

SESSION 1A

CLOSING THE LOOP: THE USE OF EVALUATION RESULTS BY PROGRAM MANAGERS

Moderator: Edward Vine, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory/California Institute for Energy and Environment

PAPERS:

Evaluation as a “Learning-by-Doing” Tool for the Implementation of Local Energy Efficiency Activities

Jean-Sébastien Broc and Bernard Bourges, Ecole des Mines de Nantes
Jérôme Adnot, Ecole des Mines de Paris

The Importance and Influence of Evaluation in the Early Stages of Pilot Program Design and Planning: A Case Study

Johna Roth and Nick Hall, TecMarket Works
Rick Morgan, Morgan Marketing Partners
Kathy Schroder, Duek Energy

In it Together: Getting Evaluators and Implementers to Talk with One Another

Shel Feldman, SFMC
Judy Mathewson and Doug O’Brien, We Energies
Jennifer Holmes, Itron, Inc.

How Organizations Implement Evaluation Results

Jane Peters, Research Into Action, Inc.
Sharon Baggett, S.A. Baggett
Patricia Gonzales and Paul DeCotis, NYSERDA
Ben Bronfman, Quantec, LLC.

SESSION SUMMARY:

This session describes how program managers have used the results from the evaluations of their programs to implement improved programs. Four papers, representing work conducted in Europe, Kentucky, New York, and Wisconsin, are included in this session. The authors highlight both the challenges and opportunities in improving communication (closing the loop) between evaluators and implementers.

The first paper, “**Evaluation as a ‘Learning-by-Doing’ Tool for the Implementation of Local Energy Efficiency Activities,**” analyzes the gap between evaluation theory and practice. The authors review the issues linked to evaluation use and then provide suggestions for designing an evaluation methodology that focuses on integrating the evaluation in the operation process itself and on the usefulness of the evaluation outcomes. The application of this methodology is analyzed through a case study of a local promotion campaign of CFLs that was promoted in southeast France. The authors conclude that the main use of evaluation is not to quantify the results of a program but to learn how to work together, how to supervise and use an evaluation, and how to improve the operation management and the operations themselves. This way, the evaluation really appears to be a learning-by-doing tool for all stakeholders involved in the implementation of local energy efficiency activities. This is an excellent example of where U.S. evaluators can learn from our colleagues overseas!

The second paper, **“The Importance and Influence of Evaluation in the Early Stages of Pilot Program Design and Planning: A Case Study,”** describes the process of evaluating an energy efficiency program sponsored by Duke Energy in Kentucky over three years, focusing on evolving versions of a pilot program, so that it could be substantially improved before its formal launch. The focus of this paper is not so much on the program being evaluated, but on the ability of the evaluation effort to improve a program in its developmental and testing phase. The authors recommend that all newly designed or re-designed energy efficiency programs undergo this type of pilot testing that incorporates ongoing evaluations and early feedback approaches so that program problems and issues can be addressed before the program is launched to full scale.

The third paper, **“In it Together: Getting Evaluators and Implementers to Talk with One Another,”** describes the ongoing involvement of the evaluation team in discussions of program components and early looks at program activities impacts as part of the We Energies 55 MW Plan. The involvement of the evaluation team appears to have helped the sponsors and the implementation team identify information to be tracked and program features that reduce free ridership, as well as initiatives and implementation decisions with questionable cost effectiveness. At the same time, the resulting relationships entail additional costs and demand attention to maintaining the independence of the evaluation team. The authors conclude by stating that it remains to be seen whether the benefits achieved are limited to situations in which the sponsors are responsible for overseeing both implementation and evaluation, and where the sponsors have limited resources for program development

The fourth paper, **“How Organizations Implement Evaluation Results,”** discusses the results of a review of how the New York State Energy Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) used evaluation results during the first three years of program evaluation and places that in context of other organizations’ approach to evaluation. Three key components of evaluation utilization – organizational learning, direct utilization of evaluation recommendations, and evaluation capacity building – provide the context for the discussion of NYSERDA’s evaluation experience. The results of this review point to opportunities for improving the evaluation process at NYSERDA and demonstrate the value in conducting such a study – not only for NYSERDA but also for other organizations interested in “closing the loop” between evaluators and implementers.