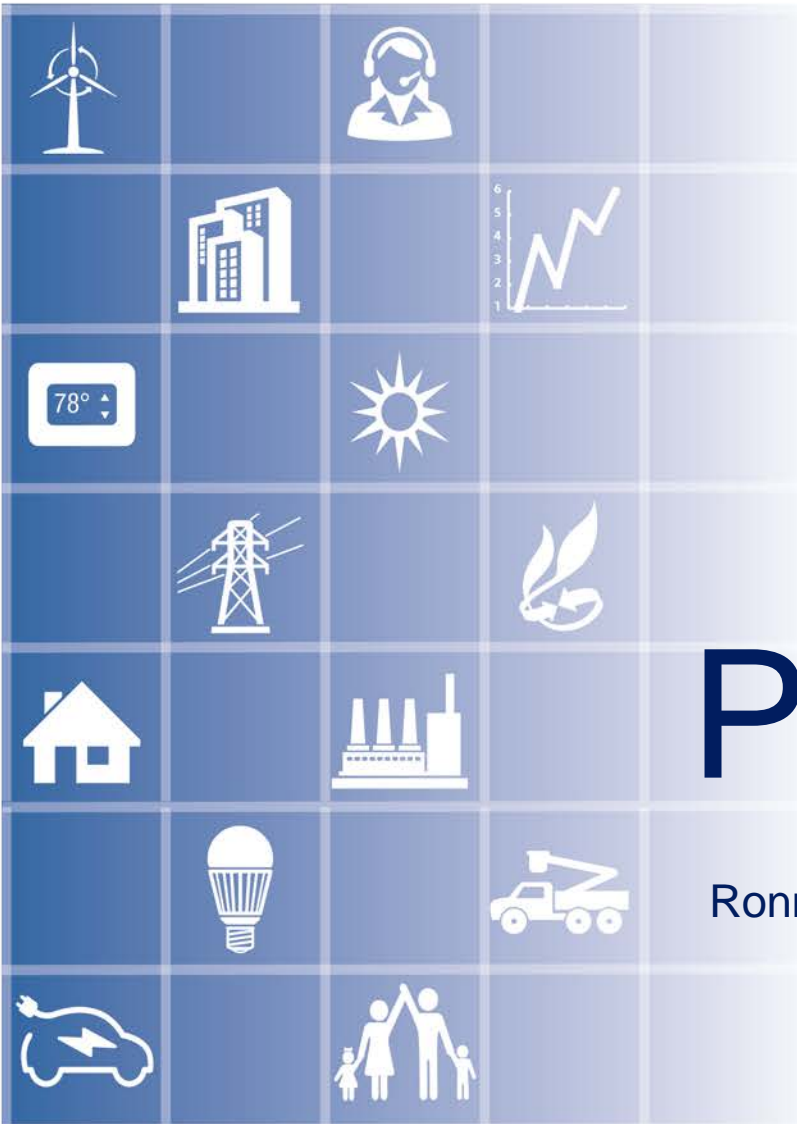# Customer Centric Programming
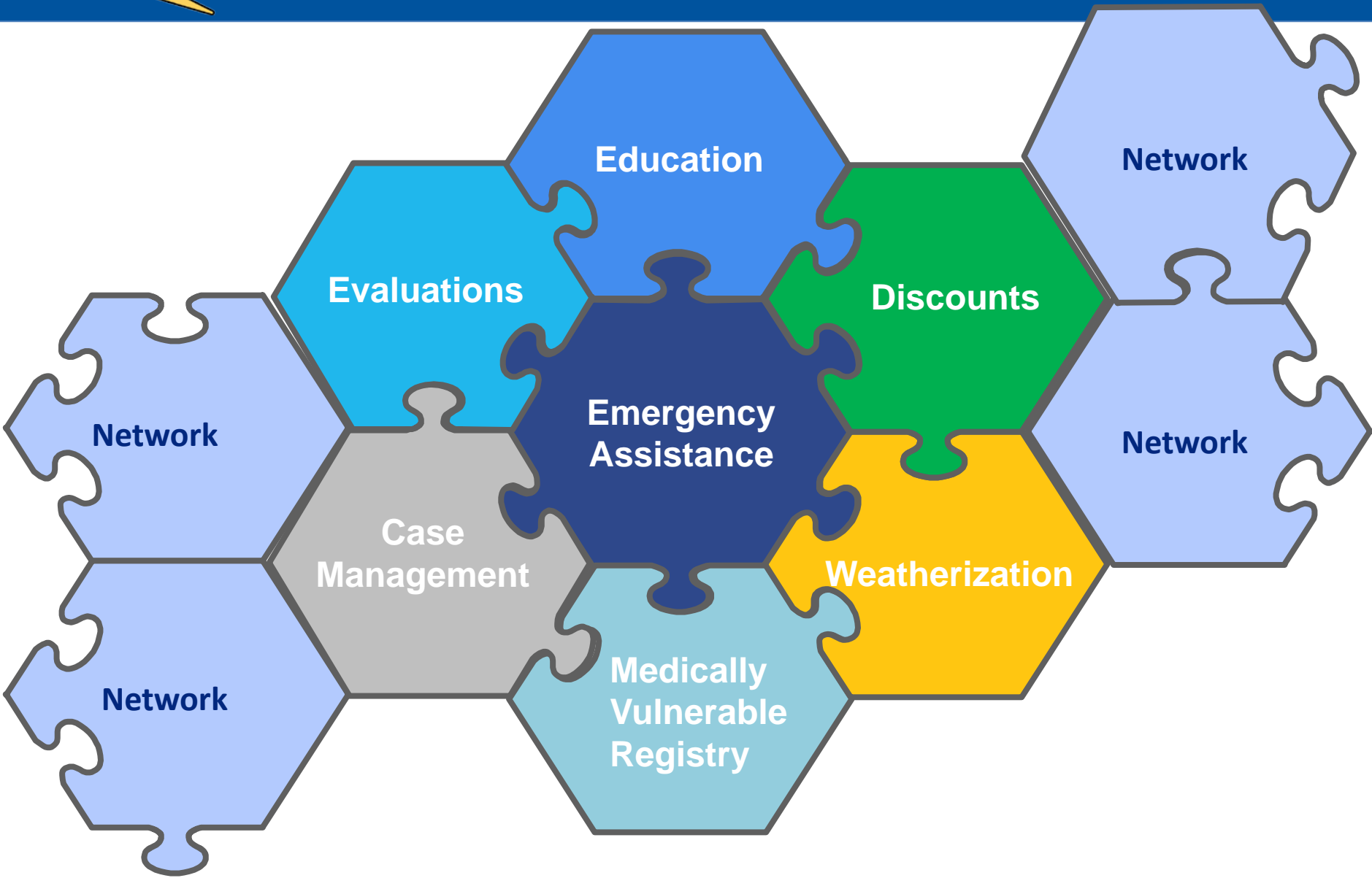
Ronnie R Mendoza, Customer Assistance Manager

