

Hard-to-Reach Energy Users

An IEA Demand Side Management TCP Task 24 Draft Concept Note

Matters for the ExCo

- Consideration of the rationale, aims and objectives of this research concept note.
- Expressions of interest to collaborate in developing a full proposal for agreement at the next ExCo meeting. The proposal was initiated very recently, after discussions among several ExCo countries (US, Sweden, Belgium, Italy and New Zealand) on how to continue the Task 24 work and approach to behaviour change, which was clearly highly successful, and valued. The topic of **Hard-to-Reach (HtR) customers** is one of the topics chosen by the *Consortium for Energy Efficiency* (CEE), as part of US participation in Task 24, Phase II, Year 3. It is also one of keen interest to the New Zealand government, as part of its work programme on energy hardship and fuel poverty.
- Approval to progress this project to full proposal at the next ExCo meeting.

Background

This note is another draft concept note for an extension of Task 24, which has been signed off in concept at 3 prior ExCo meetings (the last one was only partially signed off by 8 countries in the Hague). The reason this concept note was not provided sooner is that, by all indication of the ExCo leadership, Task 24 was not to be continued as part of the future DSM work programme (although all other current Tasks – 16, 17 and 25, are supported to be continued). However, several countries have contacted the NZ Task 24 OA and asked what it would take to keep NZ, and this research collaboration which boasts a strong expert platform and is regarded as the first, and main global research collaboration on behaviour change in DSM, in the DSM TCP. New Zealand, under the leadership of the Task 24 OA Dr Sea Rotmann, is willing to take forward the concept note and develop it into a Task Proposal at the next ExCo meeting.

Motivation

The motivation for this Task comes from two directions: 1) not losing the strong expertise and expert platform that Task 24 has created in the behaviour change area, for the DSM TCP – particularly seeing that this Task most closely resembles our strategic focus going forward; 2) the fact that every country and energy sector has different definitions of what constitutes a “Hard-to-Reach” (and thus motivate and engage) energy user or customer. There is clearly a wealth of research to be undertaken in this area, which will be of global interest (especially seeing there isn’t a single country on this planet that doesn’t have HtR energy users, see below).

Task 24 work with CEE sponsors for the US on this topic has shown just how divergent the definitions of HtR customers can be (and this is just in one sector – utilities – and one geographic region – North America). US and Canadian utilities interviewed during the last year of Task 24 defined “hard-to-reach” customers as:

- Low income or from lower socio-economic groups
- In energy hardship or fuel poverty
- Rural, isolated or physically hard to reach communities

- Hard to motivate or engage (several utility managers said “if we can send them a utility bill, we can reach them, but that doesn’t mean we can *reach* them to become more energy efficient.”)
- Tenants in multi-family apartment buildings (where the landlord paid the utility bills)
- Not internet or smart phone users
- Disadvantaged communities, e.g. indigenous or immigrant communities where language and cultural barriers are key
- Small to medium businesses etc.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the Task would be to enable participating countries to improve policy, industry, research and community outcomes by applying lessons learned from collaboration with other countries. The objectives could contain the following elements:

- *Share experiences and expertise*

Experts from the government, industry, research and third sectors would come together to identify HtR energy user definitions and how they have been addressed and engaged in their countries and sectors in the past.

- *Develop guidance*

Based upon the learning from each other’s programmes and research, develop guidance for the application of how to reach the hard-to-reach in the energy sector, how to run engagement trials and how best to monitor and evaluate outcomes.

- *Original collaborative research*

Develop an international survey on HtR energy users, designed to better understand similarities and differences across national boundaries on issues related to energy literacy, for example.

- *Capacity building and dissemination*

Work with the IEA Secretariat to help build capacity in key emerging economies through the Energy Efficiency in Emerging Economies (E4) programme.

Approach

Subtask 0 - Administration: New Zealand’s Task 24 Operating Agent would function as expert in the field, organising meetings and workshops, and leading on the production of outputs and reporting. *Her time could be paid out of several countries supporting a more in-depth look beyond the first phase (below), which would be around €12,500 per country per year. The Task would run for an initial period of [two] years and has the potential to be a longer-running Task, depending on the interest in taking an internationally-validated, standardised way of engaging the HtR going forward (ST 2) and testing it with field research (ST 3).*

Subtask 1 – Definitions and case studies: This Task would bring together experts from (hopefully) all DSM ExCo countries and many different sectors (similar to the Task 24 work using the **Behaviour Changer Framework** to identify top issues and top relevant Behaviour Changers to help research these issues). Participating experts and ExCo would need to contribute to the production of outputs. *A small contribution from either each DSM country (~€3,000 per country) or, if the whole TCP decides to partake in Phase 1, the common fund*

(~€50,000) would be sufficient to undertake the first phase of defining HtR energy users, and main case studies or programmes currently underway to engage them (preferably, for each TCP member).

Subtask 2 – Development of standardised process: Task 24 Phase II has developed a **Toolbox for Behaviour Changers** (Subtask 8), which provides many insights into tools, research and evaluation methodologies on how to “do” behaviour change from A to Z. The Task 24 project partners, the *Californian See Change Institute* (SCI), are currently developing and testing the “SCI process” with utility partners. The Task 24 and SCI tools and processes can be combined to develop and validate, a standardised way of how to engage HtR energy users in the field (Subtask 3). *Many individual elements of this process were already developed in Phases I & II of Task 24, and by the SCI. To support the Task 24 OA and SCI Project Partner to administer and report on international validation of the process, would cost around ~€7,500 per participating country.*

Subtask 3 – Field testing: The standardised process developed and validated in Subtask 2 would be tested in field research trials on the chosen priority areas of each participating country or co-sponsor. Field trials are expected to take around 18 months each and can be co-sponsored by industry (e.g. utilities), government (e.g. ministries of social development, energy or health), research organisations (e.g. Sheffield Hallam University’s work on “the hardest to reach”), or the third sector (e.g. social organisations focusing on refugee integration or fuel poverty). The all-important Middle Actors who will help administer field research trials, will be identified for each country / sector. *Co-sponsorship can take several forms, from direct funding, to in-kind or task sharing support, to access to end users and / or data etc. It is envisaged to be flexible enough to be developed in collaboration with each country / partner, and not every participating country has to engage in Subtask 3.*

Expectations / Results

Depending on the nature of the collaborative research, the following results are envisaged:

- Greater insights into the “Hard-to-Reach” energy user group as a result of learning from other countries’ experiences and the input of a wide range of expertise and case studies
- A report detailing different HtR definitions and relevant case studies from (hopefully), the entire DSM TCP
- Guidance on how to do behaviour change in the energy sector, how to align different Behaviour Changers, design and run field trials and monitor and evaluate interventions to prove real, long-term change on this difficult end user group has occurred
- Survey results of end users that enable a better understanding of the contextual factors affecting HtR energy users in different countries
- More capacity to apply behaviour change insights to policy making and real life in key emerging economies and the G20 through collaboration with the Energy Efficiency Leading Programme and work on multiple benefits.
- High quality and accessible dissemination of messages from the research through the tried and tested networks of Task 24, DSM country participants, and the IEA Secretariat.

Note: Seeing this concept proposal was written rather hastily, and under urgency, it is open to changes and input from the ExCo, including around length, funding and if it should be a Task 24 extension or new Task. We hope to be able to discuss this during the ExCo meeting tomorrow and ask for sign-off in concept to be developed further, only.