

# Unleashing creativity and compassion: How exactly are utility marketers adjusting their strategy?

Part 1



**E Source**

**Shelby Kuenzli**  
Analyst, E Source

Fall 2020 E Source Marketing and  
Communications Leadership Council

# Session objectives

**Purpose:** Articulate who your vulnerable customers are now, what they need and want, and how to market to them moving forward

**Outcome:** Understand what your most vulnerable customers need from your right now; gather insights from peer utilities on how to market to customers now and moving forward, how to inform your marketing strategy going forward, and how to get creative in your marketing and outreach during COVID-19

# Session outline



Setting the stage: Who are your vulnerable customers now?

What your vulnerable customers need and want right now

How Austin Energy is pivoting its marketing during COVID-19

Discussion

**Setting the stage: Who  
are your vulnerable  
customers now?**

# COVID-19's impact is ongoing

ECONOMY

## U.S. Faces Rent Crisis As Pandemic Eviction Restrictions Get Rolled Back

June 21, 2020 · 7:58 AM ET

Heard on Weekend Edition Sunday

## This Woman Accidentally Turned Herself Into A Potato For A Video Meeting And Couldn't Figure Out How To Fix It

Millennials were told we could be anything, so Lizet Ocampo became a potato.



Lauren Strapagiel  
BuzzFeed News Reporter

Posted on April 1, 2020, at 10:34 a.m. ET

CITYLAB

## One-Third of American Renters Expected to Miss Their August Payment

An expansive census survey reveals a nation stretched to the brink by the financial toll of pandemic.

Customer Service, News

## Utility customers are financially stressed due to COVID-19 and some are struggling to pay their bills

By [Clarion Energy Content Directors](#) | 8.11.20

MARKETS | FINANCE

## Millions of Credit-Card Customers Can't Pay Their Bills. Lenders Are Bracing for Impact.

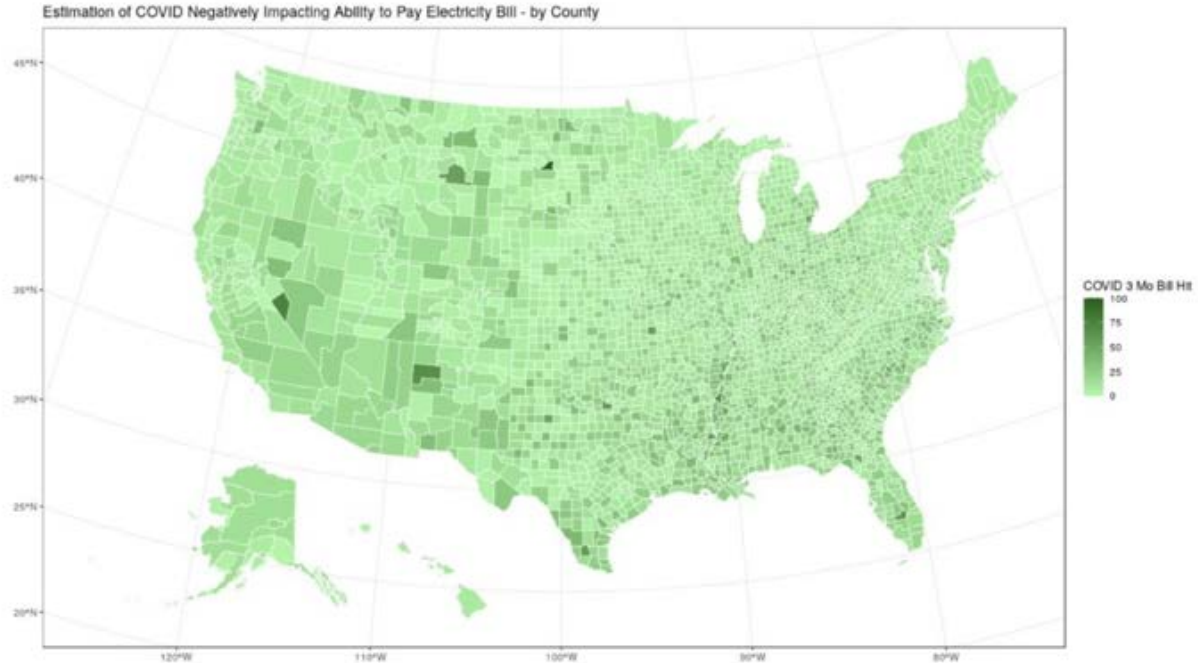
Credit-card debt kept many consumers afloat. Now that the debt bubble is bursting, lenders and borrowers alike are preparing for pain.

By [AnnaMaria Andriotis](#) and [Orla McCaffrey](#)

April 25, 2020 5:30 am ET

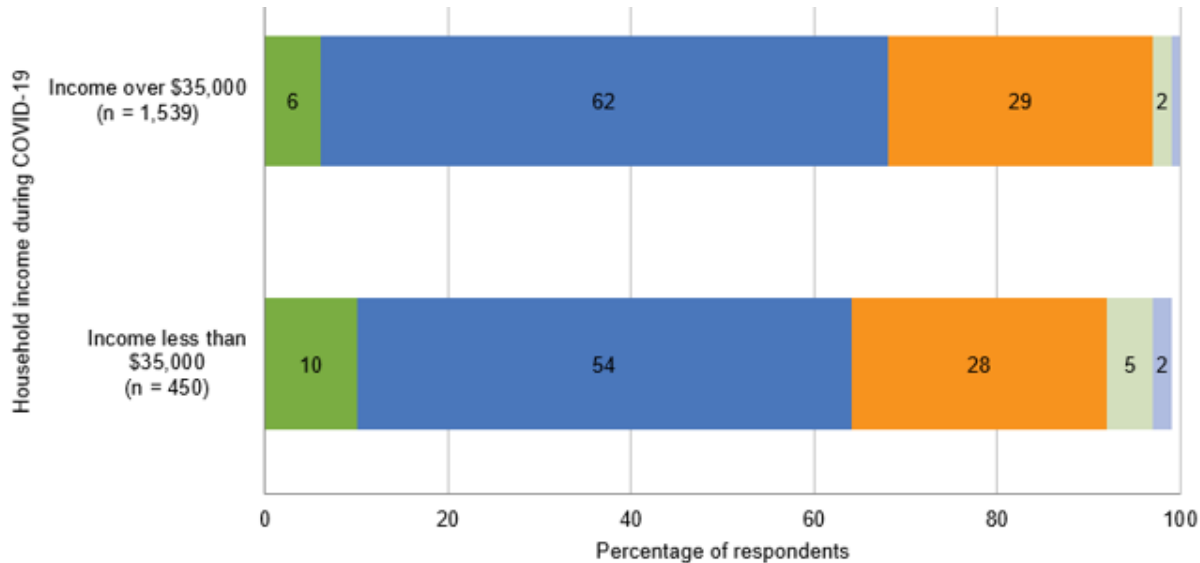
# Utilities' most vulnerable customers

- As our economic recovery continues to shift, we're starting to see the long-term impacts on household finances.
- While most customers plan to pay their bills on time, we ran a propensity analysis to see which areas are most likely to struggle to pay their electricity bills.



