

Innovations in Performance Management: Integration of Strategy and Planning

Paul A. DeCotis, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, Albany, NY
Nancy W. Perry, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, Albany, NY

ABSTRACT

New York's approach to evaluating System Benefit Charge (SBC)-funded public benefit programs, in particular the **New York Energy SmartSM** program, ensures individual projects are assessed throughout their planning, development, and implementation phases for adherence to the program's original intentions. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA's) evaluation plan, the subject of this paper, proposes principles, methodologies, and guidelines for evaluating SBC-funded energy efficiency, low-income, research and development, and environmental protection programs. This paper presents preliminary baseline data collection plans, findings and successes (to the extent available) through the early stages of program planning and implementation, and identifies lessons learned as the program unfolds. It is hoped NYSEDA's experiences will serve as a model of best practices for other political jurisdictions to use as they develop their own evaluation efforts for public benefits programs. The model described in this paper is not limited to energy-related purposes and is intended to have broad application in many public policy areas.

Introduction

Preserving vital public benefits in a rapidly changing and restructured electricity industry is gaining momentum nationwide. Public benefits programs providing energy efficiency, research and development (R&D), low-income services, as well as environmental protection programs are being implemented in close to two dozen states. Each state places different terms and conditions on the use of public benefits funds over varying time periods, although the common thread among all programs is that each requires some degree of public accountability. Discussions continue at the federal level on the prospect of a national public benefits program for similar purposes although at this time no action has been taken to implement a national program.

New York's utility regulators named the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) as administrator of New York's system benefits charge (SBC) public benefit program during the State's transition to electric retail competition over the 1998-2001 time period. The New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) established \$234.3 million in funding over three years, with \$175 million of these funds administered by NYSEDA. The remaining \$59.3 million is being administered by New York's electric distribution utilities to meet continuing program obligations and close out other projects.

The PSC and NYSEDA agreed to create an SBC Advisory Group to serve as the independent program evaluator. The SBC Advisory Group is composed of 17 individuals representing the energy efficiency industry, environmental interests, national and State R&D organizations, power producers and marketers, utilities, business interests, and the New York State Legislature. NYSEDA is coordinating the program evaluation process on behalf of the SBC Advisory Group, and is responsible for overall

management, data collection and verification, analysis, and reporting. Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), a U.S. Department of Energy national laboratory, is under contract to NYSERDA to assist in developing and implementing the evaluation plan.¹

The Challenge

Evaluating public benefits programs poses a unique and challenging opportunity for NYSERDA, and the evaluation community generally. Unlike the former utility demand-side management programs which were designed to procure peak electricity demand and energy savings, public benefits programs are intended to meet broader public interests. As a result, it is necessary to evaluate not only direct performance, such as energy savings, but also other public policy objectives, including the effect on transforming markets to higher levels of energy efficiency in order to determine how well public benefits programs achieve their stated objectives. It is not feasible to rely exclusively on direct performance measures to determine how well SBC-funded programs achieve their goals and objectives. In many instances, qualitative methods and market-related data are required to adequately determine whether individual projects have achieved a desired level of “public benefit” and whether desired program outcomes have been met.

In this new era, more than ever before, evaluators must wrestle with how to evaluate practices and behaviors that are difficult to measure including:

- Determining whether a particular project has adequately reduced market barriers or transformed markets;
- Ascertaining if increases in economic competitiveness can be measured from the results of one or even several projects;
- Addressing whether the added value of customer satisfaction or increased comfort is sufficient to merit a project’s success and continuation; and
- Determining with any certainty that these programs caused or significantly contributed to goal attainment.

When it comes to funding, SBC evaluators face another very real dilemma. While the focus of evaluation is changing to encompass qualitative and quantitative benefits, the money available to conduct evaluation is steadily decreasing. Evaluation budgets of 5-10% of program costs a few years ago have been reduced to less than 1% percent in many states. At the same time, the number of programs being offered has increased. Yet, the outdated axiom “a dollar spent on evaluation is a dollar lost for implementation” continues to prevail.

The challenge is to define a new approach to evaluation that welcomes evaluators as members of the “program team,” responsible for program planning, design, implementation, data collection and analysis, and reporting. This emerging model of ongoing, integrated evaluation is based on economic necessity and common sense, and to a larger extent on sound public policy.

