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New Communications Toolkit Helps Utilities Convey the Value of Smart Grid to Consumers

Smart Grid Consumer Collaborative releases its updated Consumer Value Proposition toolkit

ATLANTA – Feb. 21, 2017 – The Smart Grid Consumer Collaborative today announced the release of its communications toolkit, “Effective Communication with Consumers on the Smart Grid Value Proposition”, a research-based, industry-wide resource for stakeholders to use when conveying smart grid benefits to consumers.

The communications toolkit was compiled following an online survey conducted between March 31 and April 4, 2016 of 502 U.S. adults who regularly make decisions on household electricity usage and payments. The objectives for this survey were to learn more about household electricity decision makers and to understand what statements and language resonate best with them.

The consumer value propositions embodied in the 2016 survey were drawn from previous SGCC research. In particular, the “Smart Grid Economic and Environmental Benefits” (2013) report is a review and synthesis of consumer research on benefits and costs that assist stakeholders in better understanding the economic, environmental, reliability and customer choice benefits of smart grid investments.

Equipped with the knowledge of the benefits of the smart grid based on quantitative research, SGCC identified three consumer value proposition categories by answering three basic questions consumers would have:

- 1) What is smart grid and why should I learn about it?
- 2) What’s in it for me?
- 3) What’s in it for “us”?

SGCC partnered with two national public relations firms, Edelman and Interprose, to organize and present the messaging and the consumer value propositions.

The 2016 survey of American energy consumers revealed several guidelines for utilities and their partners to follow when communicating the consumer value proposition of smart grid. According to the survey analysis, the most effective way to communicate the consumer value proposition is to use specific, positive words and phrases that are familiar and appealing to consumers in relatively brief statements.

Messages should be short, specific and positive. References to “increasing” benefits rather than “reducing” harmful elements are better received by consumers. When communicating concepts,

stakeholders should use short, direct statements composed of plain, familiar language. The survey's findings show that consumers want dependable service, quick power restoration after an outage and to save money. They favor energy efficiency and electricity pricing options.

Finally, in pitches touting the benefits of smart grid, longer statements are less appealing, particularly those that digress to include historical background on the grid or offer analogies with other technologies.

Utilizing these key takeaways, the toolkit provides utilities and their partners with a sample messaging house that conveys the environmental, economic and reliability benefits of the smart grid. Longer-form messages are available in the form of an Elevator Pitch and a Stump Speech for opportunities when stakeholders have one to five minutes to convey the benefits of smart grid.

The toolkit also provides a "Reasons to Love a Smarter Grid" infographic and several banner ads that, like the messaging house, Elevator Pitch and Stump Speech, are free to use for both SGCC members and the energy industry at large.

For more information or to download a copy of the "Effective Communication with Consumers on the Smart Grid Value Proposition" toolkit, please visit www.smartgridcc.org.