# Low income in the wake of COVID-19

## From our 2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey



- About one-third of utility customers have lost income during the pandemic.
- It's not only low-income customers—households making less than \$35,000 a year—who have lost money during the pandemic. Customers across all income levels have been affected.

Base: US and Canadian respondents (n varies). Question S6\_5a: How has COVID-19 impacted your household income? Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. We removed data labels less than 2%. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

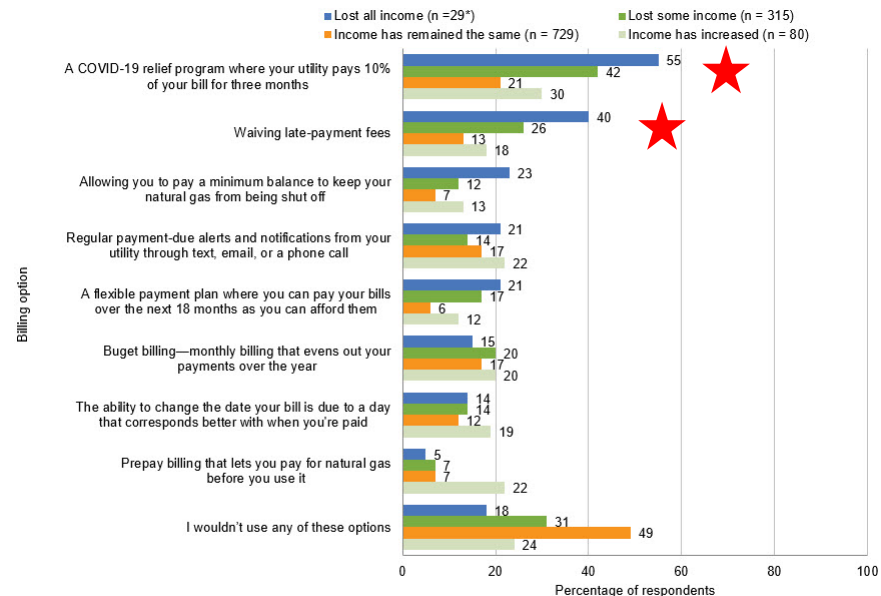
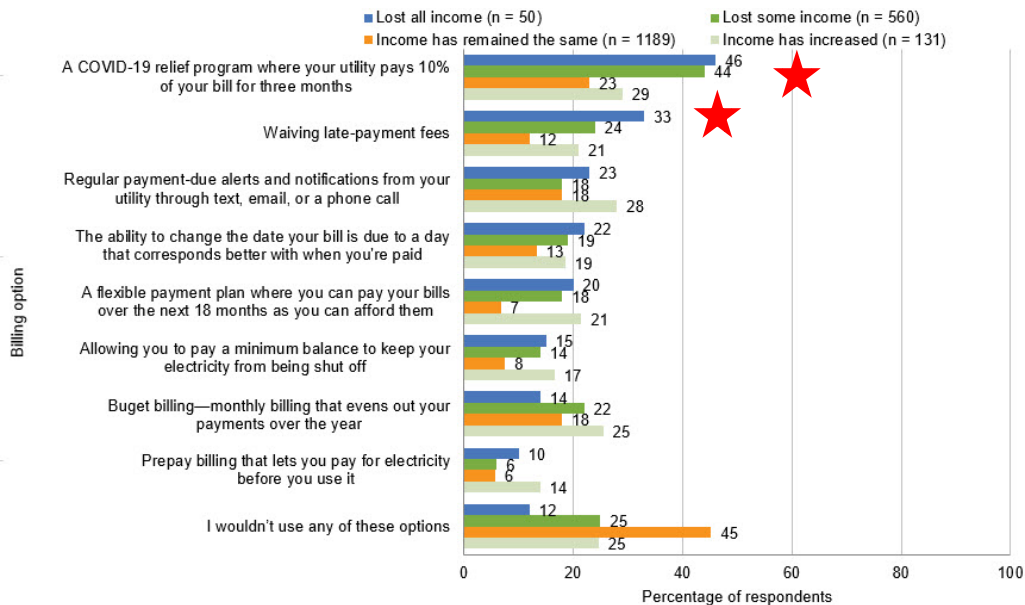


A person is shown from behind, sitting at a desk and using a laptop. The laptop screen displays a social media profile page with a profile picture, a name, and various navigation options like 'My Status', 'My Friends', 'My Photos', 'My Videos', and 'My Groups'. The background is a solid blue color.

