

Advanced Meter Customer Education & Communication Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Service Company ("Public Service" or the "Company") is requesting approval from the Colorado Public Utilities Commission for certain components of its Advanced Grid Intelligence & Security ("AGIS") initiative. If approved, the utility will deliver roughly 1.5 million advanced meters to its Colorado electric customers over a timeframe of approximately two years.

In addition to the advanced meters, the AGIS initiative includes a new two-way communication system to wirelessly send and receive information between the advanced meters and the utility. The addition of interactive meters will provide customers with more choice and control, while allowing Public Service to better monitor the system and improve service and reliability.

The AGIS initiative will help create a smarter, more resilient grid that can better serve our customers in the decades to come. An integrated system will provide Public Service with a better understanding of how power is being consumed throughout the grid, enabling us to manage the entire system more efficiently.

To maximize benefits of these investments, a phased customer outreach effort will be required to ensure effective change management, customer satisfaction and engagement. Public Service's proposed Advanced Meter Customer Education & Communication Plan describes how the Company recommends using a customer-focused strategy and sequential approach, as well as a variety of channels, tactics and messages to raise awareness, educate customers and help them to get the most out of this new technology.

It is important to note that this is a preliminary, working plan that presents a cost-effective, yet wide-reaching, customer education and communication plan. It could be subject to change dependent upon Commission approvals that will provide final decisions and clarity regarding specific details of smart meter and smart grid programs and initiatives for our Colorado customers.

STRATEGY & COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Our recommended education and communication campaign includes three phases, outlined below. This phased approach helps with the overall change management effort and is designed to ease customers through each stage of the advanced meter deployment process.

Phase I - Raising Awareness: An introductory, wide-reaching effort to inform customers, employees, and community members about advanced meter rollouts and overall benefits of grid intelligence.

Objectives during this phase would be to:

- Educate all Colorado customers about the deployment of the new metering system.
- Educate Colorado employees, with a strong focus on those who have direct customer contact, so they can fully and effectively discuss the benefits and specifics of the initiative with customers.
- Educate and engage public officials, reporters, and others who can support the implementation process.
- Educate and engage opinion leaders and authoritative advocates.
- Explain why the utility is making this investment, with a focus on customer benefits.
- Measure consumer awareness, understanding, and interest in having an advanced meter and access to associated benefits.

<u>Phase II - Supporting Meter Installation:</u> Targeted customer outreach by installation community and/or geographic areas. Communications in this phase will be focused on the actual meter installation.

Objectives during this phase would be to:

- Conduct outreach and notification about installation to affected customers on a rolling basis.
- Ensure that customers understand the installation process.
- Provide communications that minimize confusion by anticipating and answering questions before customers ask them.
- Measure consumer awareness, understanding, interest, and participation in advanced meter functionalities.

<u>Phase III - Customer Engagement:</u> Targeted follow-up communication to customers who have had an advanced meter installed to ensure satisfaction with the process and let them know how to take advantage of advanced meter features.

Objectives during this phase would be to:

 Educate customers that have had advanced meters installed about online tools and resources.

- Encourage customers to view their energy use information online.
- Provide follow-up communications to customers about specific ways to use this information to manage their energy use.
- Make it easy for customers to select energy management tools andenergy efficiency and conservation offerings available to them, based on their personal preferences.
- Measure consumer awareness, understanding, interest, participation and satisfaction with advanced meters and associated features.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

While the exact timing of customer education and communication activities will remain flexible to respond to any shifts in regulatory approvals, advanced meter implementation schedules, exact timing of new technology functionality and ongoing customer feedback, the following is an anticipated high-level schedule.



BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

To further build upon the Company's experience with advanced meter pilots and advanced grid technology initiatives in Colorado, the Company also has examined communication and outreach best practices among other utilities with advanced grid and advanced meter deployment experience.

Many of these best practices and lessons learned are outlined below, and have been taken into consideration as we developed this proposed communication plan.

- Advanced grid/advanced meter implementation should be treated as a change management program for employees. Consider a full process of engagement with employees throughout the life of advanced grid activities and initiatives.
- Train employees to be ambassadors in the community and leverage employees' existing relationships and involvement in their communities to help disseminate important information. Aim for transparency and a high level of engagement between the customer and customer-facing employees.

