



DTE Energy®

DEAF COMMUNITY OUTREACH PILOT & COMMERCIALIZATION



This project was made successful from the collaboration of the following teams:



- HOLD SPACE FOR
INDRODUCTION
VIDEO

DISCOVERY PROCESS

Alliance for Deaf Services (ADS) approached DTE Energy to discuss improvements to a direct installation Energy Efficiency (EE) program.



Alliance for Deaf Services' Mission: We promote communication access and opportunities for persons who have hearing loss/deafness. We are dedicated to breaking down barriers by harnessing technological advancements.

Early meetings with ADS explained gaps in our program offerings:

- American Sign Language (ASL) is a different language than English. Printed copy does not necessarily translate.
- The Deaf community is very tight knit. Utilizing a community interpreter has the potential to cause a customer embarrassment surrounding sensitive topics.
- A lack of communication between a service professional and a Deaf customer has the potential to make the customer uncomfortable in their own home.
- Not directly engaging the Deaf community is resulting in little to no participation with DTE's EE programs.

BEGINNING PROGRAM STATE

- DTE currently had no specific method of field capable outreach to the Deaf Community beyond using community interpreters.
- Some videos do have script but it do not fully address the language gap between ASL and English.
- DTE's is currently experiencing low to no engagement or participation from the Deaf community in our EE programs.
- Michigan has roughly 100,000 people who communicate exclusively using American Sign Language (ASL).



The current state needed to be changed to better service our customers. Video Remote Interpretation bridges the gap in communication with our Deaf customers through cost effective, private and on demand access to qualified interpreters.

Every situation, customer, and market segment may be different, but Design Thinking can help ensure successful program implementation.



DEVELOPING THE OFFERING



FIELD CREW TRAINING




STAGE 1: FIELD TEST & APPLIED LEARNINGS

SUCCESSFUL FIELD TEST:

The process of conducting a HEC for a Deaf customer was tested from sign up to completion of the HEC visit.

LEARNINGS:

- Dedicated tablets with mobile wireless connectivity should be used to mitigate against service interruption.
- Direct communication is paramount whether or not someone else offers to or can interpret within a customer's home.
- Backup videos needed to be developed for use in extremely rural areas or areas where WiFi and data are unavailable.
- In a service industry understanding customer voice is of paramount importance when designing a product, program or outreach event.



SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!
Please provide your contact information.

Name:	
Address:	
City:	ZIP Code:
Email:	
Telephone:	Cell Phone:
Would you like to receive an appointment reminder via text?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you need a Video Remote Interpreter (VRI)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
What day and time is best for us to visit your home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Monday <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday <input type="checkbox"/> Friday <input type="checkbox"/> 8 a.m. - Noon <input type="checkbox"/> 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
For Administrative Use Only:	
Event Date:	
Event Location:	
Date Contacted:	Date Scheduled:

CREATING BRAND LOYALTY

- First impressions are instrumental for a company to demonstrate passion behind their commitment to build a customer relationship.
- Small, but significant changes such as eliminating the third party liaison greatly enhance customer inclusiveness.
- Accessible means to communicate affect customer service experience and act to build trustworthiness and brand loyalty.

EMPOWERING RESULTS

- Having VRI available empowers customers who are Deaf to become aware of their energy consumption and become an energy friendly home owner.



STAGE 2: SMALL SCALE TESTING FOR GAPS

Social Media & Word of Mouth Marketing:

Small scale marketing targeted 50 households prior to full commercialization in order to improve the offering and mitigate against any customer dissatisfaction that may have been overlooked

Learnings:

- Appointment windows needed to be reduced from 4 hour blocks to no more than 2 hours
- To verify appointments texting permission needed to be granted during signup
- A video phone was needed at the point of scheduling in order for the call in numbers to work
- News flashes needed to be provided to existing call centers in order to route potential signups
- Most effective lead generation was through direct outreach at Deaf clubs and events
- Weekly meeting with learnings, best practices & new ideas for improvement