NYSERDA’s approach includes evaluators as members of the “program team,” and incorporates them in all project phases, including assisting in program planning, design, and implementation. This

¹ NYSERDA is to submit a draft evaluation report to the SBC Advisory Group, which will then report to the PSC and Department of Public Service (DPS) on NYSERDA’s evaluation, including recommendations for future action. The program evaluation report is intended to provide the PSC with sufficient information to determine the future of SBC-funded public benefits programs in New York beyond the initial three-year transition period.

approach is in addition to traditional evaluation work in data collection and analysis, and reporting. NYSERDA's evaluation is a collaborative effort among parties, including the Advisory Group, ORNL, program and project managers, and project contractors. A good example of this approach is the assistance provided in designing the standard performance contracting and new construction programs. NYSERDA program evaluators provided the analytical support for pre-screening energy efficiency measures for incentive eligibility, developed dollar incentives for measures, assisted in developing solicitations for contractor selection, and determined measurement and verification protocols for evaluating each of the programs. This team arrangement expedited program development and introduced "best practices" in program design to accommodate evaluation during all program phases. The interaction allows NYSERDA to assess the status of programs, refocus objectives if necessary, correct observed deficiencies, and maximize program successes and progress toward the desired objectives.

Description of New York's SBC-Funded Program Areas

NYSERDA's **New York Energy SmartSM** program offers three broad types of programs for implementing its SBC-funded public benefits program. Programs are offered for Energy Efficiency Services, Low-Income Energy Affordability, and R&D and Environmental Protection, and are grouped according to their functional similarity. These three program categories are also used to aggregate programs and outcomes for evaluation purposes:

- *Energy Efficiency Services*, include Energy Services Industry programs, Market Transformation programs, and Technical Assistance and Outreach programs. Consistent with the SBC-funded public benefits program plan approved by the PSC, NYSERDA expects to commit \$124 million to the Energy Efficiency Services programs. These programs are designed to assist in transforming energy markets by improving the energy efficiency of equipment and products, providing information to customers to foster improved energy decision-making, encouraging customers to regard energy efficiency as a value-added service, and cost-effectively improving the efficiency of electricity use.
- *Low-Income Energy Affordability*, includes a Direct Installation program, Public Housing Coordination program, and Market-Based Strategies, and Public Awareness programs. Consistent with the SBC-funded public benefits program plan approved by the PSC, \$13 million is allocated for Low-Income Energy Affordability programs. These programs will seek to reduce the energy burden² of low-income consumers by improving energy efficiency and providing energy management and specific energy aggregation strategies that will increase the market power and self-sufficiency of low-income consumers. They will build on the success of other publicly-sponsored initiatives by coordinating the delivery of programs and services that reduce energy use and costs of low-income households in the State.
- *R&D and Environmental Protection*, include Energy Efficiency and Strategic programs, and Renewable Energy, and Environmental Protection programs. Consistent with the SBC-funded public benefits program plan approved by the PSC, \$27 million is available for Energy Research and Development (R&D) programs. These programs are in four broad categories: (1) Renewable Energy, (2) Environmental Protection, (3) Energy Efficiency,

² A household's energy burden is defined as the percentage of income devoted to energy expenditures.

and (4) Strategic R&D. The primary goal of these programs is to develop new state-of-the-art technologies and facilitate their deployment into market applications. The focus of these programs is on field testing new technologies, evaluating performance, disseminating information on their applications, and developing strategies to promote greater and more widespread private sector involvement in public benefits R&D. The SBC-funded R&D programs will continue to invest in public benefits energy research that might otherwise not be provided by the private sector during the transition to greater competition in the electric industry.

Overview of the Public Benefits Evaluation Model

NYSERDA's **New York Energy SmartSM** program evaluation plan is based on guiding principles that are designed to ease the burden of data collection, and ensure that evaluation is rigorous and objective. Quantitative estimates of benefits will be made when possible, however, qualitative analysis of key benefits will also be reported. Case studies, illustrative of program specific outcomes, will be an important component of NYSERDA's evaluation effort. The framework for conducting **New York Energy SmartSM** program evaluation is based on the following guiding principles:

- Evaluation will be designed to ensure objectivity, fairness, and balance in terms of the types of data and information collected. Only data and information that is deemed necessary for evaluating the programs will be collected.
- Program evaluation will be based on sound methodology, credible data and analysis, and adhere to professional standards.
- The program evaluation will focus predominately on outcomes, impacts, and causality.

