

Workgroup #4

The Role of Marketing and Public Awareness in Energy Efficiency – What is the role of marketing in fostering an energy efficient economy?

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Summary

Preliminary research indicates that a scalable regional marketing effort could effectively advance adoption of energy efficiency practices and enhance the efforts of area utilities. A coordinated effort in the Northwest must take into consideration the varying needs of utilities of all locations, sizes and population demographics. It must not compete with existing individual utility brands or marketing efforts. A pre-launch benchmark study and mid-point and post-launch evaluations should be conducted in order to measure impact and effectiveness. Partnerships with city, county and state governments could expand its reach and should be explored. Private sector business and industry should also be considered, possibly to underwrite the effort. A subgroup has been established to continue identifying gaps in existing market research and if needed, recommend new research required in order to solidify any presumptions made in this recommendation. A second subgroup will delve further into developing a strategic approach to a marketing effort for the region.

Outcome

- Conduct a marketing effort that increases energy efficiency in the region.
- The effort will complement and augment, without diluting or compromising, existing utility marketing efforts.
- Identify the appropriate group(s) to lead the development of a new regional marketing effort.
- Identify funding sources to cover costs of developing, implementing, evaluating and sustaining a new marketing initiative.
- Attract and sustain broad support from Northwest utilities, public sector, businesses and public and private NGOs.

Drivers for Regional Marketing:

Higher mandated savings goals in the region, rising energy costs, reliability and increasing demands on existing utility marketing resources are primary drivers for a coordinated regional marketing effort. We know that energy efficiency is the greatest and most cost-effective resource, and is preferable over more costly generating resources. Unified regional messaging would help enhance success and eliminate possible confusion caused by the proliferation of energy and climate-related messages. And, leveraging resources will save money for all stakeholders.

Areas of Focus:

Workgroup #4 identified two primary areas of focus needing further development by workgroup subcommittees: market research and coordinated marketing efforts.

Market Research:

- The region needs to leverage residential segmentation studies already completed by BC Hydro, Puget Sound Energy and BPA (soon to be completed).
- Preliminary assessment of the research gathered to date indicates a need for additional quantitative research to ascertain what consumers know about energy efficiency, which will lead us to how we can affect behavior change. Qualitative research will also help in establishing benchmarks and testing of messages.
- Gaps seem to exist in research on the commercial and industrial market sectors.
- Most current research appears to focus on the I-5 corridor, so we may need to recommend market studies inclusive of a broader representation of the region, including lower density populations.
- Any research conducted could serve as a benchmark for success, with follow-up at specific points during and after any regional campaign.

Issues for Market Research Sub-group:

- Identify additional qualitative and/or quantitative research needed.
- Do we need more research into possible drivers of behavior change?

Coordinated Marketing Effort:

- Other regional campaigns such as Power of One, Flex Your Power, One Thing, Climate Action Now, and Home Energy Makeover Contests, provide models to build upon in developing a Northwest campaign.
- Audit and recommend how to integrate existing and ongoing efforts into a coordinated regional marketing effort.
- Further define final goals and objectives, what we hope to accomplish and how to measure success.
- A campaign needs to be scalable based on markets, geography and size of utilities.
- Provide flexibility for utilities to maintain their existing brands, especially those that have made considerable investments developing their own marketing efforts.
- Develop a marketing plan that includes clear-cut goals, tactics and measures for success.
- Develop unified umbrella messaging, with additional targeted messages that resonate with specific interests and market sectors.
- Test messaging prior to execution.

Issues for Coordinated Marketing Effort Sub-group:

- How should education and behavioral change be integrated into a coordinated regional marketing effort?
- Identify barriers to adoption of a regional effort.
- Will multiple campaigns be necessary to assure that we reach all targets? How would an umbrella initiative inform those campaigns?
- Should regional efforts piggyback on any other environmental concerns (climate change, salmon, carbon footprint)?
- How do we break out energy efficiency vs. renewables?
- How do we ensure a regional campaign results in cost savings?

- How can we engage gas and water utilities as partners in the campaign?
- Should we pursue media and corporate partnerships for major campaigns?
- Who would lead a coordinated marketing effort, and how would it be funded?
- NOTE: Although a minority view, strong opposition to regional branding or marketing campaigns exist in the Workgroup. This view will be further examined by the sub-group.

Marketing Tools Sub Group:

- This sub-group will break out of the campaign sub-group.
- Smaller utilities need a marketing toolkit to participate in energy efficiency marketing efforts at any level, even if a regional initiative is not developed.
- Any regional campaign must include a toolkit of customizable marketing and communication materials that extends beyond collateral.
- Explore the potential for a centralized web site to house the tools for all to use.

Next Steps for October/November:

- Coordinated Marketing Effort and Market Research subgroups continue to address issues outlined in this document.

Post NEET Activities:

- Conduct an energy efficiency symposium of interested parties, utilities, city and state governments, regional stakeholders and businesses. Explore the idea of holding it in conjunction with BPA's annual energy efficiency utility workshop in March.
- Organize an ongoing forum for networking, idea sharing and problem solving for marketing and communications personnel in the industry.