**What your vulnerable  
customers need and  
want right now**



# Which billing options are customers interested in now?



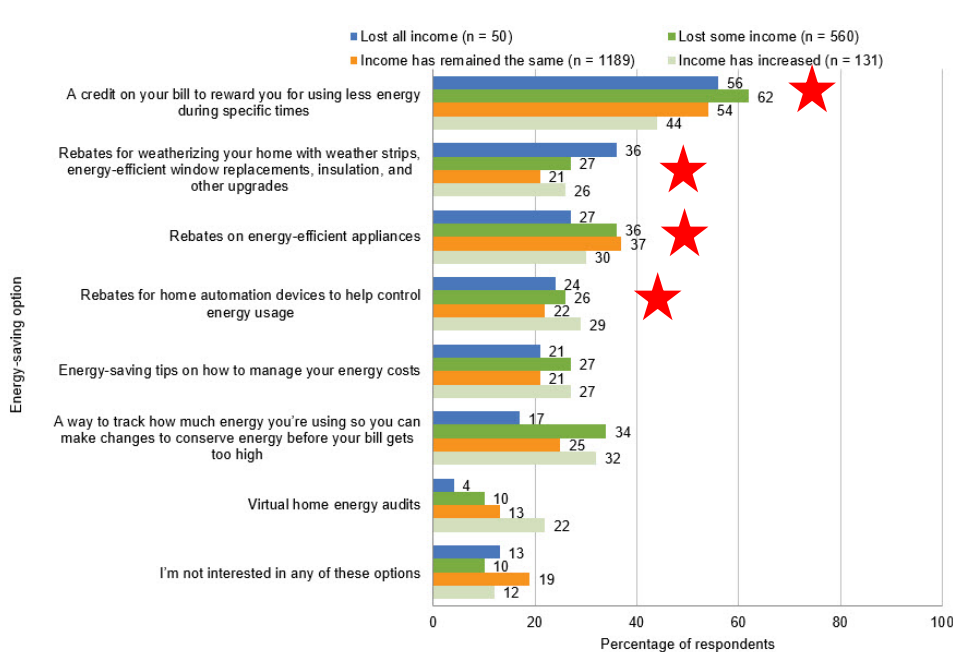
Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay an electric bill (n varies). Question S2\_7: If your utility offered each of the following options, please select the ones you'd most likely use in the next three months. Select all that apply. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay a natural gas bill (n varies). Question S3\_7: If your utility offered each of the following options, please select the ones you'd most likely use in the next three months. Select all that apply. Note: Use caution when sample size falls below 30. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

Electric

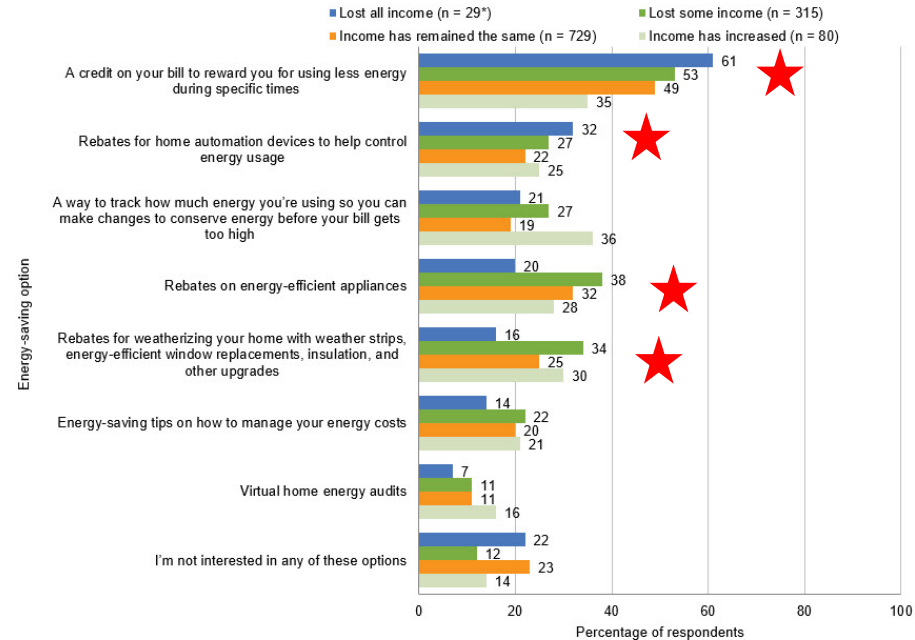
Natural gas

# Which energy-saving options are customers interested in now?



Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay an electric bill (n varies). Question S2\_8: If your utility offered all of the following options to reduce your monthly electric bill, which three options would you be most interested in? © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

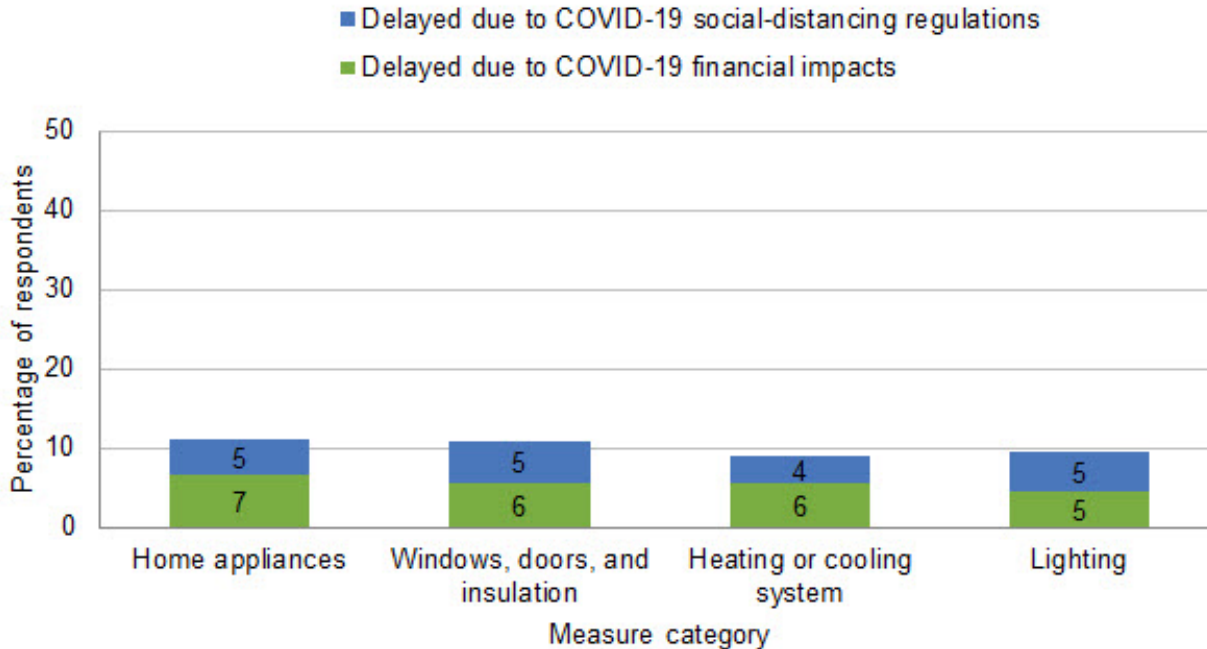
Electric



Base: US and Canadian respondents who pay a natural gas bill (n varies). Question S3\_8: If your utility offered all of the following options to reduce your monthly natural gas bill, which three options would you be most interested in? Note: Use caution when sample size falls below 30. © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