These principles will guide the evaluation process to ensure New York's electric ratepayers receive the greatest benefits possible from the **New York Energy SmartSM** program.

NYSERDA's evaluation plan is based on a five-step sequential model for evaluation. The model provides opportunities for feedback at all stages and is designed to:

- (1) *Identify the broad program objectives and goals used to guide evaluation.*
- (2) *Define the key success factors or criteria to be used to measure goal attainment.*
- (3) *Manage data collection and perform the required quantitative and qualitative analysis, including the design of data collection instruments and procedures for determining a program's success.*
- (4) *Use data and information collected during implementation to make mid-course corrections.*
- (5) *Prepare a report summarizing evaluation findings.*

Each step of the evaluation model is addressed in turn:

(1) Identify Program Objectives and Goals for Program Evaluation.

The New York Public Service Commission in its Opinion and Order on the SBC-funded public benefits program stated that the objectives of the program are to: (1) promote competitive markets for energy efficiency services, and (2) provide direct benefits to electricity ratepayers, or be of clear economic or environmental benefit to the people of New York (New York Public Service Commission July 30, 1998). NYSERDA's *Proposed Plan for Public Benefit Programs Funded by System Benefits Charge*, approved by the PSC, and the Memorandum of Understanding between PSC, the Department of Public

Service (DPS), and NYSERDA further defines these objectives to include:

- Improving the efficiency of electricity use through cost-effective, energy-efficient equipment, products, measures, and services.
- Transforming permanently the market for energy-efficient products and services, including informing the public about the full-range of energy efficiency opportunities and the transformation of the energy-efficiency market, and promoting the development and demonstration of new and innovative technologies.
- Fostering the energy efficiency industry and providing information encouraging customers to regard energy efficiency as a value-added service, measured in terms of energy savings, increased affordability, improved environmental quality, and other non-energy benefits.
- Addressing the energy affordability problems of low-income households by managing and improving energy use.
- Investing in public benefit energy RD&D, not otherwise provided by private markets, including promoting new energy technologies, and maintaining environmental monitoring and protection strategies (New York Public Service Commission July 2, 1998).

(2) Define Key Success Factors or Criteria for Measuring Objective and Goal Attainment.

A critical factor in determining program success is the ability to measure performance. Each of the SBC-funded programs has clearly identified objectives relating to the broader public benefits goals discussed earlier. Key success factors are identified and tracked, providing information on progress toward meeting the program's goals. These factors comprise a "family of indicators" for monitoring program progress and ultimately success. Defining key success factors is dependent on determining a "baseline" of energy efficiency industry activities and practices, customer awareness of energy use and energy savings opportunities, equipment availability, and purchasing decisions, among other information.

NYSERDA's SBC-funded programs will be evaluated from a "public benefits" perspective that goes beyond solely measuring energy savings, and economic and environmental benefits. Some programs that predominately provide direct energy savings, such as the SBC-funded Standard Performance Contract program (SPC), will be evaluated based, in part, on the energy reductions achieved. Other critical measures of success will include broader indicators such as, assessing the effects on building energy managers to improve overall building energy performance, increasing purchases of energy efficient equipment by equipment dealers and distributors, and increasing the number of energy services companies (ESCOs) providing services in New York, as well as including smaller customers and new market segments in ESCO business portfolios.

Market transformation programs will be evaluated using a broad set of criteria, taking into consideration the non-traditional benefits of these programs. Market transformation efforts will be evaluated according to their ability to stimulate customers to buy and use, and dealers and distributors to stock and promote, more energy efficient equipment and products. In addition, the ability of these programs to make lasting changes in customer purchase and use decisions, and in the manufacture and distribution of energy efficient equipment will also be assessed.

Energy RD&D and environmental protection programs are intended to develop and demonstrate new technologies and better monitoring of pollution or mitigation strategies. These programs will be evaluated according to their ability to: provide necessary and relevant information for decision-making; focus attention on existing or emerging public benefit needs; and create an infrastructure of partnerships and collaboration in order to achieve public benefits that might not otherwise be realized in a competitive

market.

Non-energy and value-added benefits contribute to a broader understanding of the ancillary benefits provided to New Yorkers from public benefits programs. Figure 1 lists some examples of non-energy and value-added benefits that will be evaluated.

