SESSION 25

EVALUATING PROGRAM PILOTS IN THE REAL WORLD

Moderator: Ben Bronfman, The Cadmus Group, USA

PAPERS:

Pilot Programs to Mainstreaming: How Evaluation Can Help
Linda Dethman, The Cadmus Group, Portland OR
Shahana Samiullah, Southern California Edison, Rosemead CA
Anne West, The Cadmus Group, Portland OR

"When policies attack!": Adapting pilot evaluations to changing political landscapes.
Claire Murray, Energy Saving Trust, London, UK
John Fawcett, Databuild Research and Solutions Ltd, Birmingham

Uses of Evaluation Findings: Taking a First-Year Industrial Program to the Next Level
Doreen Caruth, Integrative Growth, Minneapolis, MN
Jean Bardeaux, Xcel Energy, Minneapolis, MN

SESSION SUMMARY:

This session will focus on issues in evaluating pilot programs and new initiatives within existing programs. Pilot programs are generally small-scale implementations that test new technologies, new designs or implement conventional components in new settings. Rigorous evaluation is probably more important for pilot programs than for conventional efficiency programs, as conventional programs have evolved to a point where savings can – and are - reliably be "deemed."

Nevertheless, since pilot programs are generally small-scale, and implemented without fully developed research designs, rigorous evaluation is frequently a victim of changing regulatory or policy environments or sacrificed for expediency sake.

The three papers in this session examine different aspects of evaluating pilot initiatives. In the first paper, Dethman, Samiullah and West focus on how – and whether – pilot programs provide the needed guidance to help them decide whether program ideas are good enough to be rolled out on a larger basis either as part of existing programs or as new programs.

This paper first presents two useful, but not often used, frameworks for conducting pilots– experimental and quasi-experimental designs. It then explores two pathways to assess energy-efficiency pilots: (1) involvement at pre-launch, where evaluation is incorporated into the fabric of the pilot; and (2) involvement at post-launch, where evaluation activities are designed after the pilot is underway.

The authors describe three pilot programs in the United States: an LED pricing trial, an appliance recycling retailer trial, and a pilot that encourages behavioral changes to reduce energy use in the workplace. These examples describe issues associated with the evaluation design and development that evaluators typically encounter when asked to assess pilots. The authors present a systematic approach for evaluators to use when asked to assess pilot efforts, no matter what state they find them in.

In the second paper, Murray and Fawcett describe the impacts of national policy changes on the evaluation of a residential pilot program. This paper discusses how to ensure that evaluations of programmes can remain relevant and influential against the context of a changing policy landscape. In particular, their research describes how important lessons were learnt through introducing new research elements and framing the findings in a way to maintain their traction and relevance to future policy.

Finally, Caruth and Bardeaux demonstrate how a systematic start-up evaluation of a commercial program led to significant program changes as well as the development of pilot component which targeted an underserved commercial market segment. Good evaluations that are part of the overall program planning and design process have a payoff for all concerned.