

# AUSTIN ENERGY: EXPANDING EQUITABLE CLEAN ENERGY ACCESS

Prior to New Bayou | Austin Energy, 2017-2022



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Led multi-year initiative to increase public awareness of clean energy programs, expand access to income-limited and underserved markets, and improve service delivery across multiple touchpoints. Implemented comprehensive strategy addressing external education, internal capacity-building, industry partnerships, and process optimization, resulting in reduced friction points, higher customer satisfaction rates, and broader program engagement across Austin's diverse communities.

## CHALLENGE

Austin Energy's clean energy programs faced three critical barriers to adoption: customers were unaware of program offerings, lacked technical knowledge to understand potential benefits, and experienced poor service quality that discouraged participation. These combined factors prevented equitable access, particularly in low-income and underserved communities, threatening the utility's ability to meet clean energy goals established by City Council.

## APPROACH

### Community Education & Outreach:

- Designed and delivered 25+ in-person training events across Austin neighborhoods, targeting income-limited and underserved markets with culturally responsive, accessible content
- Created "Solar 101" digital course covering solar technology, bid comparison, financing options, and holistic energy savings approaches
- Presented regularly to Resource Management Commission, elected officials, and community groups to align solar initiatives with public expectations

## APPROACH (CONT.)

### Built Internal Capacity & Service Quality:

- Trained frontline customer service staff on clean energy programs through educational sessions and knowledge assessments
- Implemented team-based incentive program rewarding high quiz performance and low transfer rates to specialists
- Gamified learning through inter-team competition, building confidence and reducing reliance on subject matter experts

### Industry Partnership Building:

- Facilitated monthly training sessions for solar contractors on rebate guidelines, electrical code updates, interconnection procedures, and consumer protection protocols
- Built partnerships with organizations like Rocky Mountain Institute to explore equitable solar penetration strategies

### Process Optimization:

- Streamlined rebate processing to reduce administrative overhead and improve customer experience



## OUTCOMES

- Increased accessibility across customer segments through targeted education and outreach
- Reduced call transfers for clean energy customers, improving first-call resolution and customer satisfaction
- Broader program engagement as knowledge barriers were reduced and service quality improved
- Strengthened industry partnerships that improved program quality and consumer protection
- Enhanced community trust through consistent, transparent stakeholder engagement
- Distributed program expertise across organization, reducing bottlenecks and building institutional knowledge

## WHAT THIS DEMONSTRATES

This work demonstrates New Bayou's multi-level systems change approach: community education, staff capacity-building, industry partnerships, and process optimization. Meeting people where they are, translating complex information into actionable knowledge, and removing participation barriers creates measurable improvements. Comprehensive intervention at multiple levels produces better outcomes than single-point solutions.



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