



# Renewable Energy Virtual Field Trip

## Category: Category 22: AUDIO/VISUAL

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Entrant Name

Cynthia Hecht

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Entrant Organisation

DTE Energy

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## ENTRY FORM - Division 4 Questionnaire

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Is the entry submitted on behalf of a client or other organization? If yes, you must upload a client authorization letter.

Answer: No

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If work is done on behalf of a client, you must submit a client authorization letter.

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A template is available at [iabcheritage.com/silver-quill-awards/how-to-enter](http://iabcheritage.com/silver-quill-awards/how-to-enter).

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Upload the Client Authorization Letter

Attach the file and click on the green upload button.

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Describe your organization.

Please use the Division 4 preview of questions template to write your responses. Check the length of your responses in Word to meet the maximum number of characters before copying and pasting your answers here.

Answer: DTE Energy's operating units include an electric company serving 2.2 million customers in Southeast Michigan and a natural gas company serving 1.3 million customers in Michigan. DTE views climate change as one of the most pressing policy issues of our era and is working to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. To deliver on this goal, DTE is significantly increasing the amount of energy it generates from renewable resources, particularly wind and solar. Over the next two years, the company will double its clean energy generation capacity, generating enough clean energy to power more than 900,000 homes, and the company has plans for continued growth in this area. DTE also provides customers with ways to reduce their impact on the

environment by supporting more renewable energy development and using energy more efficiently.

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Describe the business need that led to this project being undertaken.

Please use the Division 4 preview of questions template to write your responses. Check the length of your responses in Word to meet the maximum number of characters before copying and pasting your answers here.

Answer: DTE Energy's Renewable Energy team typically receives more than 30 requests a year to conduct student field trips at its wind and solar projects. Managing the number of requests and the logistics had become challenging for the team. The number of tour requests exceeded staff availability; the tour quality and educational value was inconsistent, depending on the employee giving the tour; and the projects are too far away from metro Detroit for most schools to visit, making the experience inaccessible to the vast majority of students in DTE's service territory.

The goals of this project were to create a more accessible, consistent and robust educational experience for students while eliminating the need for employees to coordinate tours for individual school groups and take time away from their day to day jobs to conduct them.

The coronavirus outbreak beginning in March 2020 created additional urgency for the need to provide quality, online educational content.

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Who were the audiences for this project? What do you know about them in relation to the communication opportunity?

Please use the Division 4 preview of questions template to write your responses. Check the length of your responses in Word to meet the maximum number of characters before copying and pasting your answers here.

Answer: We decided to target the virtual field trip to a middle school/ junior high audience after looking at the grade of previous tour groups and consulting with DTE's Workforce Development team. This targeting aligned with other programs that team had in place, including a statewide Careers in Energy week curriculum. Since we already had a renewable energy education program for elementary students, this targeting also served as a logical extension of that program and the company's energy efficiency education program. We also selected these grades to align with the state's curriculum around energy and climate science. A search of existing content on renewable energy demonstrated a need for this kind of in-depth, highly visual experience for students. We also felt students this age are old enough to care about the environment and take steps to reduce their impact and encourage their friends and families to as well. The students in these grades are also starting to think about future careers.

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What were the measurable objectives for the project? Please provide no more than three objectives and describe how they are aligned with the business need.

Please use the Division 4 preview of questions template to write your responses. Check the length of your responses in Word to meet the maximum number of characters before copying and pasting your answers here.

Answer: 1. Triple the number of students/schools who had access to this content and broaden geographic reach. Students in the metro Detroit area, which is the majority of DTE customers, live too far away from our projects to visit them in person. Yet, these projects and those we will build in the future will play an increasingly important role in the fight against climate change, and it is valuable for the students to understand what clean energy is and how it helps them. Video enables us to bring the projects to the students. With our stakeholders in rural communities, we want them to understand how these projects work and why we need to build them so we can overcome community opposition and gain support and approval to build additional wind and solar assets.

2. Reduce number of onsite tours to less than five per year. With the growth of our renewable energy portfolio, our team doesn't have time away from their regular jobs to devote to tours for student groups.

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What were the key messages for the project? List no more than three key messages.

Please use the Division 4 preview of questions template to write your responses. Check the length of your responses in Word to

meet the maximum number of characters before copying and pasting your answers here.

Answer: 1. DTE is leading Michigan's transition to clean energy and is committed to doing its part to fight climate change.  
2. Increasing the amount of energy we generate from renewable resources, including wind and solar, is one of the most important things we can do to reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change.  
3. There are several interesting careers students can pursue in the energy field and things they can do now to reduce their impact on the environment and use less energy.

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Describe the resources (budget, time, others) available for the project and how effectively they were managed.

Please use the Division 4 preview of questions template to write your responses. Check the length of your responses in Word to meet the maximum number of characters before copying and pasting your answers here.

Answer: The project cost \$100,000. Corporate communications wrote the first draft of the script after interviewing subject matter experts and provided the script to the video vendor who then wrote the screenplay. An education consultant was retained to review the screenplay and graphics for compliance with state standards and to ensure the language and concepts were appropriate for students in the targeted grades. We shot very little new footage for the video; instead repurposing existing footage from DTE TV commercials and other videos. This left more budget available for creating the graphics and animations. We had initially allocated \$70,000 for the project and had planned to film the tour host at DTE's downtown headquarters and onsite at the solar project. Due to DTE's COVID-19 safety protocols, we needed to add additional money to the budget midway through the project so we could film the actor and participating DTE employees in a studio in front of a green screen.

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Provide a brief summary of how you used these insights (business need, audiences, objectives and key messages) to guide the development of your project.

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Answer: Over the past two years, the renewable energy team at DTE Energy had discussed bringing its wind and solar park tour experience online. When schools shifted to online learning due to the coronavirus outbreak, DTE Energy decided it was the perfect time to move forward with this project. We anticipated that remote learning would continue during the 2020-2021 academic years, so we worked to have the video and accompanying educational material ready for distribution in September 2020. Since one goal was to provide a more robust educational experience for the students, we determined that we also needed to create an educator's guide for teachers that would include activities, topics for group discussions and a glossary of terms to enhance the educational value beyond just viewing the video. Knowing a personal connection to DTE was still important, we provided some classes the chance to have a brief virtual Q&A session with employees after they had seen the video. To increase access to the video and broaden the geographic reach, we developed a robust communications plan that included a press release, blog post and social media to announce the video when it was finished and promote it throughout the school year, especially during Clean Energy Week, Careers in Energy Week and Earth Month. We also partnered with DTE's Public Affairs, Regional Relations, Renewable Energy Development and Workforce Development teams to promote the video through newsletters and eblasts.

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How well were the measurable objectives met? Please show the relationship between the objectives you set and the results you achieved.

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Answer: The video project was been extremely successful. Our main objective was to triple the number of students served. While we had served approximately 900 students a year with in-person tours, we've had more than 66,000 people view the tour video on DTE's YouTube channel. We know we've expanded our geographic reach as we've received positive feedback from teachers from our service territory and our employees have done post-viewing video chats with students from schools in Detroit, St. Clair Shores, and West Bloomfield, all schools that are too far away to travel to the projects. The video was promoted and is being used in mid-Michigan where we have and are building more wind and solar. The video was so well received internally that we

were asked to create a shorter version for use at Rotary meetings and with other community groups. Finally, no DTE employees have had to take time away from their regular jobs this year to conduct onsite tours.

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Please upload a maximum of 5 work samples.

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Website URL

Answer: <https://empoweringmichigan.com/?s=Renewable+energy+virtual+field+trip>

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YouTube URL

Answer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKZaBg1xkxs>