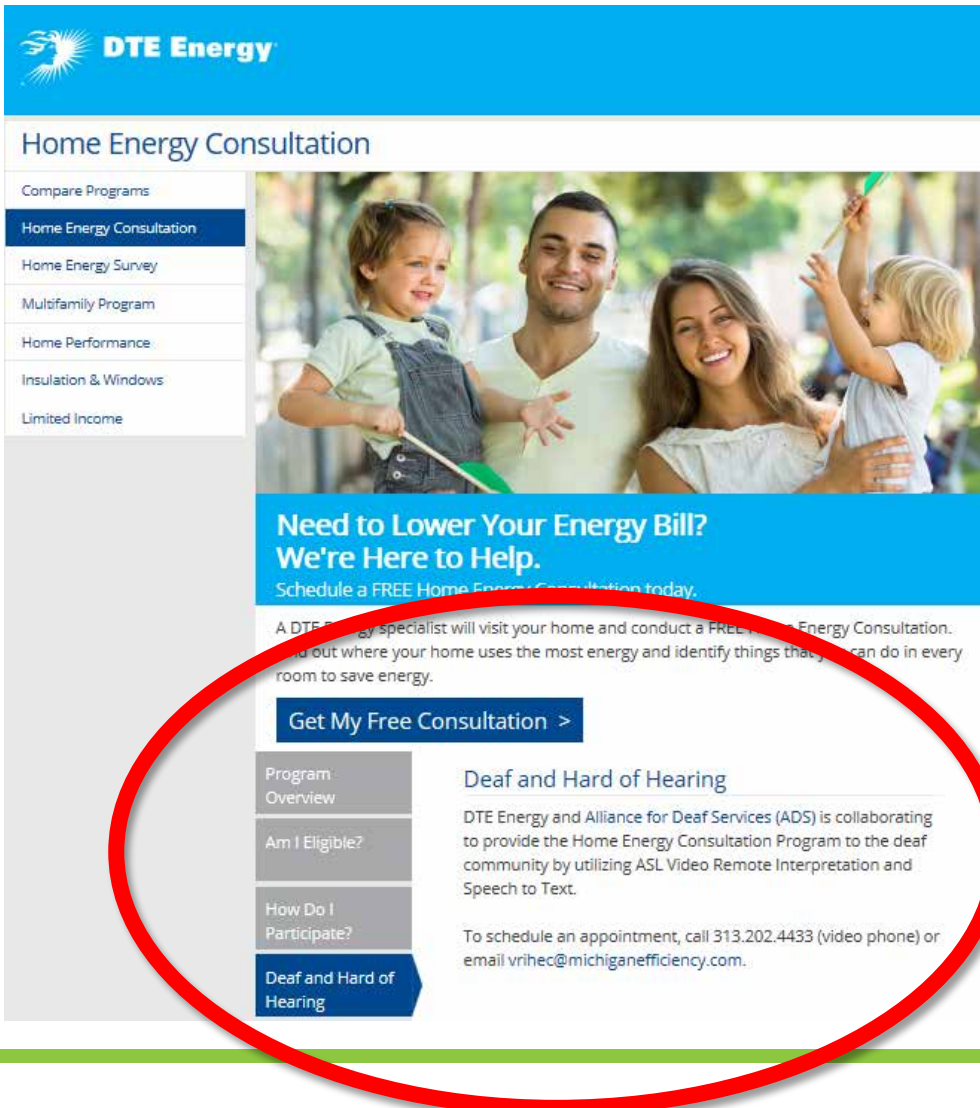
STAGE 2 SUCCESSES

SOFT INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS:

- Increased Deaf community awareness of DTE programs
- Increased fire safety for Deaf households
- Money savings for Deaf households
- A feeling of being an equally valued customers
- Communication services from first call to completed HEC
- Education to the Deaf community about energy efficiency
- Launched a Hard of Hearing “Speech to Text” Service as a result of the Hard of Hearing Community’s request to include Veterans
- DTE has empowered the Deaf community to request, develop, and engage in other similar programs in the general market place
- High levels of customer satisfaction & increases of interest in programs participation



STAGE 2: RESULTS



The screenshot shows the DTE Energy website's 'Home Energy Consultation' page. A red circle highlights the 'Deaf and Hard of Hearing' section, which includes a 'Get My Free Consultation >' button and a list of program options. The highlighted section contains the following text:

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

DTE Energy and Alliance for Deaf Services (ADS) is collaborating to provide the Home Energy Consultation Program to the deaf community by utilizing ASL Video Remote Interpretation and Speech to Text.

To schedule an appointment, call 313.202.4433 (video phone) or email vrihec@michiganeficiency.com.

5 OUTREACH EVENTS

219 LEADS

43 COMPLETED HECs

5 JOBS CREATED

STAGE 3: COMPLETE COMMERCIALIZATION



HEC COMMERCIALIZATION

- Focused on 1,000 homes
- Continuation of feedback loop
- Larger scale program learnings

STAGE 3: CONTINUING SUCCESS

73

OUTREACH EVENTS

20

PLANNED EVENTS

523

LEADS

161

COMPLETED HECs

3

PROGRAM EXPANSION



MARKETING & OUTREACH

Even with the same program incentives & information, communications need to be customized because not one size fits all for program marketing.

- Live streaming social media on well respected and trafficked forums
- MOU's were developed to incentivize lead generation with Deaf clubs and Community partners
- Text responses & notifications were used with customer permission
- New outreach videos were created to show what programs were offering

MARKETING & OUTREACH

- **HOLD SPACE FOR
MARKETING VIDEO**

PROCESS

While delivering on the same service need, processes behind program implementation must stay flexible to accommodate all possible customers.

- Dedicated email signup accounts were created for housing programmatic requests
- Specific channel flags were used during signup to determine customer needs
- Energy Specialists were assigned to Deaf customer homes first in time blocks
- Call center notifications needed to be sent out to ensure correct routing of signups

CUSTOMER VOICE

Early involvement of the customer voice will help mitigate against potential project blind spots and ensure that the initial launch will be well received.

- “Don’t do anything for us without us”
- Program showed areas where DTE Energy could accommodate rather than comply
- Allowed for meetings with State agencies to better accommodate safety notifications, outage updates & collaborative communication with Deaf Customers

DESIGN THINKING

- Every situation may be different, but utilizing Design Thinking can help ensure successful programs.

CUSTOMER FOCUSED

- Programs need to be continually looked at with customer centric lenses in order to see if they are as effective as possible.

BUT... what is MOST important is remembering that DTE Serves Everyone. So complete service to every market segment is critically important.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

- Systematic barriers do not diminish our pursuit of the “American Dream.”
- Access to effective communication is vital to high quality customer service.
- The Ability to converse freely is enlightening and empowering.
- Positive customer experience will open participation pathways to other programs and services.

SERVICE PROVIDER TAKEAWAY

- Our responsibility as a utility is to engage all our customers with the best possible communication resources
- VRI enables people without experience the ability to interact with customers who are Deaf.
- Building a successful model with our Deaf customers opens the door to explore the other language offering of this technology

“Now I don’t have to accommodate the crew, the crew accommodates me. That is the main difference”

CONTACT INFORMATION



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Questions?