- Getting ahead of the process is important. Pre-deployment engagement makes all the difference: by talking to stakeholders first, the approach can be customized and messaging can be localized by each community to effectively focus on issues and interests they care about the most.
- Educate customers before their advanced meter deployment by staging communications ahead of key customer contact leading up to the actual installation.
- Use social media as a means to approach advanced meter installation as a new technology rollout across specific geographic locations and targeted customer segments.
- Focus communication directly on customers. Do not assume they understand the
 concept of kilowatt hours, how the utility measures electricity, on-versus off-peak usage,
 etc. Avoid industry terms and jargon and instead use simple language and a call to
 action that customers can easily understand.
- Set realistic expectations on functionality.
- Build an extensive set of Q&As to address issues and concerns. Through active
 employee change management and education, ensure front-line employees who work
 directly with customers use these messages and can anticipate questions, clear up
 concerns, and address issues in an accurate and timely manner.
- Collect customer success stories to make advanced meter/advanced grid benefits tangible and understandable.
- Ensure full integration and coordination of field operations, communication/marketing, customer care, and billing.
- Customer concerns must be identified quickly, elevated to the appropriate level, and resolved swiftly.

MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Public Service will develop a carefully constructed message framework once the Commission grants approval of the AGIS CPCN application. This will allow the Company to finalize technical specifications, including selecting an advanced meter vendor and specific AMIs. It is crucial to wait to develop messaging until after this step, as advanced meters types and functions vary, and in order to be successful the messaging must address the exact meters and functionality that Public Service will deploy. This message framework will be essential for successful completion of this plan and the overall transition to advanced meters.

The Company typically develops messages using the following process:

Research: Market research lays the groundwork for message development, incorporating customer message testing, customer panels, focus groups, and utility peer research.

Understanding the Audience: While we will be raising awareness among all our Colorado customers, advanced meter messages will be targeted to specific customer market segments to ensure maximum effectiveness and tap into the benefits that customers care about the most.

Language and Tone: Messages will be developed using simple, straight-forward language and practical information that customers can easily understand and act upon. It is important to note

that we have learned through research that customers have a limited understanding of the terms "AMI" and "advanced meter"; customers are more familiar with and prefer the term "smart meter" (or grid). In an effort to use the most understandable language, we will use the term "smart meters/grid" in customer-directed messaging rather than the industry terms "advanced meters/grid" or "AMI." Additionally, we will aim to manage customer expectations (i.e., don't overpromise) and clarify what will be available to customers at each stage of the transition to new technology.

Overarching Messaging Themes: Customer Benefits & Value Propositions

Because of the significant investment other utilities have made in the advanced grid, consumers today are seeing the benefits. The Smart Grid Consumer Collaborative ("SGCC") is an independent nonprofit organization consisting of commercial, utility, and advocacy organizations that collects information about customers' views and understanding of advanced meters and grids. SGCC has recently updated their advanced grid consumer segmentation framework, which highlights consumer attitudes. According to SGCC, three distinct value propositions of advanced grids have emerged:

Economic: With more information on energy consumption and more choices about how and when they use energy via possible future rate options, consumers may be able to save money as a result of advanced-grid enabled programs and technologies.

Example messaging theme: Smart meters and the smart grid provide superior energy usage information which can help consumers save money by enabling them to better manage their electricity use.

Environmental: The advanced grid enables the incorporation of greater amounts of renewable generation, gives customers more opportunities to make more environmentally conscious choices, and can also reduce the need to rely on fossil fuel generation.

Example messaging theme: The smart grid helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions by making it easier to connect renewable energy sources to the electricity grid.

Reliability: Grid-side intelligence offered by advanced grid technology can reduce the frequency and duration of outages while providing better information when outages do occur. According to SGCC, the importance consumers place on these benefits has been remarkably consistent and strong, with nearly 90 percent of consumers rating each of these benefits as important, regardless of their awareness of advanced grid technology.

