



# Smart Meter Project Customer Education Plan Implementation 2023 Annual Report



## OVERVIEW

In 2023, El Paso Electric (EPE) officially launched its Smart Meter Project and began installing smart meters in Texas and New Mexico. A comprehensive Customer Education Plan was created by consultant Black & Veatch\* in coordination with EPE to ensure customers are prepared for the transition. EPE hired communications firm Hahn to assist with the implementation of the Customer Education Plan.

Over the past several years, EPE has redefined its mission and strategic pillars to focus on transforming the energy landscape. Smart meters are a key development in this transformation since they can help customers use electricity more efficiently.

To generate awareness of the multi-year project, EPE ran a three-month awareness campaign January-March 2023 to announce the project and educate customers about the benefits of smart meters. In May 2023, EPE launched a second awareness campaign to inform customers about their installation dates and prepare them for installation day. Customers were also encouraged to create online customer accounts and download EPE's mobile app so they can monitor their energy use in near real time once they receive their smart meters.

All information related to the EPE Smart Meter Project was made available on a dedicated smart meter website that is tailored for Texas and New Mexico customers in English and Spanish. An interactive map allows customers to type in their zip code to find out when their meter will be installed.

Other educational materials included explainer videos, FAQs, a community outreach presentation, a postcard mailer, flyer, and door hangers for the meter installers. Communications were also sent to customers and EPE employees via email, bill inserts, customer e-newsletters, and social media channels. The EPE Corporate Communications team promoted the project with local news media and participated in several community meetings.

Educational materials were published in English and Spanish to serve EPE's bilingual customers.

\*Black & Veatch is a 100-percent employee-owned global engineering, procurement, consulting and construction company with a more than 100-year track record of innovation in sustainable infrastructure.

## CUSTOMER EDUCATION GOALS

1. Demonstrate transparency and responsibility throughout the project.
2. Educate internal and external audiences about the benefits of smart meters.
3. Keep internal and external audiences informed about the process, progress and next steps.

## STRATEGY

Messages for the EPE Smart Meter Project are being deployed internally and externally in three phases. In 2023, EPE completed the Pre-Deployment phase and began the Deployment phase of the project.

Phase	Goal
Pre-Deployment/Phase 1 2023	Raise consumer awareness about upcoming technology transformation and proactively address concerns around safety, security and cost.
Deployment/Phase 2 2023-2025	Help customers understand the installation process and general timeline.
Post-Deployment/Phase 3 2025-202x	Announce project completion and educate customers about new program and service offerings made available through the EPE Smart Meter Project.

## OPTIMIZATION AREAS\*

- 5 Optimization Areas for TX and 2 for NM
- Contiguous Zip Codes for each area
- Easily identifiable in CCS

*Optimization Area target is between 50,000 and 100,000 endpoints.*

OA1 - TX		OA2 - TX		OA3 - TX		OA4 - TX		OA5 - TX		OA6 - NM		OA7 - NM	
Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count
79901	6,125	79821	2,840	79907	21,692	79935	8,476	79836	2,841	88005	18,101	87930	636
79902	11,286	79835	4,897	79910	2	79936	44,493	79838	3,886	88008	2,939	87931	1
79903	8,155	79911	4,000	79915	16,277	79937	3	79839	925	88011	19,604	87933	132
79904	13,064	79912	36,644	79925	19,933	79938	35,677	79849	5,135	88021	7,089	87936	261
79905	10,669	79932	13,204		<b>57,904</b>		<b>88,649</b>	79851	541	88024	857	87937	2,084
79906	287	79934	11,940					79853	1,243	88027	439	87940	190
79908	2		<b>73,525</b>					79855	1,523	88044	1,048	87941	427
79916	12							79927	16,912	88046	1,395	88001	22,657
79920	1							79928	31,482	88047	437	88002	1
79922	3,878								<b>64,488</b>	88048	1,257	88007	12,760
79924	25,895									88058	561	88012	15,540
79930	11,592									88063	6,464	88030	112
	<b>90,966</b>									88072	1,102	88032	1
										88081	6,656	88052	3
											<b>67,949</b>	88330	2
													<b>54,807</b>

\*Optimization areas are clusters of zip codes assigned by EPE to streamline the installation process. In 2023, EPE installed smart meters in optimization areas 1, 2, and 6. Regardless of who has a smart meter, the number of portal users appears to be similar.

## CUSTOMER REACH

In 2023, EPE's awareness campaigns resulted in approximately 39 million impressions\* in Texas and New Mexico. Digital (online) impressions reached 16 million while traditional (print, radio, TV) impressions reached 23 million.

\*Impressions represent the number of times an ad was served on a media platform.

### Pre-Deployment/Awareness/Phase 1

During the awareness campaign, EPE targeted all customers across multiple communications channels and attended community outreach events in each optimization area.