Objectives

- Objective 1:
  - Learn techniques for establishing a community network to leverage internal customer assistance programs

- Objective 2:
  - Learn techniques for integrating customer assistance programs with the utility and community advocates

- Objective 3:
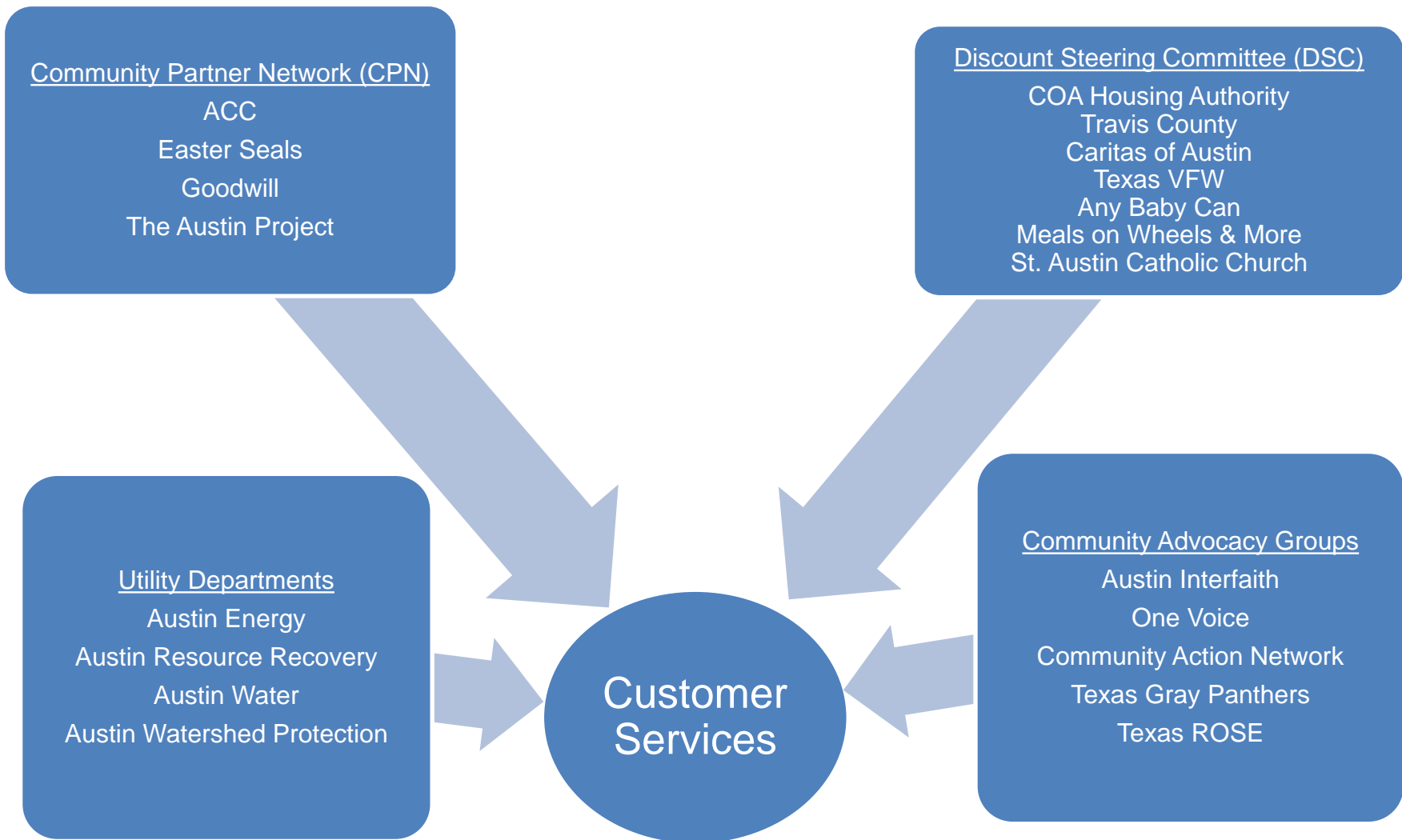 - Better engage low income customers via specific assistance programs and educational community seminars

