




October 27 - 28
2020 | **THE ACADEMY**
Customer Connections
Virtual Conference



Tuesday, October 27

(All times Eastern)

11 a.m. – Noon Opening General Session 
 10 – 11 a.m. CT / 9 – 10 a.m. MT / 8 – 9 a.m. PT








Welcome
 Connie Ford, Director of Member Services, Missouri Public Utility Alliance,
 and Chair, APPA Customer Connections Section

The State of Public Power
 Joy Ditto, President & CEO, American Public Power Association

As we reflect on 80 years of being connected as a public power community, we also reflect on how we have endured the recent pandemic and other crises throughout our history. Get the latest update on how APPA is working to protect the interests of public power in Washington, D.C., and helping our members to navigate an increasingly complex industry.

Honoring our Colleagues
 Excellence in Public Power Communications Videos
 View the innovative, informative and inspiring videos being honored with this year's Excellence in Public Power Communications Awards.


Noon – 12:15 p.m. Break
 11 – 11:15 a.m. CT / 10 – 10:15 a.m. MT / 9 – 9:15 a.m. PT

Key to Sessions		
 Customer Service	 Energy Services	 Key Accounts
 Public Communications	 Industry Spotlight	
 General Session	 Networking	


12:15 – 1:15 p.m.

Breakout Sessions


11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. CT / 10:15 – 11:15 a.m. MT / 9:15 – 10:15 a.m. PT

1. **Measuring Customer Call Center Success** 


Call centers are vital to your customer service operations. Yet effectively measuring productivity and gauging call quality can be difficult, especially if your CSRs are working remotely. Review which metrics and key performance indicators offer a meaningful measure of your call center. Discover how you can use the Erlang methodology to optimize your staffing levels. Discuss tools and strategies to evaluate and measure CSR performance.

 - Krista Boston, Director of Customer Relations, Rochester Public Utilities, Minnesota
 - Deanna Sparks, Customer Operations Lead Supervisor, Lansing Board of Water & Light, Michigan
2. **Distributed Generation: Whose Load Is It, Anyway?** 

As distributed energy resources become more ubiquitous, the question of who manages this increased load becomes more pressing. Learn how different utilities are successfully managing the increase in small scale generation in their communities.

 - Leland Keller, Energy Services Engineer, Fort Collins Utilities, Colorado
 - Kurt Stogdill, Manager, Green Building & Sustainability, Austin Energy, Texas
3. **Upgrading Your Key Accounts Program: A Guide for Next Level Service** 

It's critical that a utility support a thriving business community with the highest level of service. Established key accounts program must be continually managed and to evolve with a dynamic community. Get insights into "next level" best practices straight from APPA's new Advanced Key Accounts Field Manual, including the five elements of key accounts mastery, how to update an obsolete business plan to reflect community values and needs, and leveraging the Customer Action Plan for continuous follow up.

 - Erick Rheam, President, Team Rheam Productions
4. **Public Communications Roundtable Discussion** 

Gather with your fellow public communicators to discuss the hot-button issues and pressing challenges in utility communications.

1:15 – 1:45 p.m.





Break

12:15 – 12:45 p.m. CT / 11:15 – 11:45 a.m. MT / 10:15 – 10:45 a.m. PT

1:45 – 2:45 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

12:45 – 1:45 p.m. CT / 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. MT / 10:45 – 11:45 a.m. PT

1. Getting Value from Customer Research 
Conventional wisdom says to factor in customer opinion data when making decisions about utility services. Learn what counts as customer research, how valuable it can be, and how you can scale it to fit your utility. Get tips for benchmarking your utility's performance and review national trends and data on public power programs, electric vehicles, smart home devices, AMI, mobile device usage, solar energy, and more.
 - Michael Vigeant, CEO, Great Blue Research
2. Using Big Data to Design Customer-Focused Programs 
Successful demand-side management programs are built on what customers want. Learn how to let data drive your DSM program design and target the right customers. Discover how to meld data from different sources to make informed decisions on how customers could benefit most from low-income programs.
 - Josh Mitchell, Energy Advisor, Chelan County PUD, Washington
 - Hassan Shaban, Principal, Energy and Data, Empower Dataworks
3. Key Accounts Roundtable: Impacts of COVID-19 
Join fellow attendees for a roundtable discussion on how your utility and its large customers are managing the economic and other impacts of COVID-19. Discuss how the pandemic has shifted who you expect to be your key accounts in the future; how your peers are helping customers in the recovery; and how key account managers can best assist their customers and the utility.
4. Communicating with Customers about Electric Vehicles 
Whether your utility is taking a "build it and they will come" approach to EV infrastructure or scrambling to keep up with customer demand, it is critical that you communicate any plans and offerings to your customers. Learn what information customers are seeking about EV charging and what they expect their utility to know.
 - Jeffrey Beeson, Manager of Marketing, Evergy
 - Dru Larson, Energy and Environmental Advisor, Rochester Public Utility, Minnesota

2:45 – 3 p.m.