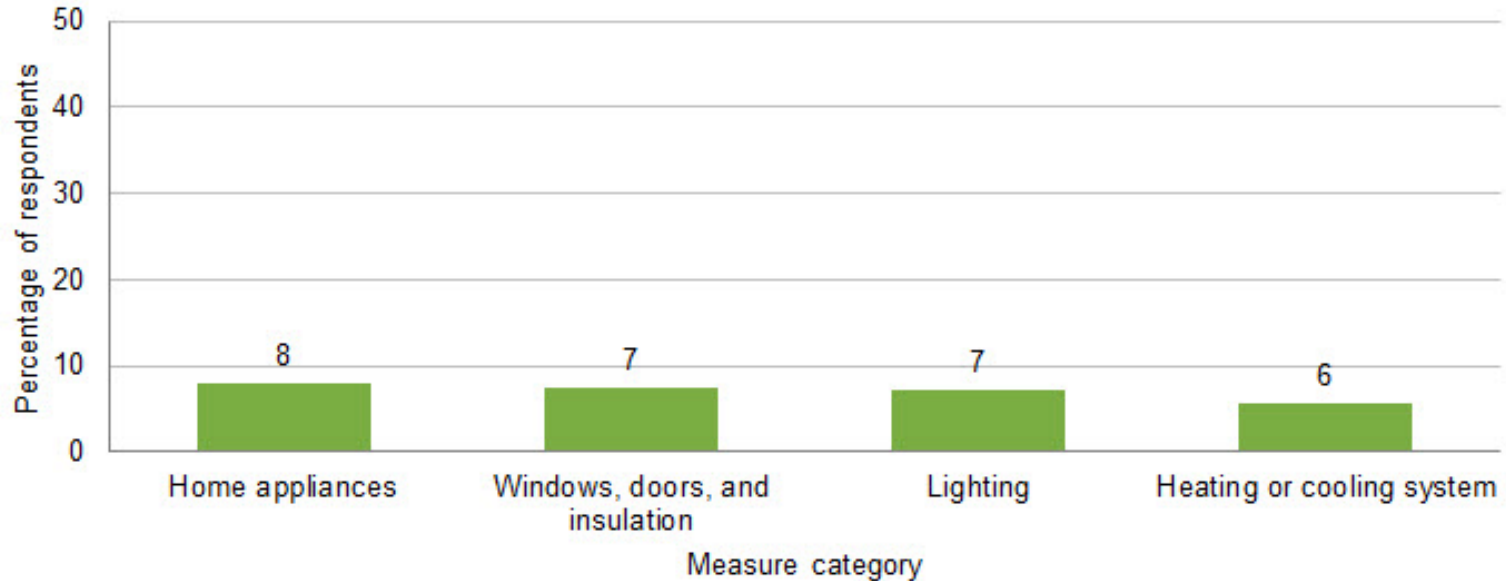
Natural gas

# COVID-19 delays in home upgrades



**Base:** North American respondents (n = 2,024). **Question S5\_4:** Thinking about upgrades to your primary residence, please select the action or actions that most closely align with your plans for 2020 for each upgrade.  
**Note:** Data shown is from respondents who answered "I had plans to complete this upgrade in 2020, but they will be delayed due to household financial impacts from COVID-19" or "I had plans to complete this upgrade in 2020, but they will be delayed due to social-distancing restrictions." © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

# Customers' plans for home energy upgrades in 2020



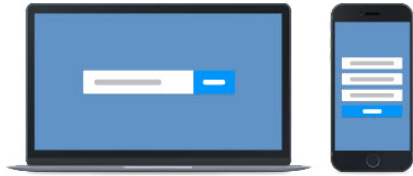
**Base:** North American respondents (n = 2,024). **Question S5\_4:** Thinking about upgrades to your primary residence, please select the action or actions that most closely align with your plans for 2020 for each upgrade. **Note:** Data shown is from respondents who answered "I have plans to complete this upgrade in 2020." © E Source (2020 COVID-19 Residential Survey)

# Key takeaways

- Customers who have seen the greatest financial impact during COVID-19 say they would be most likely to use a **relief program where their utility pays 10% of their bill**. **Late fee waivers** are the second most popular option for those who lost some or all of their income.
- Customers are most interested in a **bill credit** for reducing energy use during peak times. Rebates for energy-efficient appliances are also popular; however, those who have recently lost income favor **weatherization and home automation rebates** when it comes to their electric bill.
- Most customers who were planning on doing **home energy upgrades** say they're **delayed** now because of COVID-19. But a small group of customers still plan to move forward with their home energy upgrades.

## How to join

### Web




- 1 Go to **PollEv.com**
- 2 Enter **ESOURCE2**
- 3 Respond to activity

### Text



- 1 Text a **CODE** response to **22333**



# How are you balancing your utility goals with the needs of customers right now?

Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at [pollev.com/app](https://pollev.com/app)



An aerial view of a city, likely Austin, Texas, with a blue tint. Overlaid on the city are numerous white, glowing, curved lines that represent a network or data flow, connecting various points across the urban landscape. The lines are of varying thickness and opacity, creating a sense of dynamic connectivity.

# How Austin Energy is pivoting its marketing during COVID-19

# COVID-Era Marketing Pivot

FY20 Energy Conservation, Scams and Utility Bill Relief  
Campaign Creative

**Jenny DiLeo**


Public Information and Marketing Program Manager



September, 2020

© 2020 Austin Energy


# Created New Energy Conservation Spring Campaign – Focus on Tips



**Save Energy, Especially Now.**


- » Unplug electronics, chargers and appliances when not in use.
- » Set thermostats to 78 degrees or higher on hot days.
- » Wash full loads of laundry.

More tips at [austinenergy.com/go/tips](http://austinenergy.com/go/tips)




©2020 Austin Energy

Print Ads



**Save Energy, Especially Now.**

Unplug electronics when not in use.



**More tips**

©2020 Austin Energy



**Save Energy, Especially Now.**

Wash full loads of laundry to help save money and energy.



©2020 Austin Energy



**Save Energy, Especially Now.**

Set your thermostat to 78 degrees or higher in the warmer months.



