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General Principles on Energy Efficiency Education

**Prepared for the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission by Maureen Mulligan
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- The difference between education and information should be clear and programs should include both.
- Education should be objective and should not endorse any specific product brands but should talk specifically about ways to save energy in order to be useful.
- “Laundry lists” designed to educate are rarely effective. It is much better to provide information about the top energy efficiency actions for homes and then a separate one for small businesses.
- General public education should tie directly to actions that can most easily be taken by the largest number of consumers.
- A statewide approach is necessary and should use objective content providers to deliver the messages. In other words, the utilities should not be permitted to run separate and distinct education programs particularly without the benefit of a centralized, consistent message.
- Have specific actions you want people to take and tell them specifically what the benefits are of taking those actions.
- Don’t be afraid of talking about the environmental benefits of cutting energy consumption. People respond to different motivators and improving the environment is a strong motivator.
- Take steps to educate children in schools and use incentives for the parents to get involved.
- Consumers will respond best if there are both financial incentives *and* a community goal at stake. Once incentives are available, the basis for your program is established and the chances of success are greatly increased.
- Brand Pennsylvania’s energy efficiency and conservation program with a campaign theme and logo.
- Track progress toward achieving conservation goals in a public way. Make it part of the campaign.
- Develop a creative “launch” event at which you will announce clear goals and establish clear time tables to reach milestones.
- Hire public relations consultants or other third party to coordinate the overall campaign.
- Don’t allow uncoordinated educational efforts and side goals to defuse the central goals and make those goals clear and measurable.
- Measure results periodically and make “mid-course” corrections as needed.
- Even though messages need to be branded and consistent, it is important to tailor approaches to delivery the conservation messages to diverse audiences.

- Develop a “bank” of speakers you can draw upon to give statements etc. These people should represent various public interests and should be broad based and educated on the issues.
- Advisory boards can be useful.
- Any education program should recognize that the benefits are directly and honestly stated. For example, real time metering is only as effective as people’s willingness to accept the technology and actively manage their energy usage. Real time pricing is only beneficial when overall electricity consumption is “permanently” reduced.
- Consumers need to understand the terminology and the PUC should define terms so that there is consistency in the marketplace. For example, the difference between conservation and energy efficiency is a prime example where there is confusion.
- A consistent and reliable funding stream should be dedicated to any initiatives developed by the Commission or set through legislation. One method of funding these programs is a portion of any approved rate increases approved by the Commission should earmark a percent of that increase to support education. This should become common practice in all rate cases, no matter what utility type.
- Use proper survey methodology to determine what messages consumers will respond to, and develop messages that reflect that information.
- Provide milestone successful (and unsuccessful) results on a regular basis via the website.
- Borrow heavily from what has already been proven to work. Consult with and hire people who have been able to deliver successful programs and education and follow their advice.
- It is critical that education is not simply viewed as delivering rote messages to large and diverse audience. People and entities need to be educated as to the *right* actions to take and be provided with the technical knowledge to implement changes.
- Grassroots organizations have the credibility and knowledge of local communities and should be engaged to deliver both programs and education.
- Government education programs should lead by example and set reduction goals that meet or exceed that of the general population and share the results.
- Consider holding a non-government forum like they did in Ontario to gain a better understanding of the barriers to good conservation and energy efficiency. Work to reduce those barriers.

In conclusion, we need to take a page from the Ontario Education Program and create a “culture of conservation” in Pennsylvania. The Commission needs to define specific goals and actions that can lead to an efficient and conscientious use of energy that can be sustained over time.