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Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative Study Shows Opportunities for Engaging Low-Income Energy Customers

Report outlines steps electricity providers can take to engage this hard-to-reach customer group

ATLANTA – July 19, 2018 – The Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC) today announced the release of a new report, “Spotlight on Low-Income Consumers: Revisiting Their Needs and Wants”, which unveils key characteristics of low-income residential energy customers and provides recommended steps for customer engagement and program design for electricity providers and other industry stakeholders.

Utilizing data from five consumer surveys, the new analysis reveals the attitudes and behaviors of residential energy customers with incomes less than \$50,000 per year, which roughly corresponds with the bottom half of U.S. household incomes. These consumers pay a disproportionately high amount of their income for the energy needed to light, heat and cool their homes – often three times more (relative to their incomes) than the general population.

However, at the same time, these consumers often report that they do not have the financial resources to invest in energy-related technologies and that the programs offered by industry stakeholders do not meet their needs. Further, the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), a critical safety net for supporting low-income consumers, has served less than 20 percent of income-eligible households, signaling an alarming gap between available assistance and those in need.

In addition to building a deeper understanding of lower-income consumers, the “Spotlight on Low-Income Consumers” report delves into how industry stakeholders can better serve their needs by outlining opportunities for program design and customer outreach. These include suggestions for outreach that utilize existing community channels, including neighborhood associations, religious organizations and community centers, and for program design that streamline enrollment and directly address the financial hurdles that low-income consumers face when starting a program.

A summary of the new “Spotlight on Low-Income Consumers” report is available to the public at www.smartenergycc.org, and the complete report is available to members via their online

logins and to the media on request. A [webinar](#) on the findings will be held on Wednesday, July 25 at 1 p.m. (ET) with key members of the research team and Liz Coyle, the executive director of Georgia Watch, a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization.

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