It will likely take more than the three-year initial SBC-funded program implementation period to realize all of the benefits, particularly from market transformation, energy R&D, and environmental protection programs. In these instances, it will be necessary to view results from the perspective of direct program beneficiaries, including customers, equipment dealers, and energy service companies, as the primary evaluation criterion. It may also be possible to estimate quantitatively the expected benefits resulting from a program given progress observed at the end of the three-year implementation period by using reasonable economic and engineering assumptions to project expected future benefits. The need for this type of analysis will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Key success indicators, including market participants and inputs, program activities, and outcomes that will be used to track progress over time by major program category are shown in Figure 2. Major program categories include Energy Efficiency Services, Low-Income Energy Affordability, and Research and Development. These broad program categories show how progress will be tracked.

For evaluation purposes, each of the sub-programs, energy services industry, market transformation, and technical assistance and outreach programs; electric savings in weatherization, public housing energy efficiency, and low-income customer aggregation; and renewable energy and environmental protection, and energy efficiency and strategic R&D programs will be considered individually. This perspective helps in designing programs and determining important evaluation criteria, because it provides common program indicators within each major program category and allows for project results to be tracked from program start-up to completion.

(3) Manage Data Collection and Perform Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis Including the Design of Data Collection Instruments and Procedures.

Only data relevant to a program's evaluation will be collected. Each program will have different types of performance indicators, and the frequency and timing of data collection will vary. The data

Figure 1: Non-Energy and Value-Added Benefits

Non-energy and value-added benefits include:

- Expanding the State's energy services industry.
- Transforming markets to deliver higher efficiency products.
- Leveraging funds.
- Reducing pollutant emissions and improving air quality, water quality, and reducing noise.
- Creating and retaining jobs, and increasing State income and gross product.
- Increasing knowledge and familiarity with new technologies, and commercializing and demonstrating new sustainable energy technologies.
- Increasing energy affordability and comfort.
- Improving productivity, product quality, economic competitiveness, and marketing opportunities for the State's businesses, institutions, and municipalities.
- Improving energy diversity and efficient electricity use.
- Improving indoor living and work environment, in terms of air quality, health, and safety, and improving productivity and product quality.
- Establishing a public "energy efficiency" ethic.
- Collecting environmental monitoring data continuously, to enable long-term evaluation of regulations.

Figure 2: Identifying and Tracking Key Success Indicators

ENERGY EFFICIENCY SERVICES

<u>Market Participants and Inputs</u>	<u>Program Activities & Products/Services</u>	<u>Early Outcomes</u>	<u>Intermediate Outcomes</u>	<u>Final Outcomes & Impacts</u>
Small customers Res./ Comm./ Ind. Institutional Colleges/universities Power marketers and brokers Manufacturers Dealers/vendors Design professionals Contractors Lenders	Programs designed and implemented Incentives for full complement of energy-efficient equipment/products Engineering Auditing/technical assistance Aggregation/rate analysis Energy management services Encouraging consumer demand and product and services availability	Contractors selected Change in energy awareness & assistance sought Projects initiated Change in stocking & floor space Partnering between lenders and customers Changed designs & construction practices	Greater leveraging of funds Change in buying habits Change in building equipment/product specifications Increase in purchases of energy-efficient equip./products Greater awareness of energy use & savings alternatives	Increased equip./product availability Reduced barriers Increased sales Customer satisfaction Customer loyalty Energy/cost savings Non-energy benefits Sustained change in behavior

LOW-INCOME ENERGY AFFORDABILITY

Low-income households Multifamily buildings Public housing Weatherization Program Lenders	Programs designed and implemented Direct installation of equipment/products Auditing/technical assistance Aggregation/rate analysis Energy management/budget counseling	Contractors selected Change in energy awareness & assistance sought Projects initiated Partnering between lenders and customers	Greater leveraging of funds Change in buying habits Increase in purchases of energy-efficient equip./products Greater awareness of energy use & savings alternatives	Reduced barriers Increased sales Customer satisfaction Customer loyalty Energy/cost savings Non-energy benefits Sustained change in behavior Increased ability to afford energy bills
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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

