

## Customer Education and Participation Recommendations

In Case No. U-20959, the Commission directed that the Customer Education and Participation workgroup identify areas of focus for customer outreach and education, identify opportunities for MPSC outreach and education activities, and explore targeting customers who could benefit from specific rate offerings.

In addition to workgroup meetings and meetings with stakeholders, Staff conducted additional research examining effective customer outreach, education, and participation practices in the regulatory space. Based on this research, Staff identified several principles to guide the development of these recommendations including:

1. Building and maintaining trust
2. Ensuring transparency
3. Increasing visibility and access

The recommendations are arranged into five categories and are provided below.

### Customer Engagement in the Regulatory Process

*These recommendations are intended to improve opportunities for customers to influence regulatory decisions.*

1. The Commission should develop processes for improved customer engagement in the regulatory space and develop engagement opportunities that allow customers to have a voice in the decision-making process, with particular attention given to communities that have been historically underrepresented in Commission proceedings.
2. The Commission should explore opportunities to encourage the utilities to engage with customers on issues including their long-term investment plans, rate case requests, and pilot programs through customer surveys, public meetings, and other available means.
3. In order to assist the public's understanding of utility proposals and applications as well as their potential customer impacts, and to aid individuals interested in providing public comment, the Commission should develop case-specific webpages containing easy to understand summaries of the proposals and issues in the case. These webpages should also provide an easily accessible link for customers wishing to submit public comment.

### Improving Customer Participation and Education regarding energy use and program options

*These recommendations are intended to improve customer education, and access to information, regarding available utility program offerings.*

1. The Commission should develop and publicize a utility program portal that provides easy access to information regarding available utility programs and offerings.
2. The Commission should hold regular meetings with regulated utilities to examine and review utility customer outreach and education efforts, identify barriers to program adoption, and discuss lessons learned and opportunities for improvement and coordination.

## Customer Education

*These recommendations are intended to improve customer education related to both general energy issues as well as Commission processes, cases, and opportunities and methods for submitting public comment.*

1. The Commission should develop an overarching, customer facing education program designed to help customers understand the regulatory process, the role and function of the Commission, and the energy issues that impact them. This program should utilize a multi-resource approach and incorporate digital, print, and multi-media options.
2. The Commission should develop an educational program designed to educate customer advocates, community organizations, and stakeholders on issues of interest to their constituencies, and should develop materials that these organizations can utilize in their outreach and education efforts.
3. The Commission should develop materials to assist customers in understanding the public comment process and how to make comments in Commission cases. Materials should also be developed to help customers understand cases of significant interest and provide the information necessary to aid in the development of their comment filing to the case docket.

## General Outreach and Engagement

*These recommendations are intended to increase opportunities for Commission outreach and engagement with customers and local communities.*

1. The Commission should build capacity to allow for expanded customer outreach, education, and engagement. Assuming sufficient appropriations and budget approvals, this could take the form of a dedicated Community Outreach and Engagement team. As part of this expanded engagement, the Commission should undertake intentional engagement with historically marginalized communities on issues impacting them including issues of energy accessibility and affordability, energy waste reduction, and utility program offerings and access.
2. The Commission should expand its social media presence and explore opportunities for expanded digital engagement to more effectively engage with customers.
3. The Commission should build intentional and consistent relationships with local stakeholders and seek opportunities to partner with them on education and outreach efforts.

## Additional Research, Meetings, and Study

*These recommendations identify opportunities for additional research, meetings, or study to further assist the Commission in its customer education and participation efforts.*

1. The Commission should identify opportunities to engage the public through outreach events, town halls, or other means to better understand the education and participatory needs and interests of utility customers.
2. The Commission should develop and issue a survey to community organizations and customer advocates seeking further input regarding community education and engagement activities.
3. The Commission should initiate discussions with the Utility Consumer Participation Board examining opportunities for expanding awareness of intervenor funding opportunities.