Break


1:45 – 2 p.m. CT / 12:45 – 1 p.m. MT / 11:45 a.m. – Noon PT

3 – 4 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

2 – 3 p.m. CT / 1 – 2 p.m. MT / Noon – 1 p.m. PT

1. **Group Therapy: Customer Service and the Pandemic** 
The COVID-19 pandemic has far-reaching implications for public power utilities. Join your fellow customer service professionals to share how your utility responded to the pandemic – what worked, what didn't, and how you are moving forward. Be prepared to discuss teleworking and remote customer service operations; payment arrangements, the long-term effects of disconnect moratoriums and waived fees, and other ways the pandemic has impacted customer service operations.
2. **Mining Your AMI Data for Energy Planning and Customer Service** 
Learn about updates Algona Municipal Utilities, in collaboration with Iowa State University, made to a MATLAB-based tool that allows even small utilities to mine customer AMI data. With a new machine learning element, utilities can use the tool to better define customer groups and load patterns to analyze or develop new rate definitions or reclassify customers.
 - Anne Kimber, Director, Electric Power Research Center, Iowa State University
 - Dr. Zhaoyu Wang, Assistant Professor, Iowa State University
3. **Power Out, Key Account Communication On** 
While ongoing communication with your key accounts is necessary, an outage or service disruption requires enhanced communication. Learn what communication processes and protocols public power utilities have in place in the event of an outage. Discuss when and how to notify customers, communication methods and technologies, priority of notification, and customer expectations.
 - Crystal Quicksall, Executive Assistant – Key Accounts, Lawrenceburg Municipal Utilities, Indiana
 - Grant Roberson, Key Accounts Manager, Wilson Energy, North Carolina
4. **Success Stories: Public Power Newsletters** 
Public power utilities have a unique connection to the communities they serve. Explore how utilities are strategically leveraging customer newsletters to strengthen this connection, promote programs, and deliver key messages.
 - Debbie Dineen, Customer Service Supervisor, Beaches Energy Service, Florida
 - Melissa Krause, Chief Communications and Strategy Officer, New Braunfels Utilities, Texas
 - Fran Losito, Project Manager & Strategist, The Shepherd Agency

5. How Utilities are Transforming Utility Bills to Optimize Customer Experience 

As a regular (and sometimes only) touchpoint with customers, bills are an essential strategic asset for your utility. Optimizing bill performance offers compelling business results, including on-time payments, reduced disconnects, higher adoption of e-billing offerings, and better customer engagement. Review bill optimization tips and real-life examples that will help you achieve these benefits, even if you are challenged with limited budgets and a myriad of disconnected legacy systems that house customer data.

- John Hoggard, Principal, Global Utilities, Quadiant
- Brian Williams, Project Manager, Strategic Solutions LLC
- George Williams, Principal, Strategic Solutions LLC

4 – 4:30 p.m.

Break

3 – 3:30 p.m. CT / 2 – 2:30 p.m. MT / 1 – 1:30 p.m. PT

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. CT / 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. MT / 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. PT


1. Making it Easier for Customers to Pay 

When we find new ways to help customers pay their utility bill, everybody wins. Discover how utilities are making bill payment easier, from installing kiosks and pay anywhere locations to adding skills to smart speakers ("Alexa, pay my utility bill").

- Erin Romo, Director, Solutions and Services, Utilitex

2. Energy Services Roundtable: Experiences and Solutions from COVID-19 

See old friends and meet new ones as you reflect on how you kept your utility going through COVID-19, and the operational solutions that have endured. Share tools that are helping you keep running business as usual or strategies for keeping customers focused on demand side management.

3. Demand Response: Who Wants What, and Why 

From manual to automated programs, learn different demand response strategies and explore the various motivations, experiences, and challenges that customers, utilities and technology providers report. Discuss how automated demand response could take your utility to the next level.

- John Borges, Program Manager, PowerDirect, SMUD, Sacramento, California
- Jason Grey, Utilities Director, Danville Utilities, Virginia

- Jason Thigpen, Manager, System Operations, Electricities of North Carolina


4. Generational Communications: Do You Know Who You're Dealing With?



With ever-changing customer bases, public power utilities are challenged to identify who their customers are and where they are going for their information. Get insight into various strategies, tactics and platforms you can leverage to message to customers from different generations.

