

6.3 Public Information and Outreach

6.3.1 Overview

The Trust reaches potential customers through tailored marketing and outreach campaigns across its various programs. These efforts are complemented by the Trust's work to provide general energy information and education through its website, events, and other activities to help consumers considering the installation of energy conservation measures. The Trust seeks to boost energy savings by increasing awareness of the benefits of cost-effective, customer-sited energy resources and operating practices and behaviors, and by providing basic guidance in how to access Efficiency Maine programs. In addition, the Trust occasionally provides training opportunities to promote workforce development relevant to energy conservation.

6.3.2 Objectives

- Increase consumer awareness of cost-effective options for conserving energy, using energy more efficiently, or using more alternative or renewable energy, as well as for financing related projects;
- Create more favorable market conditions for the increased use of energy-efficient products and services;
- Provide general information about the benefits of energy conservation and distributed renewable or alternative energy;
- Provide tools and resources to support decision making related to energy conservation, including best practices, usage tips, calculators, purchasing guides, and vendor locators; and
- Promote access to technical training on best practices in marketing, installing, and maintaining energy upgrades to maximize energy savings, cost-effectiveness, and customer satisfaction.

6.3.3 Market Barriers

- *Lack of information:* Many customers are not familiar with energy conservation choices: public information resources help guide both customers and contractors to efficient options, as well as strategies to conserve energy.
- *Diversity of choices and information:* The number and diversity of products and contractors available in the market can be overwhelming for customers who are planning upgrades or replacing burned-out products. The Trust's website is a trusted, accessible resource for information and can act as support for customers choosing among efficient equipment options and contractors.
- *Lack of familiarity with efficient technologies:* The Trust provides resources for Maine's efficiency contractors to increase their familiarity with efficient technologies and best practices for installation.

6.3.4 Program Design

Addressing Market Barriers

The Trust shares information on energy conservation issues through several channels. The Trust's website is a significant resource for consumers, providing web tools including a lighting savings calculator, vendor locator, heating system comparison tool, and virtual tour of energy-saving household technologies. Additional web resources focus on the installation and operation of high-efficiency equipment; for example, the ductless heat pump web hub shares installation considerations, user tips, case studies, and more.

The Trust attempts to drive interested Maine consumers to the website via targeted digital ads and search engine (or web) optimization strategies. At this time, the website has about 16,000 visitors a month. The Trust has increased its presence on social media and has found Facebook and Twitter to be effective communication channels. While the Trust continues to share information at workshops, fairs, conferences, and trade shows, educational efforts have increasingly focused on digital resources that will reach out directly to potential customers.

To complement these digital resources, the Trust invests in its own customer service representatives, who are available for customers preferring over-the-phone support. The Trust staffs a toll-free number to answer customer questions about efficiency options and incentives. Staffed from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday, this call center receives approximately 1,100 calls a month. When customers visit a store that sells efficient products, they will often see information provided at the point-of-purchase, such as signs and brochures in the water heater aisle at a major retailer or in front of an off-shelf display of LED bulbs. Efficiency contractors frequently educate their customers as they provide their specific services.

The Trust periodically provides trainings and scholarships to overcome market barriers to workforce development. For example, the Trust has offered scholarships for advanced heat pump training to support the contractor community in adopting best practices for installing this relatively new technology. The Trust also has sponsored trainings in commercial building energy management and lighting. Specific trainings for installers will be offered as needed in Triennial Plan IV when new technologies come on the market or as the Trust identifies issues through the program quality assurance reviews.

Measures Promoted

This initiative funds educational resources, workshops, or courses that present and discuss the benefits of energy conservation and the options for pursuing energy conservation or distributed renewable and alternative energy systems. The activities funded range from organizing or participating in workshops and conferences, to creation and delivery of written materials, to developing web tools or digital resources.

Incentives and Financial Considerations

Financial incentives are typically not a feature of the Trust's Public Information and Outreach efforts. However, the Trust has offered scholarships and training discounts to energy conservation contractors and facility managers participating in training programs. The Trust will consider the use of scholarships to promote its objectives where appropriate and as budgets allow during the Triennial Plan IV period.

In prior years, the Trust brought "in-house" the production of several Public Information and Outreach efforts including some web design and production. If in-house resources are insufficient, the Trust may use a competitive bidding or selection process to execute parts of the Trust's Public Information and Outreach efforts.

Marketing and Outreach

The Trust will continue to build on the growing awareness of energy conservation, management of energy costs through energy conservation, and Efficiency Maine programs. The Trust will communicate with various Maine audiences through digital, print, and video case studies; website and digital technologies; social media; seminars, symposia, and forums; workshops and trainings; print and television media; and other vehicles that make the Trust's programs and information accessible to Mainers statewide.

The Trust will evaluate how Public Information and Outreach efforts may support more targeted customer communication needed by other Trust initiatives. For example, a general public information campaign may accompany a Non-Transmission Alternative initiative in a specific geographic area. Similarly, customers who receive a rebate for a programmable thermostat may also be invited to receive energy-saving tips or demand response alerts.

The Trust's marketing efforts are largely focused on educating potential customers about a specific energy-efficient technology or energy-saving solution promoted through a specific program. However, the Trust may from time to time undertake general energy conservation marketing campaigns or educational initiatives the scope of which extends beyond any one of the channel-specific programs.

Quality Assurance/Quality Control

The Trust will consider the following measurement tools when gauging the success of Public Information and Outreach initiatives:

- Web metrics (number of unique visitors, time, bounce rate);
- Social media followers and participation;
- Survey instruments;
- Frequently asked questions and inquiries directed toward the Trust's website and toll-free number;
- Course and workshop participation rates and participant assessments;
- Program participation rates; and
- Frequency of energy conservation and customer success stories in the media.