

Duquesne Light Company

Smart Comfort Program

Duquesne Light Company's Smart Comfort program is an exciting low-income program model for significantly reducing participants' bills and minimizing bill arrearages. The program's evolution and results are indicative of the increasing sophistication of Duquesne staff's delivery of energy services. Smart Comfort provides rich lessons for utilities facing increasing competition and thus keen on devising valuable wrap-around services using customized approaches for maximum customer benefit at low cost.

When Duquesne began Smart Comfort in 1988 the program was driven by prescriptive measures intended to cut electricity use in homes with electric space and/or water heating. Thanks to the vision of its early architect, Joe Flynn, and the program's primary driver, Barry Kukovich, the program was significantly redesigned to encompass a comprehensive custom approach that has cost effectively delivered impressive levels of savings. In the most recent program year Duquesne projected savings of up to 40% for each participating home's total electricity consumption at a cost of saved energy less than 3¢/kWh. Smart Comfort was launched to fulfill the low-income program mandate established for investor-owned utilities by the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission. The program initially provided weatherization services for electric heating customers through the "Heating approach." After a few years, Duquesne Light staff recognized that because customers did not use electric resistance heating, the program was targeting a relatively small subset of its low-income customers who live primarily in multifamily apartment buildings. Thus the Heating approach was replaced by the "End-Use approach," a broader orientation that allowed Duquesne to provide services to many more low-income customers.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of Smart Comfort is the role played by its Energy Managers. These program staff have been given license to "eek out" energy savings in a host of creative ways from program participants. By empowering Energy Managers to provide one-stop comprehensive services for low-income customers, Duquesne hit upon a winning formula. Highly motivated Energy Managers provide participants with a number of no-cost services, increasing their awareness of their energy use, providing tips on reducing their bills, installing technologies such as compact fluorescent lamps on the spot, and even arranging for waterbed and refrigerator replacements. Through this customized, hands-on approach coordinated with the three local gas utilities, Duquesne has at once served its customers most in need of bill relief while providing the utility with a return on its program investment, stemming bill arrearages through energy efficiency improvements.

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DUQUESNE LIGHT COMPANY Smart Comfort Program

Sector: *Low-income residential*

Measures: *Energy efficiency measures for any and all end-uses including: lightbulb replacement, refrigerator and appliance replacement, waterbed replacement, water heater wraps, low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators, weatherization*

Mechanism *Walk-through audits identify needed measures and provide education to residents; all installations and services are provided free to customers*

History: *Launched in 1988; End-Use approach piloted in 1992*

1994 PROJECTED PROGRAM DATA

Energy savings: 2,171 MWh

Lifecycle energy savings: 32,564 MWh

Nominal cost: \$717,024

Levelized cost: \$629,685

The Results Center produced 126 profiles of the most successful energy efficiency and renewable energy programs in the United States and around the world in the early and mid 1990s. With the support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ted Flanigan directed a research team at Colorado-based IRT Environment to produce and distribute these exceptional examples. Thanks to strong demand for solid case studies, The Results Center was supported by dozens of major utilities and energy associations worldwide. Today, The Results Center is managed again by Ted Flanigan, now at California-based EcoMotion Incorporated, a firm focused on strategic consulting, information dissemination, program design, outreach services, and aggressive implementation. To nominate highly successful programs, contact: The Results Center, c/o EcoMotion, 15375 Barranca Parkway, F-104, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 450-7155, or TFlanigan@EcoMotion.us