Example messaging theme: A smart grid senses problems and reroutes power automatically. This prevents some outages and reduces the length of those that do occur. It strengthens the resiliency of the power network that serves you.

Anticipating Customer Questions

The Company will develop a multi-faceted set of messages tailored for each specific target audience. Messages will likely address the following topics:

- What is a smart meter?
- What is a smart grid or intelligent grid?
- How will smart meters benefit me?
- How will a smart grid benefit me?
- Why do we need smart meters/a smart grid now?
- What kind of choices do smart meters offer me?
- Who is paying for smart meters and smart grid technology?
- When will I receive my smart meter?
- Will I be notified before and/or after my smart meter is installed?
- How will I receive my smart meter?
- Who will install my smart meter?
- Will power be interrupted during my smart meter installation?
- What can I expect when my smart meter is installed?
- If I need help after my smart meter is installed, who can assist me?
- Where can I learn more about getting the most benefit from my smart meter?
- How will my smart meter differ from my 'old' meter?
- How can I tell if my meter is a smart meter?
- Can I opt out of my smart meter or choose to not to have a new meter installed?
- Will my bill look different after my smart meter is installed and in use?
- Will my smart meter make my energy bills higher?
- Will my smart meter reflect my energy bills accurately?
- Will Xcel Energy now have more control over my energy use with the smart meter?
- Who will have access to my energy use information and data?
- Will the smart meter compromise my personal privacy or security?
- Will fixed and limited income customers pay more than their fair share for smart meters?
- What options do you have for fixed and limited income customers?
- Is a smart grid more vulnerable to an outside attack? Does it pose a security risk to the community?
- What kind of radio signals do smart meters emit?
- Do smart meters pose a health risk?
- Does automatic meter reading eliminate jobs?

SUGGESTED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND TACTICS

Consistent with the lessons learned from numerous utilities that have managed advanced meter deployments and advanced grid investments, the following are proposed communication channels and tactics focused on effectively reaching our target audiences.

Phase I: Raising Awareness	
INTERNAL TACTICS	
Tool	Purpose
Talking Points and FAQs for employees	 Talking Points in Phase I will provide employees with an overview of the advanced grid activities and advanced meter/advanced grid benefits, including expected features and functionality. These messages can be used to guide discussions when engaging with or responding to customers. FAQs provide answers to commonly asked questions, ensure accuracy of information shared with customers, and allow for timely replies to inquiries. A well-informed workforce helps carry the corporate message.
Employee Training	- Create materials and offer training opportunities for employees who will be working directly with affected customers Target audiences will include, but not be limited to, Customer Care Agents, Field Crews (meter installers/meter readers), Billing Staff, Community Affairs Managers, Key Account Managers, State Government Affairs, and Regulatory Affairs.
Speaker Resource Kit	- Provide a presentation, talking points, fact sheets, and other materials to employees who will serve as ambassadors to the community.

Phase I: Raising Awareness		
EXTERNAL TACTICS		
Tool	Purpose	
xcelenergy.com	 Building on existing website resources, launch a dedicated advanced meter/grid section on our customer-facing website. Content can include fact sheets, news releases, and other downloadable resources. 	
Fact Sheets	- Fact Sheets during Phase I can focus on advanced meter benefits and overall awareness of advanced grid benefits intended to inform customers of upcoming deployment plans.	
Customer FAQs	 FAQs during Phase I can focus on advanced meter benefits and overall awareness of advanced grid benefits. See the "Message Development" section of this plan for more details. 	
Bill Onsert	 A bill onsert is an article or advertisement printed on an additional page of the bill. An initial bill onsert can feature an article about Public Service's advanced meter/grid modernization plans to raise initial awareness and interest in these upgrades. 	
Stakeholder Outreach/Community Meetings	 We will reach out to community leaders, public officials and influential audiences to provide an initial briefing and enlist their help in sharing information. Conversations allow for dialogue and create opportunities for direct customer feedback into ongoing communications. These meetings also allow employees to reach out to populations that may otherwise be difficult to reach (such as vulnerable or low-income customers). 	
Social Media	 Monitor social media for discussions regarding advanced meters in communities where technology will be installed. Leverage social media as appropriate to disseminate messages to customers (via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) 	
Media Outreach	 News releases and editorial boards during Phase I can provide reporters with information about the Company's overall plan and vision for advanced meter/advanced technology investments. Media Relations can provide fact sheets and other informational resources to reporters likely to cover advanced meter activities and utility/energy news. 	
Market Research	- Measure consumer understanding and interest in having an advanced meter and access to associated benefits as a result of Phase I activities.	

