

SESSION 5D

THE REGULATOR/POLICY MAKER/ EVALUATOR RELATIONSHIP - LET THE SUN SHINE IN!

Moderator: Bill Saxonis, New York State Department of Public Service

PANELISTS

Carmen Best, California Public Utilities Commission-Energy Division,
Steven Schiller, Schiller Consulting

Ashlie Ossege, former Utility Regulatory and Evaluation Director for Duke Energy, (currently Director of Analytic Services for Utilities, Direct Options)

Ralph Prah, Prah and Associates

PANEL SUMMARY:

Often overlooked in the world of evaluation is a fundamental and critical question—is the evaluation product responsive to the needs of its target audience including state regulators, who often hold sway over the scope, direction and budgets of energy efficiency programs, other policy makers and program implementers. Are evaluators providing the right data with the right rigor level, at the right time and in an understandable and useful format? Are regulators asking the right questions? Just as with energy efficiency programs, the policies and procedures that drive program evaluation need to be regularly assessed.

The goals of our panel are to spotlight the regulator/policy maker/implementer/evaluator relationship and to tackle fundamental questions about the role of evaluation including how effectively it is meeting the needs of those it is designed to serve. We will conclude with a discussion of how evaluations can be made more useful. Audience participation will be encouraged.

Potential topic areas will include:

- Are expectations about what will result from evaluations clearly communicated?
- What is the “correct” level of regulatory oversight for the evaluation process? Are mandated guidelines for evaluation rigor and design a help or a hindrance?
- Are evaluations helping regulators, program implementers and policy makers improve energy programs? Are the results clear, timely and useful?
- What is the appropriate role for stakeholders in defining the research agenda or utilizing results? Does the collaborative process work?
- How can evaluation be made more responsive to those they are intended to serve?
- Are evaluations meeting the needs of resource planners, are they evaluating efficiency with the same, more, or less rigor that other energy resources (and public investments)?
- What is correct balance of relative roles of the implementers/administrators in documenting savings and conducting process evaluations and the role of the third-party evaluators to do some (or all) of the same work for the purposes of regulatory oversight - how much redundant effort and costs is appropriate?