©2020 Austin Energy

Digital Display + SEM Ads



**Austin Energy** @austinenergy · Apr 13

Be a fan of fans while you Save Energy, Especially Now. Make sure your ceiling fan rotates counterclockwise in the warm months so the blades push cooler air down. Find other easy, no-cost ways to reduce your energy use during this time: [austinenergy.com/go/tips](http://austinenergy.com/go/tips)

**Save Energy, Especially Now.**

Ceiling fans can help you feel about 4 degrees cooler.



©2020 Austin Energy



Support comes from Austin Energy, encouraging customers to save energy, especially now. Unplugging electronics and setting thermostats at 78 can save energy. More at [austinenergy.com/go/tips](http://austinenergy.com/go/tips).

Social Media and Radio





# Incorporated Additional Spring Messaging

**YOUR SAFETY. YOUR UTILITIES. OUR PRIORITY.**


We want to keep the lights on and the water running.

The City of Austin cares about the health and safety of you and your residents. While social distancing, stay connected to your City Utilities and City information channels. Resources for both residents and owners and managers of multifamily properties are available.

For more information, please visit [austintexas.gov/COVID19](http://austintexas.gov/COVID19) or call 3-1-1.



Multifamily Print Ad



**NEWSFLASH**

Customer Driven. Community Focused.™


Dear Key Account Customers,

In light of the current public health crisis and the "Stay Home, Work Safe" order, Austin City Council approved an ordinance last Thursday to provide utility bill relief to residents and businesses over the coming months. The ordinance helps Austin Energy's commercial customers by:

- Reducing the regulatory charge on electric bills, effective May 1 for commercial customers. This should provide a 3.5 - 4% bill reduction for most customers.
- Extending Austin Energy's moratorium on utility disconnects for non-payment through Sept 30, 2020.
- Extending Austin Energy's policy of waiving late fees through September 30, 2020. This also applies to District Energy & Cooling invoices.

We encourage customers to pay what they can in the meantime. If your business is experiencing a hardship during this time, please contact your Key Account Manager to request a payment plan or assistance with energy use and bills, especially as we

**Lighting a Brighter Future**



**SINCE 1895**

Austin Energy Corporate Communications | 721 Barton Springs Rd, Austin, TX 78704 | [austinenery.com](http://austinenery.com)

For immediate release:  
April 13, 2020  
Contact: Jennifer Herber, Austin Energy Public Information, (512) 299-1740

**Austin Energy announces deadline extensions for Energy Conservation Audit and Disclosure (ECAD)**

The Austin-Travis County "Stay Home, Work Safe" order requires residents to remain at home with the exception of essential activities to help prevent the spread



**Stop Utility Scammers!**  
Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1

#2020 Austin Energy

HELP STOP UTILITY SCAMMERS!

**Don't FALL for the CALL!**

Austin Energy does NOT

- Threaten to disconnect your utilities.
- Demand payment with cash or gift cards.

Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1



[austinenery.com/go/stopscams](http://austinenery.com/go/stopscams)

Print Ad



**STOP UTILITY SCAMMERS!**  
**Don't FALL for the CALL!**

Austin Energy does NOT demand payment with cash or gift cards.

Report Calls to 3-1-1

Digital Ads



**Don't FALL for the CALL!**

Stop Utility Scammers! Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1

Sticky Note Ad



Help stop utility scammers: **Don't FALL for the CALL!**  
Report suspicious calls to 3-1-1

Visit [austinenery.com](http://austinenery.com)

OOH – Billboard



Help Stop Utility Scammers

**Don't FALL for the CALL!**

Report Suspicious Calls to 3-1-1



#2020 Austin Energy

Commercial and Multifamily Energy Marketing and audit requirements this year, Extended to October 1, 2020: The commercial customers within the City of Austin, Texas, which are normally

Press Releases, Emails to Key Accounts, Large and SMB Commercial Customers and MF Properties



# Developed New COA Utilities Residential Marketing

**Facing Financial Hardship? We're Here to Help.**

- 1. See if You Qualify for Help on Utilities:**
  - [austinenergy.com/go/cap](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap)
- 2. Explore Your Options:**
  - Utility Bill Discounts
  - Emergency Financial Assistance
  - Payment Arrangement
  - Budget Billing
  - Medically Vulnerable Services
- 3. Submit Your Application:**
  - Start today at [austinenergy.com/go/cap](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

©2020 City of Austin

Multichannel Infographic

**Facing Financial Hardship? Get Help on Utilities.**

[See if you qualify](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

©2020 City of Austin

Digital Ads



**¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Obtenga Ayuda con los Servicios Públicos.**

- Descuentos en facturas de servicios públicos
- Asistencia financiera de emergencia
- Plan de pago diferido
- Plan de presupuesto
- Servicios para clientes con necesidades médicas

**Vea si califica:**  
[austinenergy.com/go/cap](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

**¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Obtenga Ayuda con Servicios Públicos.**

[See if you qualify](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

City of Austin Utilities

© 2020 Ciudad de Austin

Print Ads

**Your Safety. Your Utilities. Our Priority.**

**We want to keep your lights on and your water running.**

The City of Austin cares about your health and safety. Smart actions can keep your utilities on and help you stay safe. Remember these tips during this time of caution:

**Get help with utilities:** Facing financial hardship? From utility bill discounts to budget billing, the City of Austin offers support for qualifying customers. See if you qualify: [austinenergy.com/go/cap](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap).

**Continue your service:** The City of Austin has stopped utility disconnects caused by non-payment. If your utilities were recently turned off because of unpaid bills, contact City of Austin Utilities today for a courtesy reconnection. Call **512-494-9400**.

**Consider new ways to pay:** For public safety reasons, the City of Austin Walk-In Utility Service Centers are currently closed. Check out other payment options by visiting [austinenergy.com/go/paymentoptions](http://austinenergy.com/go/paymentoptions) or call 3-1-1 for more information.

**Stop the scams:** Watch for possible scams during this time. Contact us if you have any doubts about a suspicious billing call or email. Call **512-494-9400**.