Phase II: Supporting Meter Installation	
INTERNAL TACTICS	
Tool	Purpose
Talking Points and FAQs for employees	- Phase II Talking Points and FAQs will build upon existing messages, but be further refined to include an <u>added focus on specific advanced meter installation details.</u>
Employee Training	 Phase II employee training efforts will build upon previous material, but be further refined to help customers <u>understand</u> the advanced meter installation process and what to expect before, during and after installation. The focus can be on assisting affected customers, gathering customer feedback on the installation process, and helping customers through a smooth transition to the new technology.
Speaker Resource Kit	- The existing Speaker Resource Kit will be expanded to include new information about how to aid customers pre- and post-installation of their advanced meter.

Phase II: Supporting Meter Installation	
EXTERNAL TACTICS	
Tool	Purpose
xcelenergy.com	- Additional content can be added to offer more online and downloadable resources for customers who are receiving advanced meters.
Fact Sheets	- Additional fact sheets in Phase II can focus on advanced meter installation information, customer FAQS about their advanced meter, and an overview of advanced meter features.
Customer FAQs	 FAQs during Phase II can focus on providing customer support before and after advanced meter installation. See the "Message Development" section of this plan for more details.
MyAccount	- Additional content can be added to the customer account web portal to provide energy usage information and energy management tips for customers with advanced meters.
CONNECT Blog	 Articles during Phase II can provide practical information, advice, and testimonials from customers who have had advanced meters installed. Help disseminate advanced meter facts and dispel myths.
Pre-Installation Direct Mail	 Each customer can receive a postcard alerting them to the fact that their advanced meter installation date is nearing. Provide contact information (via 1-800 number and email) if they have questions. Direct customers to website for more details.

Phase II: Supporting Meter Installation		
EXTERNAL TACTICS		
Tool	Purpose	
Pre-Installation Outbound Call	- Alerts customers to a timeframe window when advanced meter installation will take place.	
Day of Installation Door Hanger with Magnet	 When installation is complete, a door hanger can inform customers about new meter, solicit customer experience feedback, and let them know where to find more information. A magnet affixed to door hanger can provide customer help line numbers and website reminders for future reference. 	
Bill Onsert	- Periodically provide basic information and reminders about advanced meters, featured articles addressing advanced meter/advanced grid topics, and directing customers to available resources for more information. The timing and specific content of bill onserts would be determined based on details of the roll-out activities in this phase as the AGIS initiative is finalized.	
Geographically-Targeted Social Media Outreach	 Inform customers that advanced meter installations are coming to their neighborhood (targeted by zip codes). Point them to xcelenergy.com for more information. 	
Stakeholder & Community Meetings	 Community Affairs managers and State Government Affairs personnel can meet with public officials and community organizations in area where advanced meters are due to be installed. Examples of materials they can provide include specific information about the advanced meter roll out in their area, FAQs to address specific constituent concerns, advance copies of materials affected customers will be receiving, and key Company contacts for questions. Face-to-face meetings with community groups, neighborhood associations, public officials, environmental organizations, business, nonprofits, clubs, and individuals to encourage them to get the word out and answer questions that may arise. 	
Community Event Sponsorships	 Speaking opportunities in the communities where installations are taking place. Ensure community opinion leaders are informed about advanced meters, help answer questions. 	
Media Outreach	- As important milestones are reached, consider news releases and outreach to reporters to communicate those achievements.	

Phase II: Supporting Meter Installation	
EXTERNAL TACTICS	
Tool	Purpose
Targeted localized advertising: tv, newspapers, radio, digital ads	 Advertising in this phase can continue to build with more robust messages as advanced meters are deployed across the service area. See the Budget section of this plan for a breakout of recommended advertising options.
Market Research	- Measure consumer understanding, interest, and participation in having an advanced meter as a result of Phase II activities.