Learn techniques for establishing a community network to leverage internal customer assistance programs

Community Networks

Community Partner Network (CPN)
ACC
Easter Seals
Goodwill
The Austin Project

Discount Steering Committee (DSC)
COA Housing Authority
Travis County
Caritas of Austin
Texas VFW
Any Baby Can
Meals on Wheels & More
St. Austin Catholic Church

Utility Departments
Austin Energy
Austin Resource Recovery
Austin Water
Austin Watershed Protection

Customer Services

Community Advocacy Groups
Austin Interfaith
One Voice
Community Action Network
Texas Gray Panthers
Texas ROSE

Community Advocacy Group (CAG)

- Comprised of advocacy groups
- Created to assist on policy change recommendations
- Works to garner broad community support on issues related to vulnerable customers
- Changes this group spearheaded
  - Summer and winter disconnects moratorium
  - Medically vulnerable program changes
  - Payment Arrangement Policy
  - Arrearage Program

Discount Steering Committee (DSC)

- Comprised of community agencies that have direct collaborations/agreements with AE
- Designed for AE to work with community partners who provide direct service
- Gives partners an opportunity to provide guidance on key issues
- Makes recommendations on assistance program implementation and structure
- Changes this group spearheaded
  - Expansion of the Discount Program
  - Oversight on Weatherization and Education Components
  - Payment Arrangement Policy
  - Arrearage Program

Community Partner Network (CPN)

- Comprised of community agencies that have direct collaborations/agreements with AE

- Direct Communication arm to our customer base

- Educated about all of Austin Energy policy and procedures

- Designed for AE to assist with disseminating emergency financial utility assistance

- Develop plan for ensuring utility services remain intact

Refugee Project

- Two agency collaboration
  - Refugee Services of Texas
  - Caritas
- Customers denied services because of inability to provide a valid ID
- Worked within the confines of our service regulations
  - Potential customers were vetted by federal government
  - Utilized I-9 ID's as a temporary ID
  - 6 weeks later social security number is provided
- Account case managed by Austin Energy
  - Accounts in customer's own name
  - Accounts are managed until social security numbers are provided
- Customer case managed by Referring Agency
  - Education about utility bill
  - Understanding a utility bill
  - How to manage their utility bill
  - Paying their utility bill

Learn techniques for integrating customer assistance programs with the utility and community advocates

Provides discounts to City of Austin utility customers on low or fixed incomes who participate in certain state, federal, or local assistance programs. These discounts appear on the customer's bill monthly.

Discounts

- Eligibility based on customer or household member receiving any of the following:
  - SNAP
  - CHIP
  - MAP
  - Medicaid
  - VASH
  - CEAP
  - Telephone Lifeline

