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Jonathan Field

Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative

770-833-6026

jonathan.field@smartenergycc.org

New Report Examines the Energy-Related Needs and Concerns of America’s Small Businesses

A new survey from the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative reveals recommended steps for engaging this overlooked customer segment

ATLANTA – June 6, 2024 – Roughly three-quarters of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in the United States are interested in participating in a demand response program (73 percent) or electrifying currently non-electric business operations (74 percent), according to a new survey from the [Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative](#) (SECC), a nonprofit organization that studies consumer and small business trends in the energy transition.

While many electricity providers have focused teams and account managers that work with the largest commercial and industrial customers to assist them in making the best use of energy resources, the large volume of SMBs in most service areas often precludes this one-on-one approach, leaving them to navigate the complexities of energy options with minimal guidance.

The [“Understanding the SMB Landscape: New Needs and Concerns”](#) report – which is based on a 15-minute online survey of 750 energy decision-makers at businesses with fewer than 500 employees – explores the characteristics, priorities and complexities of small and medium-sized businesses and offers recommended next steps for customer engagement for electricity providers and other industry stakeholders.

Building on SECC’s groundbreaking “Understanding Your SMB Customers: A Segmentation Approach” report from 2018, the new research developed four personas that highlight the key needs and priorities of SMB customers in all their variety and provide insights that can help stakeholders develop effective engagement strategies:

- **Energized Enterprises** have a preference for time-of-use (TOU) rates. They are engaged with their electricity usage and in programs from their providers. These businesses vary widely, reinforcing the need to understand and address unique business priorities.
- **Opportunistic Organizations** are anchored in electricity being a large expense to the business. They participate in energy efficiency programs, but these programs need to fit business needs. Overall, this group offers a great growth opportunity for providers.

- **Small & Satisfied** classify electricity as a small expense for the business. This typically means the business is small all around – fewer employees, smaller spaces and lower bills – and this presents less of a need for energy efficiency measures.
- **Entrenched Businesses** are anchored in being well-established, typically having an account with their providers for over 11 years. Change is difficult for these larger, more established businesses, and participation in programs is the lowest across the personas.

The “Understanding the SMB Landscape: New Needs and Concerns” report, which can be [downloaded here](#) by SECC members and is available to the media on request, also explores current participation in various programs and offers (such as energy audits, new rate plans and energy efficiency rebates), satisfaction levels with electricity providers, barriers to making energy-efficient improvements and more.

Finally, on Tuesday, June 18 at 1 p.m. (ET), we will be hosting a one-hour [Research Brief Webinar](#) on the report’s key findings with SECC’s President & CEO Nathan Shannon and guest speakers from Uplight, Honeywell, Dominion Energy and research partner Maru/Matchbox.

To learn more about the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative, visit www.smartenergycc.org or follow us on [LinkedIn](#). To request information on membership, please complete [this form](#).