Phase III: Customer Engagement INTERNAL	
Tactic	Purpose
Talking Points and FAQs for employees	- Phase III Talking Points and FAQs will build upon existing messages, but be further refined to include an emphasis on how customers can get the most out of their advanced meter.
Employee Training	 Phase III employee training guides can reflect the type of inquiries we are receiving from customers. -Xcel Energy's Customer Care Quick Reference will remain a dynamic tool to capture learnings on an ongoing basis.

Phase III: Customer Engagement EXTERNAL		
Tactic	Purpose	
xcelenergy.com	- Include newer fact sheets, FAQs, and video vignettes to existing web content.	
Fact Sheets	 Add fact sheets that provide "how to" information for customers using MyAccount, understanding their bill, and their personalized energy usage information. 	
Direct Customer Email	 A follow-up email to advanced metered customers can provide a check-in and drive them to available online resources for increased engagement. Can also help gather customer satisfaction feedback. 	
CONNECT Blog	- Blog articles in this phase can continue to educate, update, and enhance understanding of advanced meters and energy management technologies as they are introduced.	
Bill Onsert	- To periodically provide basic information and reminders about advanced meters, we will consider featured articles addressing advanced meter/advanced grid topics and directing customers to available resources for more information. The timing and specific content of bill onserts would be determined based on	

Phase III: Customer Engagement	
EXTERNAL	
Tactic	Purpose
	details of the roll-out activities in this phase as the AGIS initiative is finalized.
Quick-Take Video Vignettes	 Can serve as content to be pushed out through YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Highlight advanced meter features in short 15-30 second pieces. Vignettes can build attention and provide educational moments for customers in a variety of channels, including public meetings.
Customer Testimonials	- Customers can provide first-hand accounts of ways they have used their advanced meter information for managing energy usage and costs. This will be dependent upon customer reaction to the roll-out and the availability of testimonials.
Targeted localized advertising: TVB, newspapers, radio, digital ads	 Advertising in this phase will continue to build with more robust messages as customers become more familiar with advanced meter technology and learn how to get energy usage information. See the Budget section of this plan for a breakout of recommended advertising options.
Market Research	- Measure consumer understanding, and interest participation and satisfaction as a result of Phase III activities.

MITIGATING RISKS AND CHALLENGES

We have conducted research that shows that customers are interested in advanced meters and functionality, but to manage expectations and address customer concerns, our team recognizes the need to put ourselves in the place of our customers. This allows us be fully prepared to anticipate and respond to situations that could affect customers, stakeholders, or the community during advanced meter deployment. We realize the introduction of new technology, logistics of the installations, and transition to use of the advanced meters will mean that we need to help customers manage through the change, and help them use their data to make decisions that will save energy and money.

Anticipating Key Issues

While individual customer issues will receive attention, we will also track issues on a broader scale. Public Service will actively monitor sources where customer issues or concerns may originate including, but not limited to:

- Customer Care Call Centers (both residential and business inquiries)
- Inquiries to Company executives, regional leaders, and front-line managers

- Inquiries to field and other employee personnel
- Public Service's Community Affairs, Key Account Management, and State & Government Affairs teams
- Media Relations
- Colorado Public Utilities Commissioners and staff
- Community groups and consumer advocacy groups
- Letters, phone calls, social media posts, and emails from customers

Addressing Concerns

We will use existing processes and procedures for handling issues escalated through our Customer Care team. Our communication materials will attempt to address key issues and possible advanced meter concerns, including but not limited to:

- Radio Frequency (RF) Emissions: As advanced meters emit low levels of electromagnetic radiation through their RF communications, the Company will educate customers with the goal of alleviating unfounded concerns around health impacts and interference with other wireless devices.
- **Privacy & Security:** The Company will assure customers that we take their data privacy seriously by providing information about our data privacy policies. We will also clearly outline steps we take to protect customers' energy use information and personally identifiable information.
- Accuracy: Messages will also address the measurement accuracy of advanced meters, and let customers know how to contact us if they have billing questions related to their meter readings. Call center agents will be trained to answer questions and assist customers.
- **Deployment Expectations:** Communications will help make it easy for customers to properly identify our Company employees and know what to expect when meter installers are working at their home or business.
- **Opt-Out Policies:** The Company will address opt-out policies for advanced meter technology, and let customers know the proper channels for inquiring about available alternatives.
- Fixed and Low-Income Customers: Customized communications will recognize and proactively address cost concerns among low-income households, seniors, and vulnerable customer populations. We will seek to engage community leaders, influencers, and representatives of these communities in the development and deployment of our educational efforts. Messages will address how customers on fixed or limited budgets can take advantage of personal energy use information that may allow them to better manage their energy costs. Outreach will also focus on increasing these customers' participation rates in energy efficiency and conservation programs, and cross-marketing Colorado's low income assistance programs. Communication and education materials that could be customized for this segment of customers may include:

- FAQs and fact sheets addressing their specific concerns and needs.
- Talking points and scheduled briefings with consumer advocacy groups and nonprofit groups who serve these populations.
- Customized presentations for community area managers to share with their constituents.
- Aggressive outreach to organizations serving seniors, low-income, and other vulnerable customer segments, with an emphasis on providing ready-to-use materials that can be distributed via their communication channels, online resources, events, meetings, and social media platforms.
- Non-English Speaking Customers: The Company's service area is expansive and includes a diverse audience spread across the state. Specific messages will be crafted with that in mind. We will develop communications to reflect diversity of education level, income, age, and language preferences, among other differentiating factors.

BUDGET

Consistent with its commitment to Colorado customers, Public Service has proposed a robust, multi-faceted, and cost-effective plan to support, inform and engage customers throughout the deployment of advanced meter and advanced grid technology. We are proposing a communication plan budget estimate built on an assumption of **1.5 million electric meter upgrades** taking place over a time period of approximately **2-years** in Colorado.

These preliminary estimates are based on previous customer education campaigns we have executed including the introduction of tiered rates; advanced meters installations in Boulder, Colorado; and our work with net-metered customers; as well as utility best practices.

This budget does not include IT implementation costs for functions such as integrating interval meter data into MyAccount or into our billing systems. It also does not include estimated costs for any potential Commission-required customer notifications for the Advanced Grid Intelligence & Security application filing. The proposed budget includes external resources and support for this program (i.e., goods and services), but does not include internal resources (i.e, communication personnel).

The forecasted costs are broken out below.

General Customer Awareness Goal: Broader customer education about AGIS benefits	
Tactic	Estimated Cost
Connect Blog	in-house
Media Relations Outreach	in-house
Targeted Social Media	\$2,000
Bill Onserts (series of messages over two-year period)	\$120,000
Advertising	
-TV Broadcast Cable (23 weeks)	\$675,000
-Radio Metro Market (30 weeks)	\$603,000
-Hispanic Radio (27 weeks)	\$53,775
-Newspaper Metro Market Sunday (8 weeks)	\$55,000
-Digital Interactive small/select impressions (10 weeks)	\$6,600
Subtotal	\$1,515,375

Customer Implementation / Customer Service Goal: Supporting individual customers before and after their advanced meter install		
Tactic	Estimated Cost	
Market Research		
-Focus Groups	\$30,000	
-Message Testing	\$35,000	
-Peer Utility Research	\$10,000	
Outbound Calls	in-house	
XE.com Web Page Development (customer tips and information)	in-house	
Employee training sessions	in-house	
Direct Mail (printing, plus presorted first-class postcard postage rate)	\$625,000	
Collateral Materials/Fact Sheets	\$450,000	
Doorhangers/Affixed Magnets (hangers 0.064 each; magnets 0.086 each)	\$215,000	
Direct Customer Email (assumes \$0.003/per email)	\$4,200	
Instructional Web-based Videos	\$10,000	
Subtotal	\$1,379,200	
Customer Awareness Campaign	\$1,515,375	
Customer Change Management/Customer Service Campaign	\$1,379,200	
Market Research to assess each of the three phases	\$150,000	
TOTAL	\$3,044,575	