- Customers impact
  - Average of $762 per year per family
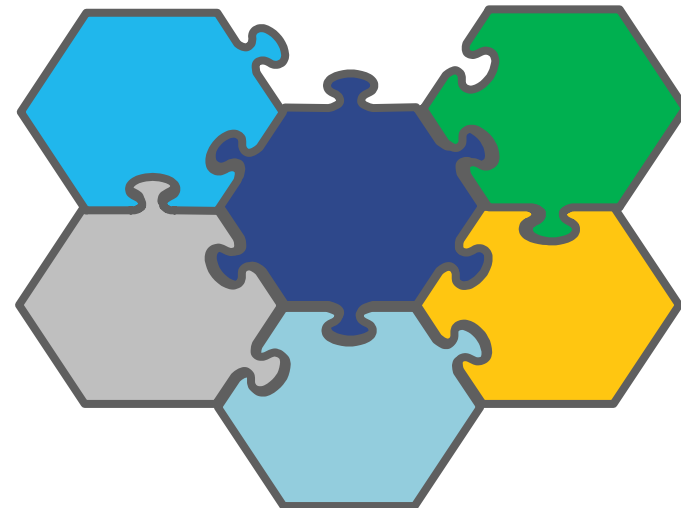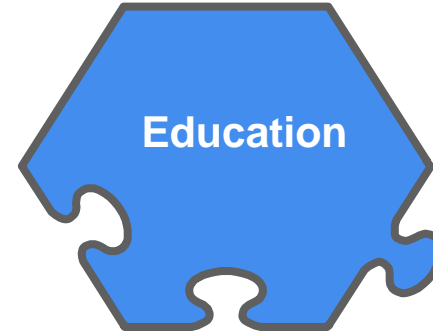 - $16 million overall annual customer savings

Offers no-cost home improvements to qualified customers, in an effort to lower their utility costs and make their monthly bills more manageable.

Weatherization
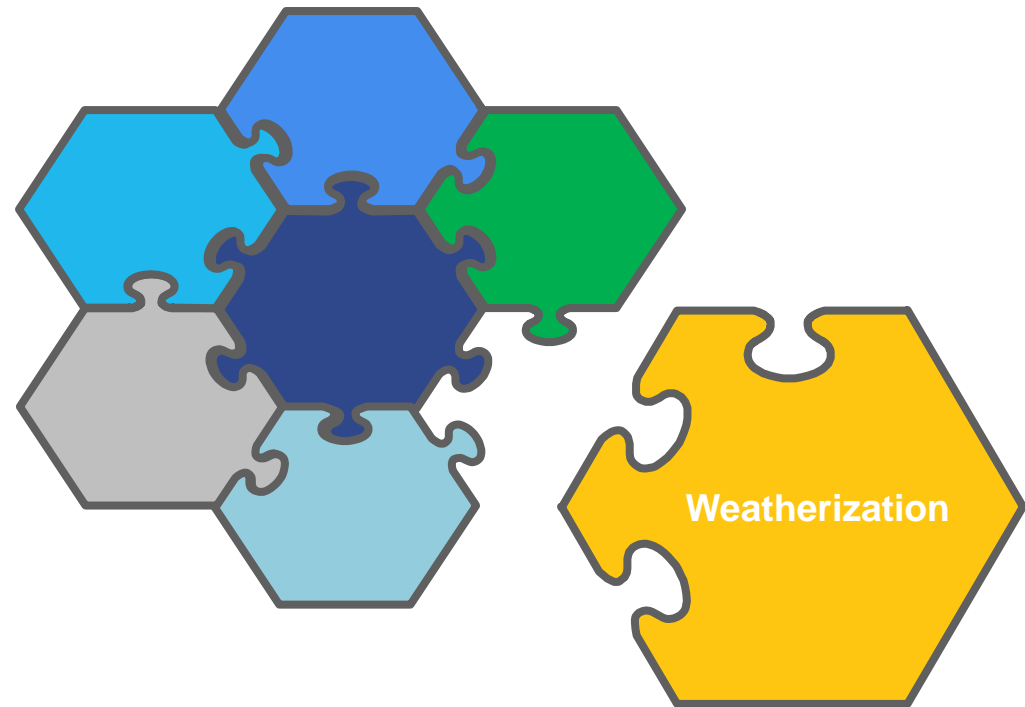
- Required pre-requisite

- One 4 hour interactive
  - Whole family
  - One on One

- Flexible class schedules

- Spanish classes available

Education

Designed to assist those City of Austin utility customers who are having financial difficulties and are unable to pay their utility bill due to unexpected emergencies. The City of Austin has partnered with local churches and non profits to help identify assistance recipients.

Emergency Assistance

The City of Austin offers the Medically Vulnerable Registry for customers with life support equipment, a critical illness or serious illness. Eligible customers receive additional time to pay their bills in addition to one-on-one case management.
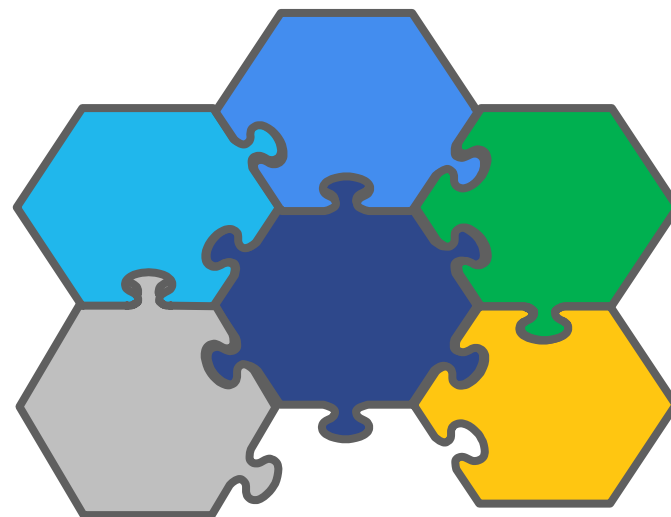
Medically Vulnerable Registry