City of Austin Utilities

For more information, please visit: [austintexas.gov/COVID19](http://austintexas.gov/COVID19)

**Facing financial hardship? We're here to help.**

Start today at [austinenergy.com/go/cap](http://austinenergy.com/go/cap)

City of Austin Utilities

© 2020 City of Austin

Videos and content for social media and broadcast

# Expanded Energy Conservation Campaign – Included Programs



## Save Energy, Especially Now.

- Remember tips like setting thermostats to 78 degrees on hot days
- Get rebates on select smart thermostats
- Use our web app to monitor your energy usage
- Get Instant Savings on energy efficient products at local retailers
- Explore home improvement rebates from Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®

More tips at [austinenrgy.com/go/summer](http://austinenrgy.com/go/summer)



Print Ad



## Save Energy, Especially Now.

Look for the green tag in local DIY stores.



Save here

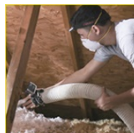


## Save Energy, Especially Now.

Lower summer bills with home energy efficiency upgrades.



Get started



## Save Energy, Especially Now.

Get rebates on home energy efficiency upgrades.



Get started



## Save Energy, Especially Now.

Install a smart thermostat to save energy and money! Rebates available.



Learn more

**AUSTIN UTILITIES NOW**  
INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CITY SERVICES

### Save energy, especially now

Summer is here, which means warmer weather and more opportunities to conserve energy. As a publicly owned utility, Austin Energy wants to help you save energy and money with simple conservation tips. Keep reading for easy ways to lower your energy usage and to save your summer utility bills, all while staying cool and comfortable in your home.

**Tip:** To lower your summer energy costs:

- Set your thermostat at 78 degrees or higher when possible. Every degree higher can decrease your summer bill by 1 percent.
- Unplug chargers. Turn off power strips whenever done. Electronics plugged in while "off" can account for up to 10 percent of home energy use.
- Use fans when you are in the room to make you feel cooler & degrees cooler. Turn them off when you leave the room.
- Avoid turning on the oven during the hottest time of the day.
- Check your refrigerator and freezer temperatures. You can save up to 25 percent by setting your refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees and your freezer to 0 degrees.
- Wash full loads of laundry.
- Keep curtains and blinds down on windows lit by direct sunlight.
- Try the Austin Energy web app to monitor your energy usage.
- Use efficient lighting. ENERGY STAR qualified LEDs use at least 75 percent less energy than incandescent lights and last about 30 times longer, saving both money and energy.

For more tips on conserving energy, visit [austinenrgy.com/go/summer](http://austinenrgy.com/go/summer)

**Get help with utility bills**

If you are having trouble at home, the City of Austin (COSA) is here to help. From utility bill discounts to budget billing, the City of Austin's Customer Assistance Programs offer resources and support to help qualifying customers pay and manage their utility bills. Save if you qualify and receive your coupons at [austinenrgy.com/go/cap](http://austinenrgy.com/go/cap)

## Austin Utilities Now Customer Newsletter

- Save Energy, Especially Now. Lower Summer Energy Bills.** Austin Energy helps you lower energy bills with whole-home energy upgrades.
- Save Energy, Especially Now. End of Summer Offer!** Enjoy as much as \$2,300 in rebates from Austin Energy on home energy upgrades.
- Save Energy, Especially Now. Look for the Green Tag!** Save on energy efficient items at the register for utility bill savings.

SEM Ads



## Save Energy, Especially Now.

Austin Energy offers programs, tools and tips to help you save energy and lower utility bills as outdoor temperatures remain high.

Look for the Green Tag to Save Energy and Money!

Austin Energy offers customers an easy way to save money on products that save energy, helping you save money on your utility bills too!

Look for the Green INSTANT SAVINGS tag on energy off-gas and DIY products like these to keep you cool and comfortable at home without over-billing your wallet.



Visit [austinenrgy.com/go/instant-savings](http://austinenrgy.com/go/instant-savings) to find participating retailers.

## Targeted Mailers + Emails

**Thinking About Installing a Smart Thermostat?**

With a \$25 installation rebate for each eligible smart thermostat you install, Austin Energy offers \$85 savings to help you install a smart thermostat.

Learn more at [austinenrgy.com/powerpartner](http://austinenrgy.com/powerpartner)

**Lower Your Energy Bills With Free Home Weatherization**

Austin Energy has flexible options for customers who have weatherization done. Austin Energy can help you get the most out of your weatherization investment by providing a \$1,000 rebate on the cost of weatherization.

Learn more at [austinenrgy.com/go/home](http://austinenrgy.com/go/home)

**Need Help Paying Late Utility Bills?**

Provide our customers dealing with financial difficulties with access to emergency assistance to help pay late utility bills.

Learn more or how to apply at [austinenrgy.com](http://austinenrgy.com)

**Is Your House More Than 10 Years Old?**

Save if you have a home that is more than 10 years old. Austin Energy offers a \$2,300 rebate on the cost of weatherization improvements including AC repair and maintenance, duct sealing, attic insulation and solar shading.

Learn more at [austinenrgy.com/go/home](http://austinenrgy.com/go/home)



## Save Energy, Especially Now.

Summer is here and so are high temperatures. Austin Energy offers programs, tools and tips to help you save energy and lower utility bills as outdoor temperatures rise.



**Was Your House Built Before 2010?**

Schedule a Home Performance with Energy Star assessment. Participating contractors will assess your home's energy performance and recommend energy-saving improvements including AC repair and maintenance, duct sealing, attic insulation and solar shading.

Save an average of \$1,800 in rebates from Austin Energy when you complete recommended home improvements, and enjoy up to 20 percent savings on summer energy bills.

Learn more at [austinenrgy.com/go/home](http://austinenrgy.com/go/home)

See reverse for more ways to save

## Campaign Timing: July - Sept

Sample Digital Display Ads



# Q&A







# Discussion

# Discussion questions

What questions do you have about how utility marketers are adjusting their strategy?

- What are your greatest marketing challenges right now?
- What are your marketing goals or priorities right now?
- How are you making marketing decisions right now?
- How are you getting creative with your marketing and outreach right now?
- How are you balancing your utility goals with the needs of customers right now?



# Which questions are you interested in discussing that relate to how utility marketers are adjusting their strategy? Select all that apply.

What are your greatest marketing challenges right now?

What are your marketing goals/priorities right now?

How are you making marketing decisions right now?

How are you getting creative with your marketing and outreach right now?

How are you balancing your utility goals with the needs of customers right now?

Other - put your question in the chat!

# Thank you! Questions?



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**Have a question?**  
**Ask E Source!**  
Submit an inquiry:  
[www.esource.com/question](http://www.esource.com/question)

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# 15-minute break!

