SESSION 4

EVALUATION METHOD CHALLENGES IN THE REAL WORLD

Moderator: Michelle McGuire, Databuild Research and Solutions

PAPERS:

Second Time Around: Improving a Second Evaluation while Maintaining Comparability with the First
> Sara Bryan Pasquier, IEA
> Nigel Jollands, EBRD

Sample Size Selection in Energy Efficiency Research and Evaluation – The Use and Abuse of the Coefficient of Variation
> Andie Baker, Research Into Action

What Makes a Good EUL? Analysis of Existing Estimates and Implications for New Protocols for Estimated Useful Lifetimes (EULs)
> Lisa A Skumatz, Skumatz Economic Research Associates Inc

SESSION SUMMARY:

The papers in this session discuss some of the issues that evaluators need to consider when designing evaluation methodologies. The papers describe, through examples, how evaluation methodologies have and can be affected by stakeholder expectations (including those of evaluation participants), data availability and / or budgets. Conclusions are drawn about how consideration of these issues can affect methods (and subsequent outcomes) and lessons are outlined for future evaluation methodology.

The first paper in this session (Second Time Around: Improving a Second Evaluation while Maintaining Comparability with the First) presents the results of an evaluation of twenty-eight countries' implementation of a set of energy efficiency policies. This evaluation (conducted in 2011) repeated an earlier evaluation (conducted in 2009). Member countries participating in the first survey provided feedback on the process and outcomes. They anticipated this feedback would be addressed in the second evaluation. The paper describes the challenge of how to adapt the methodology for the second evaluation to address the feedback whilst ensuring comparability with the first evaluation.

The second paper in this session (Sample Size Selection in Energy Efficiency Research and Evaluation – The Use and Abuse of the Coefficient of Variation) discusses some of the tensions between the knowledge, skills and budgets of evaluation funders and the expertise and interests of evaluation consultants. It discusses, with evidence from consultants' proposals for an assessment of building stock, how this may result in inappropriate sample sizes for evaluation. The paper suggests some strategies for ensuring sample sizes are fit for purpose.

The third paper in this session (What Makes a Good EUL? Analysis of Existing Estimates and Implications for New Protocols for Estimated Useful Lifetimes (EULs)) is a study of the measure lifetime tables that have been developed and used for program planning and evaluation by utilities across the United States (US). The paper discusses the outcomes of a study cross-comparing the tables of measure lifetime values adopted by utilities across the US and tracking the underlying source(s) of the values and highlights the implications of the variation in EULs on evaluation outcomes. The paper suggests guidelines for determining reliable EULs and developing lifetimes for "new" measures and technologies, so that EULs can be used with confidence in evaluation methodologies.