Better engage low income customers via specific assistance programs and educational community seminars

- Case Management Project
- Arrearage Management Program
- Affordable Energy Policy Summit
- Community Connections Resource Fair
- General Outreach
- Site Visits

Case Management

- Community based organizations serving high risk populations
  - Families with children who have severe medical issues
  - Elderly low income
  - Families struggling with HIV/AIDS
  - Homeless veterans
- Single point of contact from Austin Energy
  - Customer Solution Coordinators (CSC)
  - Direct contact with agencies
  - Create comprehensive action plans
  - Flexibility in policy decisions

- Focus: customers with debt between $1,750 to $3,000
- Match towards customers total amount due
- 36 months
- Enrolled in Budget Billing
- Internal administration
- Referred to Education and Weatherization Programs

Arrearage Management Program

Summary of Service

CUSTOMER, JOHN D.
Service Address: 123 RESIDENTIAL BLVD
Account Number: 12345 60000
Invoice Number: 123456789

Bill Print Date	Jan 28, 2017
Due Date	Feb 14, 2017

Previous Activity/Charges

Total Amount Due at Last Bill	$355.90
Payment received - Thank you	-$355.90
Previous Balance	$0.00

Current Activity/Charges

Electric Service	$79.77
Water Service	$50.38
Wastewater Service	$124.45
Clean Community Service	$8.05
Solid Waste Services	$46.39
Drainage Service	$4.90
Street Service	+ $11.52
Current Balance	$325.46

If Payment is received after due date, a late fee will be assessed.

Total Amount Due	**$325.46**

50%
of Customer's Electric Payment applied toward **Electric Service Current Activity / Charges**

AE matches this amount (Community Benefit Charge funding) to satisfy **Electric Service Current Activity / Charges**

50%
of Customer's Electric Payment applied toward **Arrearage Balance**

Customer pays the Total Amount Due

- Introduces utility changes to the community
- Communication avenue for community partners
- Community Input
- Targets local social service providers
  - Non-profits
  - Faith-based groups
  - Government agencies
 - Advocacy groups
  - Low income housing representatives

- Utility meets customer at community level
- Holistic approach to customer service
- One-stop place to reach basic needs services
- Targets low to moderate income customers
- Focuses on high poverty zip codes
- Over 1,330 participants with over 100 community agencies represented