**Stay in this meeting!**

**Up next: Unleashing creativity and compassion—How exactly are utility marketers adjusting their strategy? Part 2**



**E Source**

# Unleashing creativity and compassion

How utility marketers are adjusting  
their strategy

**Kevin Andrews**  
Lead Analyst, E Source



**E Source**

# Where we're going



Build empathy and understanding for what business customers want and need from their utility



Highlight examples of no- and low-cost support services utilities are offering their business customers



Discuss challenges, solutions, etc. with peers and colleagues



# Chat questions!

Who's on the call? Enter your name, title, and utility into the Zoom chat window.

# Chat questions!

Who's on the call? Enter your name, title, and utility into the Zoom chat window.

How many E Source leadership council meetings have you attended in the past?

# Chat questions!

Who's on the call? Enter your name, title, and utility into the Zoom chat window.

How many E Source leadership council meetings have you attended in the past?

If you could go anywhere in the universe right now, where would you go and what would you be doing? (e.g. Hawaii, SCUBA diving or Hogwarts, quidditch)

# Building empathy via E Source market research

- E Design ethnographic insights for small and midsize business (SMB) customers
- E Source SMB gap and priority benchmark—COVID-19 open-ended responses



# E Source ethnographic insights

“Developing Successful Relationships with Small and Midsize Business Customers,” Adam Maxwell and Rachel Cooper, E Source (2019)

We nationally recruited 12 businesses. Screening criteria ensured participants:

- Are responsible for paying the energy bills
- Have 10 to 99 employees
- Spend \$25,000 to \$199,999 on electric and gas combined annually
- Actively or extremely actively seek ways to manage energy costs and bills

**Customer  
engagement**



**Customer  
experience**

# E Source ethnographic insights

Daily routines and communication preferences

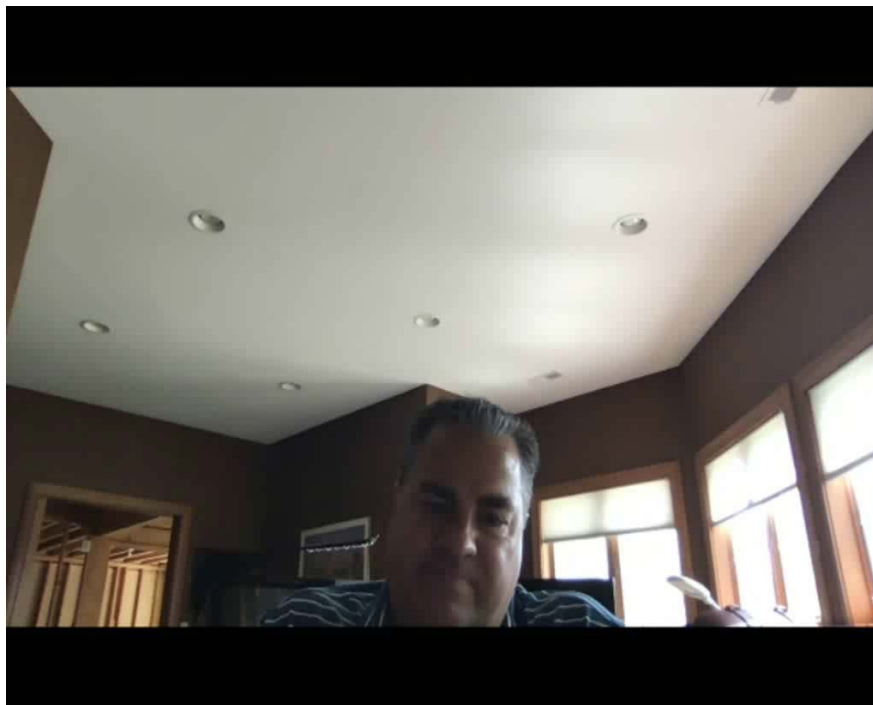
Utility relationships, perceptions, and desires



