



AC Rewards Evaluation

AC Rewards Roundtable Presentation

May 12, 2021





Key Findings Presentation

Table of Contents

01 | Evaluation Overview

Slide 2

02 | Key Findings and Considerations

Slide 3-6

Evaluation Overview

Staff Interviews



- › Conducted 13 in-depth staff interviews to understand the history of the program and explore primary evaluation opportunities

Post-Event & Post-Season Surveys



- › Investigated satisfaction, comfort level, program awareness, pre-event notifications and overall engagement

Post-Enrollment Survey & Analysis



- › Assessed customer experiences with the new online enrollment process, program expectations, and satisfaction with information provided
- › Enrollment analysis estimated annualized rate of attrition

Focus Groups



- › Conducted 4 online focus groups with non-participants to explore barriers to participation in AC Rewards and response to marketing materials

Peer Benchmarking



- › Conducted 8 interviews with peer utilities to investigate program characteristics, processes and partners, recruitment strategies, enrollment, and the interaction between EE and DR programs

Workshop



- › Facilitated a workshop to brainstorm ideas for the AC Rewards program to reach new customers, improve processes, work with EE program, and align with the vision for the program in the future

AC Rewards Key Findings & Considerations



Key Themes and Opportunities for Program Improvement

1 | Address the needs of different customer types in marketing and outreach efforts

2 | Leverage EE channels for AC Rewards recruitment

3 | Enact strategic adjustments to maximize program impact and participant satisfaction

Key Considerations

Marketing and Recruitment Considerations

Topic	Considerations
Marketing and Recruitment	<p>Continue to send its own program marketing emails, in addition to leveraging thermostat vendors for marketing.</p>
	<p>Adjust messaging away from emphasizing energy savings and focus on customer bill credits in addition to the contributions of the program towards sustainability and grid stability. This will also help to minimize participant confusion about why the program increases cooling load via pre-cooling prior to events.</p>
	<p>Revise marketing collateral for greater transparency. Clearly describe why Xcel Energy initiates control events, when and how often they occur, and for how long.</p>
	<p>Fine tune marketing messaging to better communicate the value proposition. Respondents require a clear understanding of bill credit amounts, when they will be paid, and for what behavior (i.e., thermostat purchase, AC Rewards enrollment, control event participation).</p>
	<p>Create new program materials that enable customers to access more granular information at their discretion. For example, provide an enhanced FAQs page, details program page (or individual landing pages) with videos, text and infographics.</p>
	<p>Message more on Xcel Energy’s rationale for control events, particularly as it relates to sustainability and grid stability. Nearly all respondents spoke of environmental conservation; many expressed a desire to be responsible and an interest in Xcel Energy’s use of renewables.</p>
	<p>Distinguish between AC Rewards, Saver’s Switch and thermostat vendor algorithms. Ensure AC Rewards marketing emails from thermostat vendors should be focused on AC Rewards rather than combining topics (e.g., eco+). Supplement marketing emails from thermostat vendors with emails directly from Xcel Energy.</p>
	<p>Conduct additional customer segment research. Further examination of under-represented customer segments is warranted to more fully understand what Xcel can do to increase Wi-Fi thermostat penetration and AC Rewards program participation among these segments.</p>
	<p>Leverage EE channels for AC Rewards recruitment. Take advantage of the fact that people may purchase a new thermostat at the time they upgrade their HVAC system or install solar PV by ensuring these customers are acquiring AC Rewards-eligible Wi-Fi thermostats <i>and</i> enrolling in the program.</p>
<p>Consider offering additional forms of “rewards” to attract those who are not enticed by the existing \$25 annual incentive.</p>	

Key Considerations (cont.)

Enrollment, Event Awareness and Experience Considerations

Topic	Findings
Enrollment	Distribute an automatic confirmation email to customers once they have successfully enrolled in the program. This helps build a stronger relationship and rapport with the customers and leaves a positive initial impression.
Event Awareness	Provide more information about how and when participants receive event notifications. Be sure to clearly instruct and remind participants to enable push notifications from their thermostat app to receive advance notifications. Consider offering additional forms of advance notification such as email or text notifications, as possible.
Event Experience	Provide helpful tips about ways to stay cool during events via the program website, as messaging in event notifications, or via periodic emails. Consider sending customers an email after each event or a couple times over the course of the summer letting them know how they performed or how the collective program performed, and how they helped the grid, environment and community by participating. Analyze setpoint and indoor temperature changes during events to confirm events are operating as expected. Consider imposing a temperature threshold (if not currently part of the program design).
Satisfaction and Attrition	Consider providing customers with a referral bonus for referring other Xcel Energy customers to enroll in AC rewards. If possible, avoid calling consecutive day events. Consistently capture and monitor customer reasons for unenrollment in the program over time and ensure this information is carried over when DRMS vendor transitions occur.