- Yearly phone surveys to CAP participants and CPN
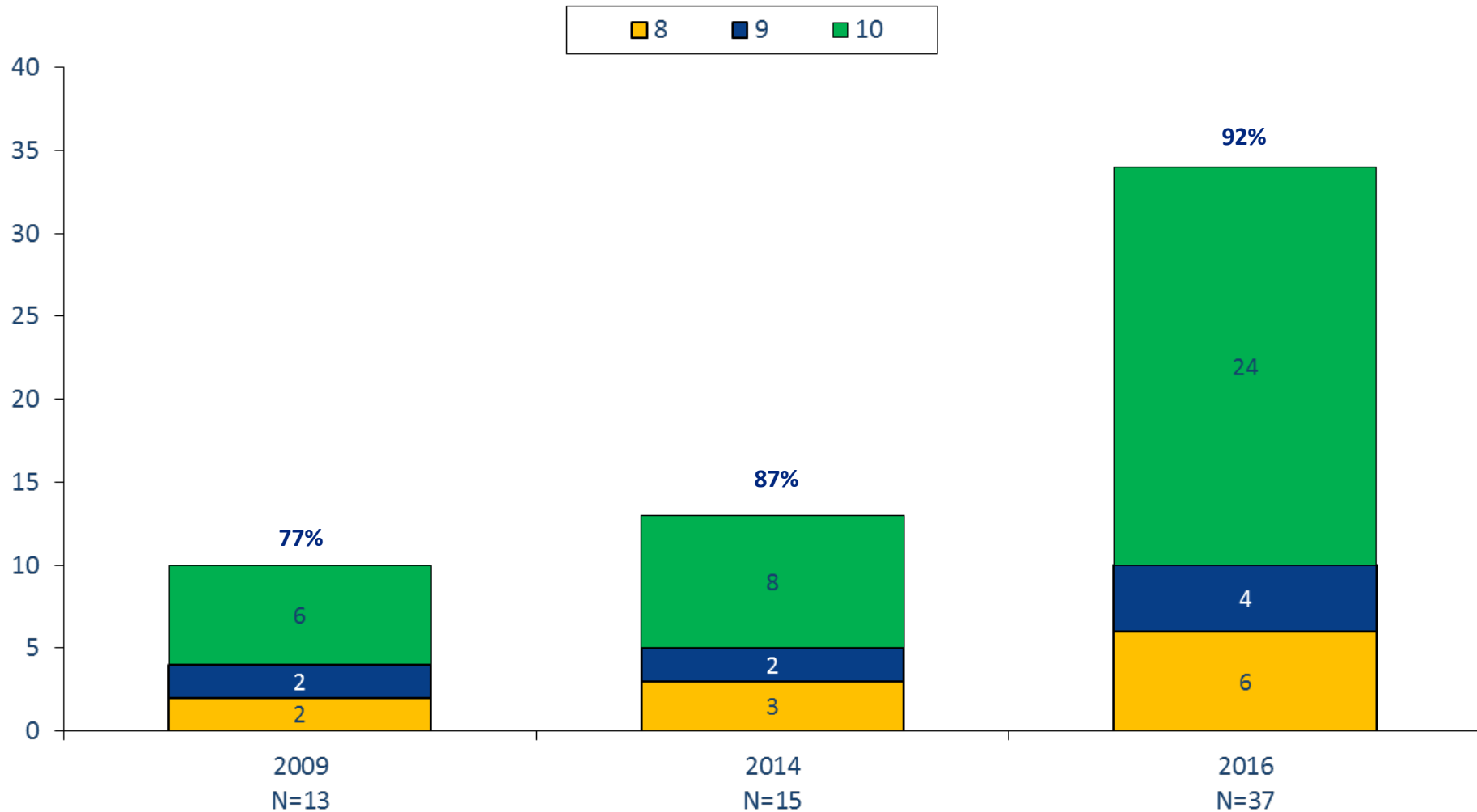- Satisfaction surveys for both customers and CPN
- Meeting expectations