Utility credibility, visibility, trust, and brand

Characteristics of valuable business relationships

# E Source ethnographic insights

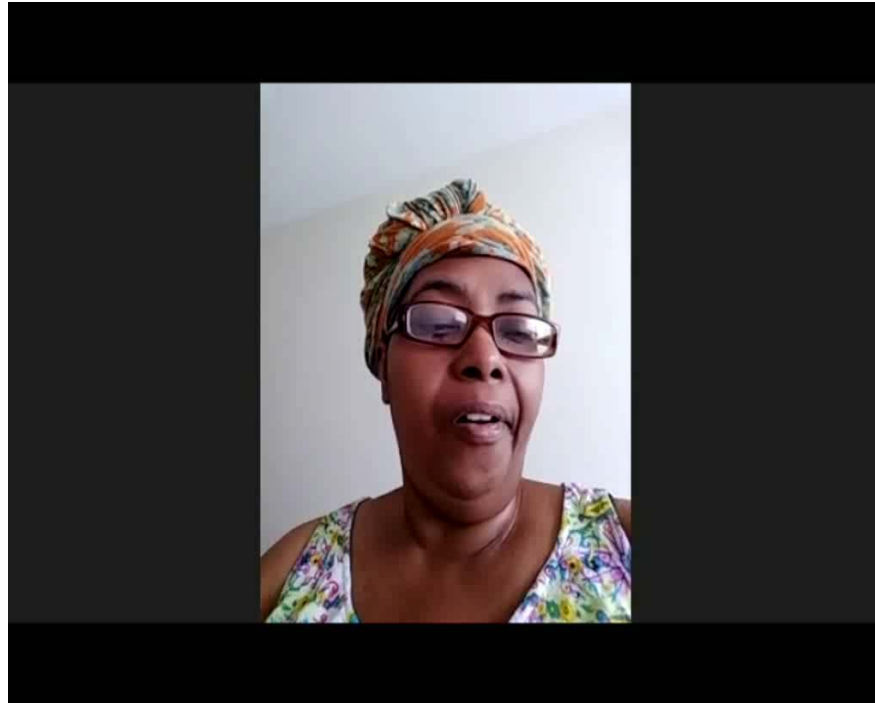


# E Source ethnographic insights

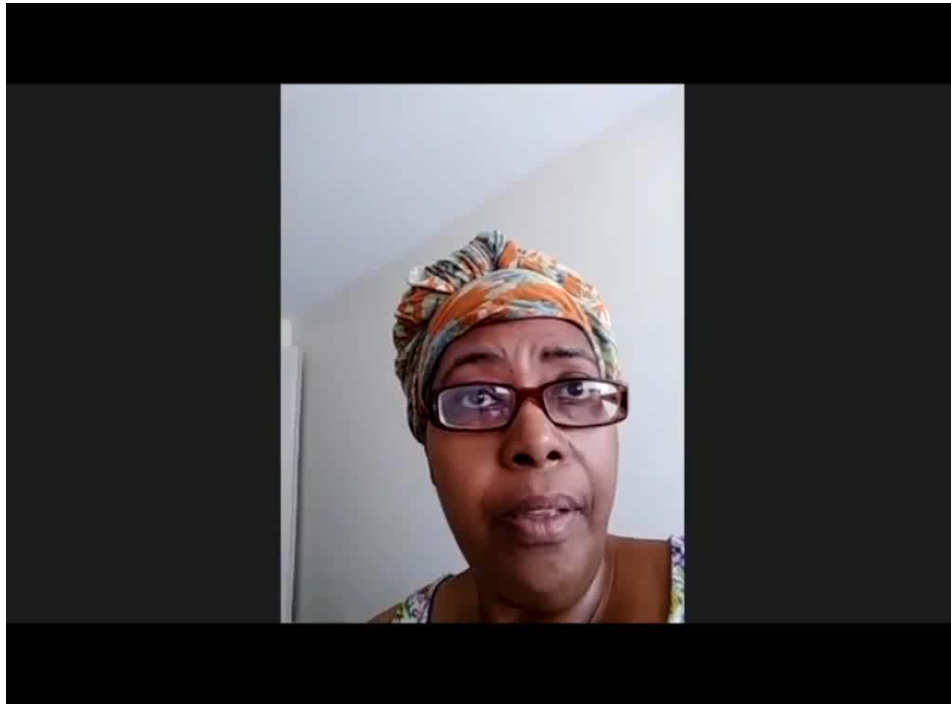




# E Source ethnographic insights



# E Source ethnographic insights



# E Source ethnographic insights



# Summary of ethnographic insights



Think like a business owner



Create opportunities for active listening



Build relationships



Be proactive with support

# Chat questions!

- Which SMB sector(s) have you focused on in recent engagement campaigns? (retail, restaurant, office, etc.)

# Chat questions!

- Which SMB sector(s) have you focused on in recent engagement campaigns? (retail, restaurant, office, etc.)
  
- Are you doing anything specific to COVID-19 to engage with your SMB customers? “Yes” or “No” is fine.



# Chat questions!

- Which SMB sector(s) have you focused on in recent engagement campaigns? (retail, restaurant, office, etc.)
- Are you doing anything specific to COVID-19 to engage with your SMB customers? “Yes” or “No” is fine.
- What type(s) of engagement? (call campaigns, mailed information, web-based consultation, kits, etc.)

# E Source market research



2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark



Surveyed 296 business customers and included open-ended responses

***Please describe anything that [Utility] could do to better serve you or your business. Is there anything specific to COVID-19 that [Utility] could be doing?***

# SMB COVID-19 responses

Grants and incentives

General finance

Payment plan

General help

Bill-related

Other



# Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“We have been hit hard by Covid-19 ... Even though we have shut down almost all lights, etc., our **bill** has not dropped significantly. I am guessing it has to do with minimums or total quantity or something. We could damn well use a break for the rest of the year where we hope to be at 20% of capacity.”

—*Service industry respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

# Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“We have been hit hard by Covid-19 ... Even though we have shut down almost all lights, etc., our **bill** has not dropped significantly. I am guessing it has to do with minimums or total quantity or something. We could damn well use a break for the rest of the year where we hope to be at 20% of capacity.”

—*Service industry respondent*

“We are non-essential and shut down for 6 weeks. We turned all appliances, lighting, a/c, heat, computers, etc. off for the entire time we were down yet our **bill** was still the same as normal. ... I do not understand how a vacant building with very little even plugged in generated the amount of electricity we were billed for.”

—*Retail industry respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

# Bill-related SMB COVID-19 responses

“No one except the Janitor and myself, the church treasurer have been in the buildings since March. Our monthly **bill** has not reflected this at ALL. Is there a way for a person to come check where we are using electricity and why our bill is so big? Thank you.”

—*Congregational respondent*

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—*Congregational respondent*

“Have billing questions that are not being sufficiently answered after three phone calls. There is an obvious error of some sort in one or more of my **bills**. After being shut down for two months for covid, **economic issues** like this are critical to be resolved. Is there a way to request an audit of my bills?”

—*Retail industry respondent*

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark



# Example SMB COVID-19 responses

“Offering **payment plans** during COVID-19 and a **budget plan** thereafter”

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

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“Response time has been great during COVID-19”

Source: 2020 E Source Small and Midsize Business Gap and Priority Benchmark

# Types of low-cost utility support

Simple and supportive communication and info

Virtual audits and inspections

Free, easy-to-install measures and tune-ups

Trade ally engagement and support



# Types

Simple and  
communication

## Behavioral

- Remove or unplug nonessential loads
- Set existing thermostat and lighting systems to unoccupied
- Adjust building ventilation systems (safely)
- Reduce lighting (safely) in parking, garages, and pathways

credits and  
incentives

## Installs and adjustments

Free, easy  
measures and







- Low-flow water fixtures
- Pipe and tank insulation
- LED lighting upgrades
- HVAC duct sealing
- HVAC equipment servicing
- Window glazing/film

engagement  
and support

# Discussion questions

- How are you creating opportunities for active listening and meaningful engagement with your SMB customers?
- Which sector(s) have been most receptive to your outreach and engagement? Which ones have been the least?
- What are some of the most relevant and timely concerns that customers have shared with you?
- What low-cost support are you providing to SMB customers? Which types of support have been most impactful thus far?

# Idaho Power case study

-  25,000 small business customers
-  Free energy-saving kits for small businesses: office, retail, and restaurant
-  No face-to-face interactions with customers after March 13
-  Suspended disconnects and posted energy-saving information
-  Phone campaign in June, starting with retail customers
-  Completed over 500 calls and distributed approximately 350 kits



# Idaho Power case study

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**Questions?**

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# Key takeaways



Think like a business owner



Create opportunities for active listening



Build relationships



Be proactive with support

# Thank you! Questions?



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