### Awareness Campaign Results

Texas	New Mexico
• 6.2 million digital impressions	• 966,000 digital impressions
• 36,434 ad clicks	• 9,383 ad clicks
• 1.1 million video ad views	• 228,000 video ad views
• 8.1 million traditional impressions	• 552,000 traditional impressions



Optimization Area	Event	Date
OA1	District 4 Community Meeting	10/12/2022
	PowerUP Expo - Day 1	1/20/2023
	PowerUP Expo - Day 2	1/21/2023
	District 4 Community Meeting	2/17/2023
	District 2 Community Meeting	3/22/2023
	El Paso Neighborhood Coalition	4/17/2023
	Grandview Senior Center	6/27/2023
	Conscious Barrio	6/28/2023
	PBS Kids Back to School Bash at Bassett Place	8/12/2023
	Texas Society of Professional Engineers	9/6/2023
	District 2 Community Meeting	9/6/2023
	YMCA Senior Health Fair - Northeast	9/13/2023
	Neighborhood Coalition Summit	9/23/2023
	OA2	Joey Barraza and Vino Memorial Park
The Park at Chaparral HOA		8/24/2023
YMCA Senior Health Fair - Westside		9/14/2023
OA3	EXPO Familia at Bassett Place	3/18/2023
	Townsquare Media Back-2-School Expo at Cielo Vista Mall	8/12/2023
OA4	Engineers Week Family Day at TechH2O	2/25/2023
	YMCA Senior Health Fair - Eastside	9/12/2023
OA5	Socorro Small Business Community Presentation	7/10/2023
	EPE Retirees Meeting	8/14/2023
	Power On! Community Meeting in Van Horn	9/7/2023
	Fabens ISD Wildcat Fest	9/22/2023
OA6	Neighborhood Coalition Summit	11/12/2022
	Buena Vista Energy Center Ribbon-Cutting	4/5/2023
	Anthony Board of Trustees	8/16/2023
	Town of Mesilla	8/28/2023
	Sunland Park City Council Meeting	9/5/2023
	New Mexico Customer Advisory Partnership	9/29/2023
	Mesilla Community Center	11/7/2023
	Mesilla Town Hall	11/7/2023
	Chaparral Community Meeting	11/30/2023
OA7	Doña Ana Board of County Commissioners	8/22/2023
	National Drive Electric Week Showcase	9/22/2023
	City of Las Cruces City Council	11/6/2023

## Deployment/Installation/Phase 2

During the deployment phase in 2023, EPE advertised in optimization areas 1, 2, & 6, representing approximately 239,000 meters. Optimization areas 1 and 2 are in Texas, and area 6 is in New Mexico.

### Installation Campaign Results

Texas	New Mexico
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 million digital impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.78 million digital impressions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32,684 ad clicks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10,860 ad clicks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.8 million video ad views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>800,700 video ad views</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13.6 million traditional impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 million traditional impressions</li> </ul>

### EPE Customer Portal

EPE serves approximately 460,000 customers from Van Horn, Texas to Hatch, New Mexico. As of the end of 2023, 36% of EPE customers have accessed the online customer portal. Customers can use the Smart Energy Tools in the portal to conduct a free home energy analysis, receive energy saving tips and view energy use comparisons.

### Customer Portal Users by Customer Type

Customer Type	Registered Portal Users
Residential	174,135
Small Business	8,970
Commercial	4,019
Other	2,309

\*The “Other” category refers to government and other municipal users.

### Customer Portal Users by Optimization Areas

Optimization Area	Portal Users	Number of Meters	Ratio of Portal Users to Meters
OA1-TX	29,694	93,729	32%
OA2-TX	32,604	78,231	42%
OA3-TX	18,740	61,604	30%
OA4-TX	37,720	94,352	40%
OA5-TX	28,001	68,039	41%
OA6-NM	23,312	72,006	32%
OA7-NM	19,362	57,902	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>189,433</b>	<b>525,863</b>	<b>36%</b>

## EXPENSE REPORT

The EPE Smart Meter Project budget is \$2 million. In 2023, EPE spent approximately \$1.019 million.

The budget is divided into two categories: production and media. Production reflects the time or labor spent to produce the marketing and advertising assets. It also includes project management, reporting, and campaign optimizations. Media reflects the advertising dollars spent to promote the project in traditional and digital media platforms.

2023 Budget	Phase 1 (January-March)	Phase 2 (April-December)	2023 Totals
Production/Labor TX	\$218,503.42	\$170,160.78	\$388,664.20
Media TX	\$88,494.56	\$207,813.68	\$296,308.24
Production/Labor NM	\$148,506.32	\$98,360.67	\$246,866.99
Media NM	\$30,225.29	\$57,201.07	\$87,426.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$485,729.59</b>	<b>\$533,536.20</b>	<b>\$1,019,265.79</b>

## PHASE 1 – AWARENESS/PRE-DEPLOYMENT

### Awareness Campaign in Texas and New Mexico

Between January and March 2023, EPE ran an awareness campaign for the entire service area. The goal of the campaign was to generate awareness of the EPE Smart Meter Project and educate customers about the benefits. Ads were created in English and Spanish for the following media channels:

#### Texas

Digital: Facebook, Instagram, digital banners, streaming radio, YouTube, KVIA digital

