

Jenny Christopher, Midwest Energy Research Consortium

Poster Title: Driving Equitable Adoption of Smart Meter Customer Portals by Making Them the Centerpiece of Local STEM Education

Abstract: Nearly half of electric customers have smart meters, yet researchers report that most people do not engage with the customer data portals made possible by the advanced meters. "Presenting this information to customers in a way that allows them to easily take advantage of these savings opportunities is critical for justifying the billions of dollars that utilities have invested in these meters," write the researchers. "Without customer engagement in smart meter data, this investment represents little beyond a slightly more accurate and efficient billing system." (Smart Meters, Big Data, and Customer Engagement: In Pursuit of the Perfect Portal Beth Hartman and William LeBlanc, E Source, 2014) This proposed presentation will explore a new strategy to boost customer engagement with smart meter portals. Namely, by leveraging them as the sources of real and relevant data that local schools crave to get more students excited about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). Case studies discussing partnerships with smart meter portal providers and electric utilities will be included. STEMhero is a research backed online curriculum, developed at Milwaukee's Midwest Energy Research Consortium. The program empowers middle school students to leverage utility portals as a way to build critical data analysis and science communication skills. Topics to be covered during discussion of the case studies include: experiences with teacher and school recruitment; limiting the need for agency staff time; reporting of student and family engagement with the portal.