- Crystal Johnson, Account Advisor, Key Accounts Section, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, California
- Nathan Shannon, Deputy Director, Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Online Networking: A Sandwich Masterclass with a Pro 
4:30 – 5:30 p.m. CT / 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. MT / 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. PT

Immerse yourself in the world of sandwiches as you cook, eat, photograph and discuss everything there is to know about an iconic New York sandwich, with the help of a professional sandwich guide!

Whether you're learning to cook for the first time, or you're a master chef, join your colleagues and fellow sandwich fans as we "cook" a delicious New York sandwich and master the art of sandwich photography to make your Instagram page "drool-worthy." Across the hour, you will be introduced to the fascinating history of the sandwich (and to the famous NY deli whose sandwich we will recreate), and also debate the deep philosophical question "what is a sandwich?".

A list of ingredients/materials will be emailed to attendees in advance so you can follow along from your home or office.

Wednesday, October 28

10 – 11 a.m.

Online Networking

9 – 10 a.m. CT / 8 – 9 a.m. MT / 7 – 8 a.m. PT

1. Community Connections, Coffee & Conversation 
Join your peers for coffee and conversation as you reconnect with old friends, meet new people and network with other public power professionals.
2. Women in Public Power Hour 
Our ever-popular networking event for women working in public power takes on a new format this year. Join your peers for morning conversation to celebrate successes and share challenges.

11 – 11:30 a.m.

General Session

10 – 10:30 a.m. CT / 9 – 9:30 a.m. MT / 8 – 8:30 a.m. PT

Welcome

Patrice Townsend, Director, Utility Services Department, Kansas City Board of Public Utilities, and Vice Chair, APPA Customer Connections Section

Honoring our Colleagues

Smart Energy Providers

Join us to honor the utilities receiving the American Public Power Association's Smart Energy Provider best practices designation, which recognizes successful initiatives in energy efficiency and sustainability.

Chair's Address

Jolene Thompson, President & CEO, American Municipal Power, Inc., Columbus, Ohio; and Chair, American Public Power Association

Well before APPA was founded, public power utilities set a strong foundation in their communities that allowed for resilience and innovation. Then as now, engaging with our communities and connecting with our customers reminds them of the value of community ownership.


11:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Break


10:30 – 10:45 a.m. CT / 9:30 – 9:45 a.m. MT / 8:30 – 8:45 a.m. PT

11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Breakout Sessions


10:45 – 11:45 a.m. CT / 9:45 – 10:45 a.m. MT / 8:45 – 9:45 a.m. PT

1. A Walk in Your Customer's Shoes 


Experience your utility the way your customers do with customer journey mapping. Learn how the journey mapping process helps you identify pain points and opportunities to improve the customer experience. Discover tools, techniques, and best practices you can use to identify and analyze every experience your customers have with your utility.

 - Laurel Gerdine, Senior Director, Program Marketing & Outreach, Franklin Energy
2. Responding to Corporate Sustainability Goals 

Businesses and corporations large and small are increasingly setting stringent corporate sustainability goals, including commitments to use 100% renewable energy, conserve water, and increase energy efficiency. Hear how utilities are working with large customers to meet their sustainability goals, and how utilities are implementing programs to provide the services that customers require. Discuss how these programs can affect utility operations.

 - Tom Damon, Manager, Large Customer Accounts, Orlando Utilities Commission, Florida
 - Lindsey Kalkbrenner, Director, Center for Sustainability, Santa Clara University
 - Mary Medeiros McEnroe, Public Benefits Program Manager, Silicon Valley Power, California
3. Walking the Talk: Communicating with Customers about Sustainability 

Public power utilities are often challenged to articulate their sustainability, but what does that really mean? Learn from utilities that are developing messaging around their integrated resource planning process and highlighting internal sustainability practices to keep customers in the know.

 - Jennifer Green, Director of Sustainability and Workforce Development, Burlington Electric Department, Vermont
 - Steve Roalstad, Communications & Marketing Manager, Platte River Power Authority, Fort Collins, Colorado
4. Experiences, Tools, and Outcomes During Times of Crisis 

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted utilities and their customers nationwide, many of whom are still faced with concerns about finances, higher energy consumption, and access to support services. Utilities are using this crisis to position themselves as trusted advisors, not only ensure they lights stay on, but to showcase support for local communities. Review data, case studies, and solutions that are helping utilities and customers cope during these times of crisis.

Discover actionable steps and messaging strategies you can take to help your customers and proactively plan and participate in this new realm of customer engagement.

- Stephanie Knight, Senior Account Manager, Apogee Interactive

12:45 – 1:15 p.m.