Television: KINT-TV Juntos studio interviews

Radio: KLAQ, KISS, KINT, KOFX, KYSE, KHEY, XHTO, KBNA, XHEM, KPRR, KTSM (AM & FM)

Print: El Diario, El Paso Inc. Business Journal, El Paso Inc. Magazine, El Paso Times, The Van Horn Advocate, El Paso Seniors Guide

#### New Mexico

Digital: Facebook, Instagram, digital banners, streaming radio, YouTube

Radio: KVLC, KXPZ, KOBE (AM & FM), KMVR, KGRT, KWML (AM & FM)

Print: Las Cruces Sun-News, Las Cruces Bulletin

## Other 2023 Customer Education Efforts During Phase 1

Tools	Details	Audience
Bill Insert/Electronic Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce project and promote smart meter benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers</li> </ul>
FAQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive FAQ for responding to customer inquiries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer service reps</li> </ul>
Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation deck for community meetings</li> <li>Pocket flier with smart meter benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected officials</li> <li>Stakeholders</li> <li>Customers</li> <li>Employees</li> </ul>
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate benefits of smart meters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who have opted in to receive email messages (100,000+)</li> </ul>
EPE Internal Newsletter, Intranet, Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate benefits of smart meters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPE employees/project ambassadors</li> </ul>
Media Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News release announcing approval of AMS program and smart meter benefits</li> <li>Media interviews</li> <li>El Paso Times op-ed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional news media in El Paso and Las Cruces</li> </ul>
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing social posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who follow EPE's social channels</li> </ul>
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explainer videos for smart meter microsite               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video 1: Smart meter benefits</li> <li>Video 2: Installation process</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers</li> </ul>
Microsite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central hub for customer education               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits</li> <li>FAQ &amp; explainer videos</li> <li>Project timeline</li> <li>Fees</li> <li>Optout process</li> <li>Programs and resources</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers</li> </ul>



## PHASE 2 – INSTALLATION/DEPLOYMENT

### Awareness Campaign in Texas and New Mexico

Beginning in May 2023, EPE launched The Installers campaign to prepare customers for their smart meter installations and encourage them to establish online customer accounts and download the EPE mobile app. More than 100,000 customers received new meters in 2023.

The Installers is a targeted campaign to notify subsets of customers one to three months prior to their scheduled meter installation dates. As part of this campaign, EPE produced a television commercial and original smart meter song to generate excitement about the project. Ads were created in English and Spanish for the following media channels:

#### Texas

Digital: Facebook, Instagram, digital banners, Connected TV, streaming radio, YouTube, KVIA

Television: KINT-TV Juntos studio interviews

Radio: KLAQ, KISS, KINT, KOFX, KYSE, KHEY, XHTO, KBNA, XHEM, KPRR, KTSM (AM & FM)

Print: El Diario, El Paso Inc. Business Journal, El Paso Inc. Magazine, El Paso Times, The Van Horn Advocate, El Paso Seniors Guide

#### New Mexico

Digital: Facebook, Instagram, digital banners, Connected TV, streaming radio, YouTube

Radio: KVLC, KXPZ, KOBE (AM & FM), KMVR, KGRT, KWML (AM & FM)

Print: Las Cruces Sun-News, Las Cruces Bulletin

### Other 2023 Customer Education Efforts During Phase 2

Tools	Details	Audience
Direct Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce smart meters are coming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers by installation date</li> </ul>
Hand Outs for Meter Installers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Door hanger with installation update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers by installation date</li> </ul>
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate about installation process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who have opted in to receive email messages (100,000+)</li> </ul>
EPE Internal Newsletter, Intranet, Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate about installation process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPE employees/project ambassadors</li> </ul>
Media Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News release announcing installations</li> <li>Media interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional news media in El Paso and Las Cruces</li> </ul>
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing social posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who follow EPE's social channels</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map of deployment sectors</li> <li>Interactive tool to verify installation dates</li> <li>Updates as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers</li> </ul>

## CHANGES IN 2024

In addition to the continuation of the installation advertising campaign, EPE will launch a next steps campaign in early 2024 to continue encouraging customers to download the EPE mobile app and create an online account. This is important because customers cannot use the smart energy tools available to them without creating an account. Once customers do this, they can complete a free online home energy analysis, track their energy use in near real time, perform bill comparisons, view historical energy use, and receive customized energy saving tips.

EPE will also focus on communicating with hard-to-reach communities such as the elderly who may prefer learning about the Smart Meter Project through local senior activity centers, community leaders, and billboards as examples.

### Energy Savings

EPE will continue to work with Black & Veatch to calculate and report on total and average energy savings by customer class. EPE requires a minimum 12 months of actual smart meter data to make before and after comparisons. This metric will be included in the 2024 annual report.

## PHASE 3 – POST-DEPLOYMENT

EPE anticipates completing smart meter installations by the end of 2025. Once all customers have received their new smart meters, EPE will begin promoting new pilot programs and services that can help customers make informed decisions on their energy use. The post-deployment plan will include a comprehensive marketing and communications plan like the first two phases of the project.