End-use customers Comm./ Ind. Municipalities Colleges/universities Product equipment Manufacturers Renewable energy industry Environmental Community	Programs designed and implemented Engineering Product development & testing Monitoring Cost sharing Risk reduction	Contractors selected Projects initiated Overcoming technical & informational barriers Partnering/leveraging Product development Environmental data continuity	Greater leveraging of funds Meeting customers needs New products being developed & tested Information available for decision-makers	Reduced barriers Increased deployment Customer satisfaction Energy/cost savings Non-energy benefits New products & technologies Evaluating effects of environmental regulations
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collection process has started, and is being coordinated closely for programs that are similar in scope or address similar target audiences. In addition, evaluation studies conducted of similar programs run by other states or utilities are being reviewed for information that might assist in developing and implementing New York's SBC evaluation plan. This information is being used to help establish baselines for these programs in some cases, and to develop a more comprehensive way to measure program outcomes, in others. With ORNL's assistance, a bibliography is being assembled to include all market studies, program descriptions, and program evaluations relevant to New York's evaluation effort. Performance measures will be collected continuously or on some predetermined intermittent sampling schedule, depending on the type of program, information available, and the strategic importance of the program to the **New York Energy SmartSM** program's overall objectives. For example, the Standard Performance Contract program ties incentive payments for energy efficiency projects to performance. Contractors must submit energy use data before and after measure installation using International Performance Measurement & Verification Protocols (IPMVP).³ In addition, independent contractors will be employed to verify data from a sample of customer sites. On-site surveys will be conducted by NYSERDA program contractors to assess customer awareness of energy issues and savings opportunities, satisfaction, and other pertinent information. Baseline work for this program is underway and preliminary results will be available shortly. For other programs, data will be collected to establish a baseline or to collect post-project implementation results less frequently. For example, survey data will be collected to help establish baseline information on customer energy efficiency awareness for some market transformation programs, or to determine the extent of distributor and vendor stocking of energy efficient equipment. For the New Construction Program, NYSERDA will rely on a survey designed to gauge pre-program attitudes of architects and contractors of the value of energy efficiency in construction and renovation. Post-program follow-up might occur during implementation for some programs to provide pertinent information to judge success or determine whether mid-course corrections need to be made to program delivery.

(4) Use Data and Information Collected During Implementation to Make Mid-Course Corrections.

NYSERDA's programs will be modified, expanded, or discontinued, based on progress achieved throughout implementation. Real-time data collection and analysis is an important and integral component of NYSERDA's evaluation plan. For example, the application process for technical assistance and outreach programs has been streamlined based on participant feedback after the initial solicitations, to be less burdensome and easier for small businesses and local governments to participate. Similarly, if progress is being steadily made in transforming a product market to higher efficiency, increasing efforts in the area could stimulate the delivery of other value-added benefits and could assist in fully transforming the market for a particular product or piece of equipment.

Decisions will be made based on a careful review of program and project objectives and an analysis of performance indicators. However, it is critical that a project's contribution to broader program goals be carefully taken into consideration. For example, a project itself might have only limited success as judged by one set of criteria, although it might contribute significantly, as a complementary project,

³ The PSC requires the use of IPMVP to reduce the cost of measurement, increase reliability, and standardize data collection, specifically option B - metering; C - billing analysis; and D - calibrated simulation.

helping to achieve overall program goals and objectives. In this case, a project might be considered effective.

(5) Prepare a Report Summarizing the Evaluation Findings.

Based on all the above activities, the program evaluation process will culminate in a detailed final report to the SBC Advisory Group by NYSERDA, in consultation with ORNL, and a report to DPS and PSC by the SBC Advisory Group, setting forth its recommendations on NYSERDA's evaluation report.

Evaluating Process, Outcomes, and Causality

The **New York Energy SmartSM** program evaluation will consist of three broad elements: a process evaluation, an outcome evaluation, and an assessment of causality attribution. These three elements are intertwined, requiring that data collected, analysis performed, and conclusions drawn regarding any one of these elements will affect the other two. Accordingly, the interrelatedness of these elements becomes critical and requires attention.

NYSERDA's five-step evaluation model broadly applies to administration, service delivery, and customer response and satisfaction. Applying this model requires that barriers to participation, customer beliefs and behaviors, program activities, such as outreach and delivery, and program timeliness are monitored continuously.

Process evaluation includes assurances of timeliness, and efficiency and effectiveness in designing and delivering program services. Contract audit services will be provided to complement this evaluation and will be responsible for sampling and auditing program results. Once data on individual projects and outcomes is audited, it will be analyzed as part of the outcome evaluation.