Break


11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. CT / 10:45 – 11:15 a.m. MT / 9:45 – 10:15 a.m. PT

1:15 – 2:15 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

12:15 – 1:15 p.m. CT / 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. MT / 10:15 – 11:15 a.m. PT

1. AMI: Now What? 
Wherever you are in the AMI journey – whether you're just getting your feet wet, starting to get your sea legs, or an experienced AMI voyager, learn how to get the most out of your AMI implementation. Review what to expect as you enter your next phase, how to prepare, what you can look forward to, and the positive effects AMI can have on your customer service.
 - James Douglas, President, Util-Assist
 - Bob Perialas, Customer Service Manager, Lansing Board of Water & Light, Michigan
2. Financing Energy Efficiency Programs 
Learn about successful financing options and programs to help keep your customers focused on energy efficiency. Review the details and development process of different financing programs and how each fits into its city's broader energy plans.
 - Geneva Redding, Supervisor, Customer Operations, City of Tallahassee Utilities, Florida
 - Anne Saliers, Conservation Programs Manager, Holland Board of Public Works, Michigan
3. Battery Storage and Your Key Accounts 
As large customers explore installing battery storage systems, utilities should be exploring how such a move would impact rate structures and beyond. Learn how utilities are managing these changes and what they are doing to help customers to explore and embrace energy storage.
 - Andrew Higgins, Senior Director of Product Development, CPS Energy, San Antonio, Texas
 - Andrew Reger, Executive Consultant, NewGen Strategies & Solutions, LLC

4. **Rewriting the Crisis Playbook: COVID-19 Lessons Learned** 
The COVID-19 pandemic affected nearly every aspect of life. Hear from public power communicators who weathered the storm and came out stronger on the other side.
 - Alison Faris, Director of Communications & Marketing, City of Tallahassee, Florida
 - Adrienne Lotto, Senior Director, Energy Security & Resilience Programs, New York Power Authority

2:15 – 2:30 p.m.





Break

1:15 – 1:30 p.m. CT / 12:15 – 12:30 p.m. MT / 11:15 – 11:30 a.m. PT

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. CT / 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. MT / 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. PT

1. **Customer Service Grab Bag** 
Ask your burning questions at this roundtable discussion and tackle your most pressing issues in a room full of customer service experts. Share ideas, get feedback, and brainstorm new solutions. Take away practical solutions from peers who've walked the path before you.
2. **How Much is an EV Worth?** 
Electric vehicles have the potential to increase utility revenue and reduce carbon dioxide emissions – a technology rather unique for utility demand-side management programs. Learn how different utilities value EVs, what incentives they provide, and how they have managed any increased load.
 - Kristin Dupre, Program Manager, Energy New England, LLC
 - Denver Hinds, Project Manager, SMUD, Sacramento, California
 - Mark Scribner, Program Manager, Electric Vehicles, Energy New England, LLC
3. **Key Accounts Jeopardy: What Is Back to Basics?** 
Come test your knowledge of essential facts for key accounts team members. In true Jeopardy! fashion, answer questions in categories that remind you of the basics in understanding customers and developing strategies for better services. Download the Kahoot! app in App Store (Apple) or Google Play (Android) ahead of time so you are ready to play. Participate to learn, and for fun AND prizes!
4. **Public Communications Rapid-fire Roundtable** 
Why struggle alone with your challenges? Join your fellow communicators for a rapid-fire brainstorming session – because two (or more) heads are better than one! Submit topics and questions in advance so you can crowdsource solutions and offer up your own ideas.

3:30 – 4 p.m.

Break

2:30 – 3 p.m. CT / 1:30 – 2 p.m. MT / 12:30 – 1 p.m. PT

4 – 5:15 p.m.

Closing General Session 

3 – 4:15 p.m. CT / 2 – 3:15 p.m. MT / 1 – 2:15 p.m. PT

Honoring Our Colleagues

Excellence in Public Power Communications and Recognition of Officers

Celebrate the winners of the Excellence in Public Power Communications Awards in the Print/Digital and Social Media/Web categories, and find out the winner of the Audience Choice video award. Recognize the officers who helped plan and deliver this conference.

Datashock: Artificial Intelligence, Connectedness, and Ready for the Big Data Future

As we hurtle toward a society and economy powered by artificial intelligence and big data, are we in for shock? Are AI, smart algorithms, big data, and the Internet of Things really taking over? See how increasingly trackable human behavior — from financial transactions to social interactions — could change the way we live, work, and do business. Explore whether AI can help the energy industry make better decisions and improve efficiencies. Learn how to recognize disruptive AI, assess its potential, and prepare for a data- and algorithm-driven future.

Jennifer Golbeck is an associate professor at the University of Maryland. Her work focuses on how to enhance the way that people interact with their information online. Her research explores the implications of our choices and actions with the internet tools we use daily.