Evaluations
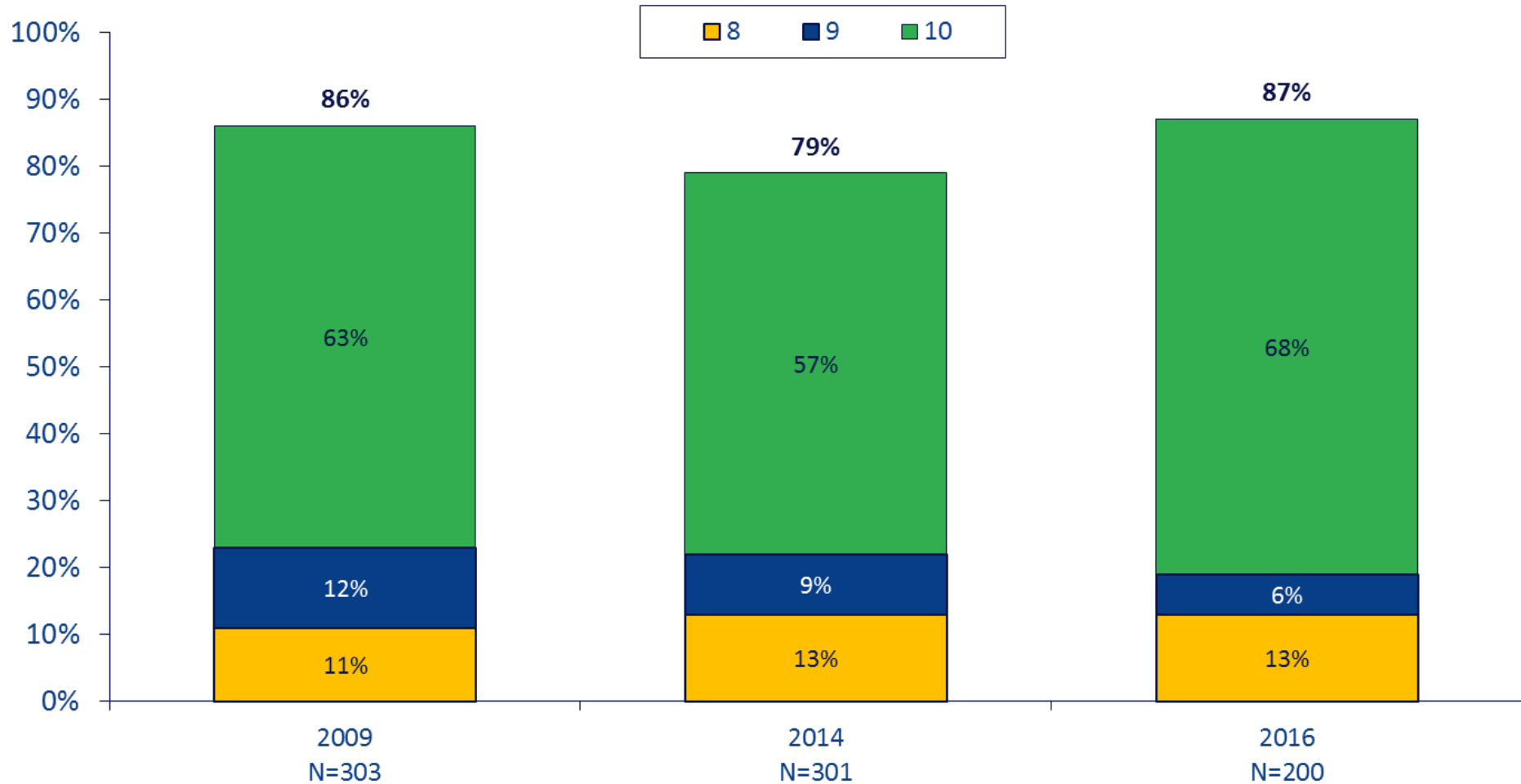
Network Satisfaction
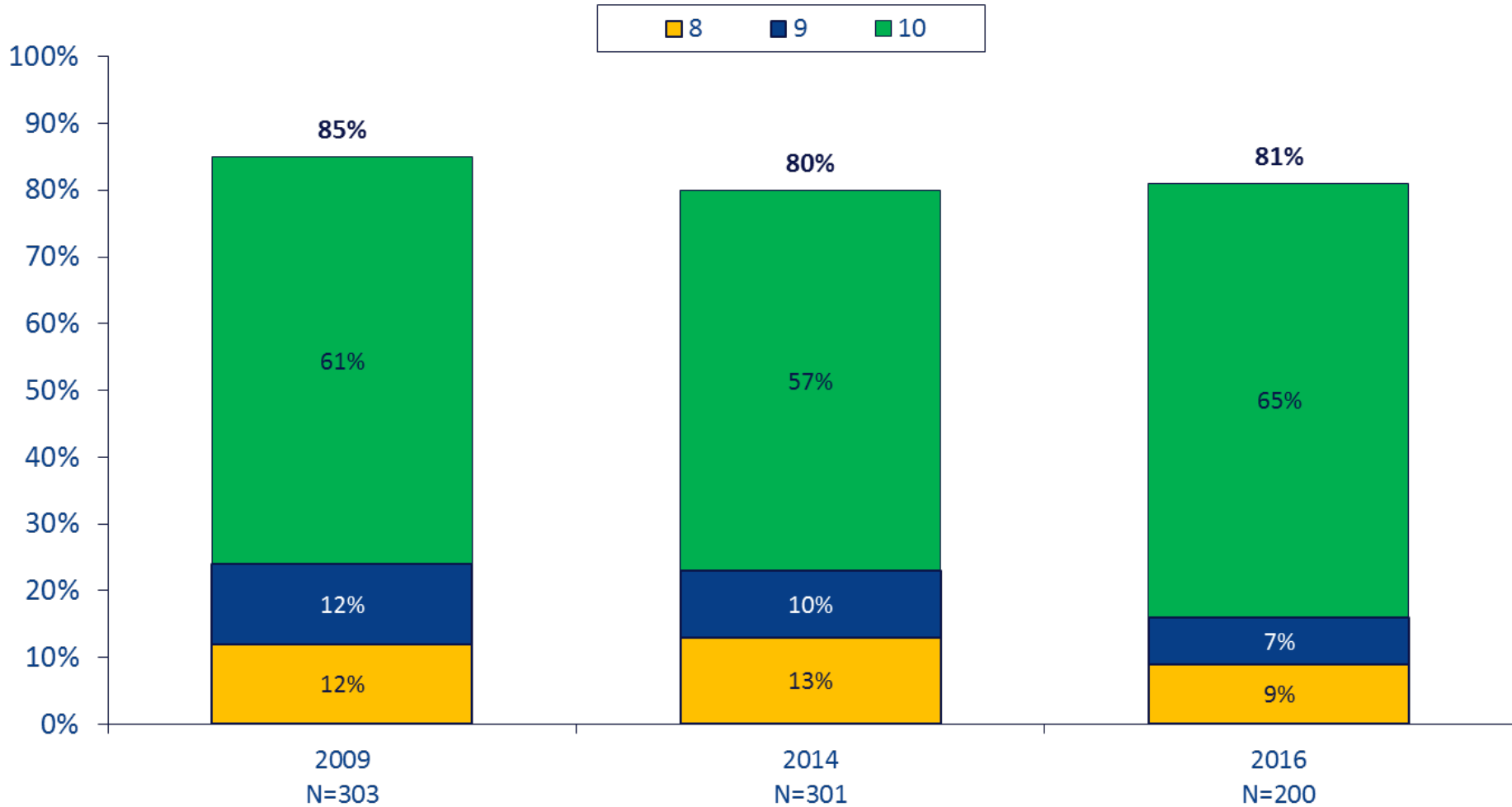

