



BetterBuildings Low Income Peer Exchange Call

Messaging and Messaging Strategies for Low Income Program Participants

May 12, 2011

- Call logistics and Roll Call
- Discussion Questions:
 - What messaging have you found successful for Low-Income program participants?
 - What strategies are you using to deliver the messages?
- Next steps
 - Future call topics
 - Call frequency, format, etc.

Roll Call - Participants

- City of San Jose, CA
- City of Phoenix, AZ
- Enterprise Cascadia
(Seattle)
- City of Greensboro, NC
- Southeast Michigan
Regional Energy Office
- Oakland-Livingston Human
Service Agency, MI

What messaging have you found successful for Low-Income program participants? What strategies are you using to deliver the messages?



Seattle - launched

- The program started with energy efficiency research and coupled that information with local knowledge.
- Identified the problem statement and crafted the message around the idea that there is an “affordable and easy solution to fix it”.
- Outreach strategies include local media, some direct mail, canvassing, and participating in local neighborhood events.
 - Canvassing included translators for multiple languages
 - Future efforts will include a community incentive of \$50 to the community group if they bring people to events
- Outreach was constrained by an inability to conduct direct mail to the target audience (too small). They were hesitant to do a large scale mailing because it may have reached a broader population than those that are eligible for the program.
- There was a three month cycle to check on efficacy of outreach and improve on the process.
- The program has received 100 applicants to date through community groups and community leaders. Households that have completed audits but have not completed the process continue to be targeted in outreach efforts.
- Working on a CRM and the program will probably buy data to be able to more closely target efforts
 - Purchased data will also help identify those that have reached out or mentioned an interest in energy efficiency.

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San Jose - launched

- The program already has connections to the target community so there is not a lot of emphasis on trying to establish the program “brand”.
- Messaging emphasis is on the comfort/health/safety of households. This decision was based on existing energy use data and the fact that total dollars saved is not a quantifiable figure.
- Outreach methods focused on grassroots tactics including using the local schools to distribute materials to parents (regular information sent home with students that requires a parent signature) and passing out flyers outside of the schools during pick-up times.
- Outreach constraints include lack of internet use within the community
- The program partnered closely with PG&E as the area is also eligible for their energy efficiency package.
- Held their kick-off event at a local Boys and Girls Club and included a free lunch (literally) as an incentive.
 - The goal of the event is that participants will meet with and sign up with the staff and contractors who would actually do the audit and work.
 - Participants have the opportunity to meet with an energy tracker to help inform how their behavior changes can help with energy efficiency.
 - The program plans on 200-300 participating in these types of events.

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Phoenix – about to launch

- The program can use the local weatherization program as a starting point – participants are referred to the BB program.
- Have the ability to offer a 60% conditional grant and homeowners are required to put up the other 40% (for single-family detached housing).
- The program is currently conducting outreach to Spanish speaking constituents via local Spanish media (both print and radio). This focus came from lessons learned in previous outreach efforts.
- Other outreach efforts focus on building a trust relationship with the community via door to door canvassing with bilingual workers and leaving self-addressed post cards to get more information.
- Outreach constraints include families that are uncomfortable going to the internet to learn more about the program and households that do not want staff coming to their door.
- Messaging is also focusing on health, safety, and comfort so that the program is not promising cost savings that do not actually materialize.

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SE Lower Michigan - launched

- The program was designed to target Detroit neighborhoods which is too small of a scale to use local media (they are interested in issues with a broader reach).
- Outreach strategies include using local neighborhood programs (e.g., block captains) and already established newsletters.
 - The program has also developed flyers, brochures, and a Facebook page to distribute via neighborhood groups.
- Participation is averaging at about 25% but varies by neighborhood.
 - The first neighborhood did not have an established neighborhood program and had to depend on word of mouth/canvassing.
 - The second neighborhood had an established block captain program with weekly meetings. Program staff participated in these meetings and held a local kick-off event.
- Meetings were held in the evenings and at lunch to reach more people. Found that the most effective outreach strategy was really word of mouth and via the schools (similar to San Jose).
- Messaging focused on lowering energy bills and comfort and safety (emphasis on comfort).
- The Detroit Weatherization Program was conducted in two suburbs and the most effective mailing strategy was using hand addressed letters.

What messaging have you found successful for Low-Income program participants? What strategies are you using to deliver the messages?



Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL)

- Very early in the process of moderate income communities research.
- Have found that within low to moderate income communities there are different “trusted messagers” than in higher income communities.
- Cost is a barrier for moderate income families and they don’t qualify for weatherization funding. This income bracket has also been hit hard by declines in property values and they are looking for bigger financial buffers.
 - This is a significant challenge to motivate households without some type of cost neutrality.
- Looking to expand on “how do you frame efficiency” and integrate it into the normal/rational decisions of maintaining your home?
 - One innovative method is to have the same people delivering property improvements talk about this program, e.g., partnering with places like big-box home improvement stores. The Lead abatement program does have experience with these types of partnerships.
- BB grantees are having good experiences working with existing/established community organizations. A well organized/engaged community (with established groups and infrastructure) is more likely to have greater program participation.

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Question: How can you answer the question, “How much money can I save”? If you can’t answer the question what is the messaging used?

- In general you can say, on average they are providing X cost savings, however the variance is HIGH by region and even by household.
- Many of these households are already limiting their energy use due to budget. So even if their costs go down there may not be an overall savings because they will actually start to use their utilities (when they were prevented from doing so before).
- Some national level contractors offer performance guarantees.
- Portland has been able to make statements based on one year of data.
- Another messaging approach is to frame efficiency upgrades as a part of regularly expected maintenance on your home
- There are loans out there that can cover some of the prep work (SEA)
- This question may get easier to answer in the future as more data are collected.

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Available Data

- ID Analytics, Lexis Nexis, L2C (products for lenders specifically)
- For many MSAs/Cities – there is specific service data on the type of owner upgrades (Phoenix, Detroit (very recent data), Seattle). By income level/area/census tract you can get a sense of the HVAC/Upgrades to homes
 - American Housing Survey 2009 - <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/ahs/ahs.html>
 - Other Census data sets
 - HUD data sets
- There is a pilot in Vermont where auditors provide a pre- and post-upgrade analysis and homeowners do their own improvements. Unsure if there are other examples of ptrams working directly with home improvement retailers

Outreach Materials Available

The following materials will be posted on the BB Google Site as soon as they are available:

- Seattle Program: PDF forms of current documents but the City is in the process of hiring a marketing consultant so documentation language should be considered under development.
 - PDFs of the decals and yard signs for program participants
- San Jose: PDF of the flyer used with schools (will be available in the near future)
- Michigan: Flyers, brochures, and a link to their Facebook page

Future Topics:

- Financing Strategies for Low-Income Participants
- How do you identify metrics and gather feedback on the efficacy of outreach strategies?
 - How does that tie into existing data sets that allow targeted marketing?