Outcome evaluation is broadly defined to include establishing baselines of behaviors, practices, and energy use of customers and sectors served by **New York Energy SmartSM** programs. Once an initial baseline is established, objectives as well as more specific goals are determined to measure success based on actual program data, to the extent it is available, and expected future performance. Because of the short implementation period for **New York Energy SmartSM** programs from design, development, and implementation to evaluation of outcomes, this evaluation will identify the potential "gap" that exists between baseline and final outcomes. As a result, in many instances, this evaluation will only assess progress being made based on a program's ability to narrow this gap.

The chain of activities used to track progress is depicted in Illustration 1. In this example, chronological order is given to process measures, and the importance of process on program outcomes is easily seen. The steps are few and streamlined, and the identification of intermediate outcomes close enough in proximity to the inputs and activities to be undertaken, to improve the ability to identify a causal relationship.

Causality is defined broadly to assess efficacy in changing attitudes, behaviors, energy use, energy affordability, policy decision-making, technology development, and value creation. It is unlikely that a single variable will account fully for any program outcome. In many instances, there is more than one desired outcome for a particular program. Often a series of outcomes is desirable, with one outcome contributing to achievement of another. A hierarchy of logically sequential and related outcomes is defined that will allow causality to be assessed from early, to intermediate, to final outcomes and impacts. Relating specific program activities to achieved outcomes depends on identifying the "chain" of events

that logically connects program activities to outcomes. Analyzing the progress made along this chain, as well as case studies of program successes, will help establish the causal link necessary to evaluate the efficacy of these programs.

Intermediate outcomes provide essential mid-course indicators to ensure the program is progressing as intended or to determine whether changes are necessary before a program is offered again. For example, to increase energy affordability for low-income customers, several intermediate outcomes might be identified. In the case of direct installation of measures in weatherization-eligible homes, an identification of eligible participants must first be defined, products and equipment for installation must be available and economical, and meet specifications by application and building type. Equipment must be

installed and operated according to specifications to provide benefits to low-income customers, such as improving affordability of energy, and realizing the benefits of reduced energy use and lower costs. Affordability will be improved and ancillary benefits will result, including an improved living environment, creation of an energy efficiency ethic, and gains in environmental compliance for building owners, and economic development.

Tracing all intermediate and final outcomes and impacts to a specific program may be difficult, although tracing them to a portfolio of programs that did not exist prior to achieving these end results is more manageable. The further away final outcomes and impacts move from program inputs and activities, in terms of time and effort, the greater the challenge to determining causality.

Illustration 1: Identifying & Determining Causality



Summary and Conclusions

This paper provides a brief overview of New York's current and ongoing efforts in developing, managing, and conducting an evaluation of public benefits energy and environmental programs. With a limited budget and time constraints, NYSERDA has created a management structure and evaluation plan that takes advantage of available opportunities for real-time data collection and analysis, and breaks new ground in forging a team of evaluators, program designers, and implementors to join collaboratively to plan, design, and deliver programs, and coordinate their evaluation.

As the structure of the electricity industry changes, so too must the evaluation of public benefits programs. Evaluators cannot wait until after a program is completed to determine how well it met its goals or how it might have been modified to better meet its objectives. Such activities must be ongoing through the planning, design, and implementation phases of these programs. One thing is certain: evaluation can

no longer remain an activity that happens after the fact. Rather, evaluation needs to evolve into an ongoing process occurring simultaneously and in concert with all other aspects of programming. This model of evaluation enables evaluators to contribute their knowledge and expertise early on, and affords an opportunity to consider alternative program designs based on “best practices” that might not occur without ongoing evaluator participation.

Data collection is integrated into program development and delivery at the outset of the program. There is no need to “go back” and recreate circumstances and relationships for data collection. The frequency of data collection is increased, accuracy is improved, and face-to-face interviews with customers are ongoing as work is conducted. Program implementors or service contractors work in cooperation with program administrators and evaluators as data-collection agents. Independent data verification is handled separately as an auditing function. A separate contractor is hired to verify data, since payment to program implementors is based on proven performance. Once audited, reliable data is ready for use in evaluation.

While still in the early stages, New York’s evaluation model and infrastructure are in place for evaluating SBC-funded public benefits programs. This model can serve as the foundation for other public benefits evaluation efforts as energy industry restructuring efforts increase across the nation.

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