Graded on a scale of 1-10. 1 being low, 10 being high

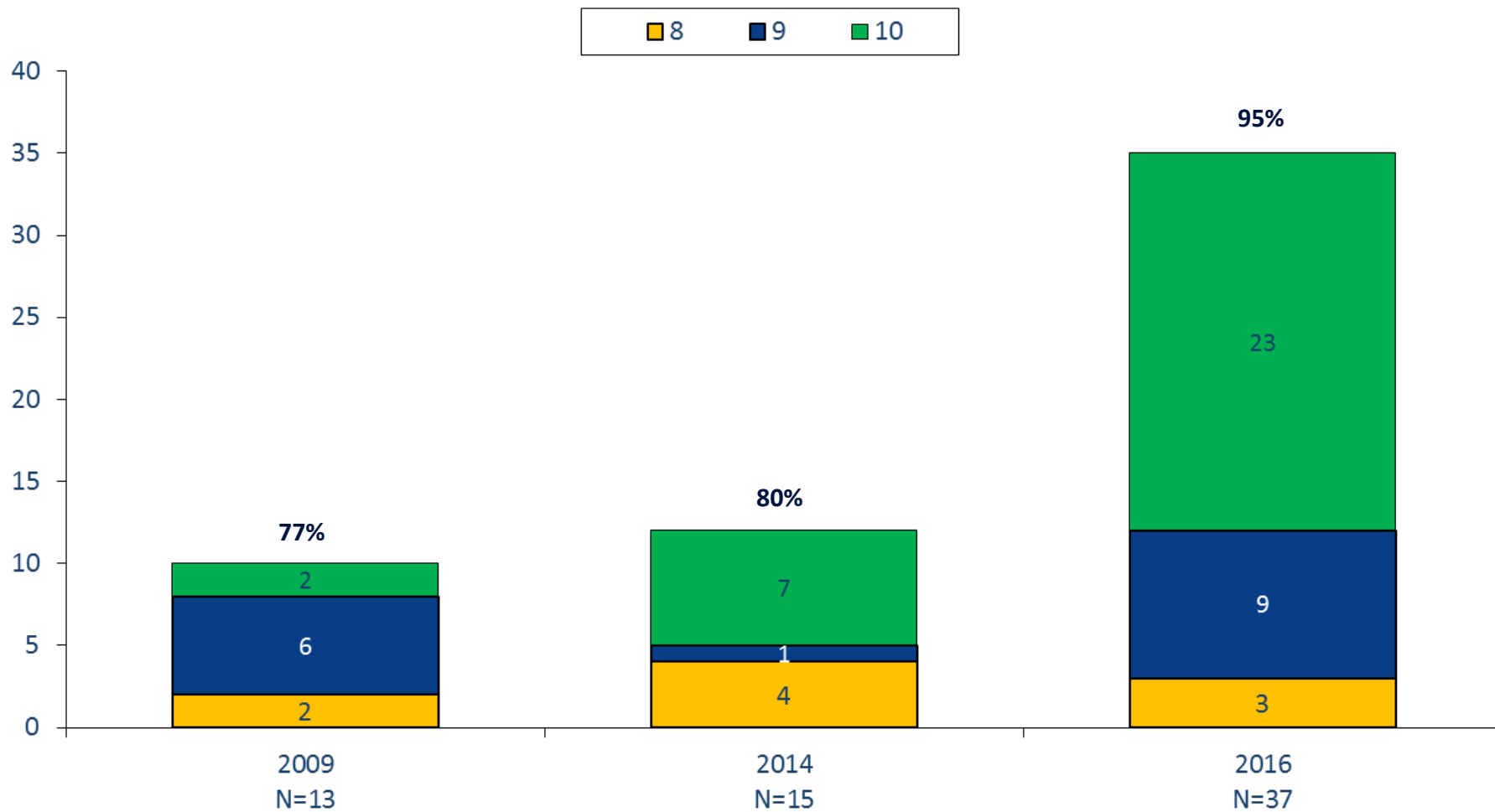# Overall Expectations

Graded on a scale of 1-10. 1 being low, 10 being high

Success

- Ongoing community dialogue
- Internal cross-functional programming
- Coalition building
- Utility Financial Integrity
- Interpersonal dynamics with customer base
- Utility awareness of community conditions
- Understanding individual customer needs
- Customer segmentation
- Community perception of the utility
- True partner for a multi-faceted community

Questions?

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Customer Assistance Programming
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F: 512-505-4028