

Evaluating a Poster Child: Contributions of the Consortium for Energy Efficiency to the Residential Clothes Washer Initiative

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ABSTRACT

The penetration of resource-efficient clothes washers (RECWs) and the agreement on future washer efficiency standards are signal achievements, making the intervention that stimulated those changes a poster child for market transformation. To provide planners and evaluators with a deeper understanding of the nature of that child—the initiative that helped change the washer market—this paper reviews the rationales for the Residential Clothes Washer Initiative (RCWI) and the contributions of its developer and coordinator, the Consortium for Energy Efficiency (CEE). It also describes the difficulties of the evaluation effort itself, including some of the complexities of Client-Centered Studies such as this.

Based on the program intervention logic and its design logic, CEE's roles were as recruiter for the RCWI, information clearinghouse, and facilitator—rather than program designer and administrator. Accordingly, it is impossible to identify energy savings or other such effects as being attributable to CEE. Hence, the evaluation problem was to determine what added value CEE provided to the Initiative.

Interviews and available documentary evidence indicate that the recruiting effort, focused on voluntary participation and considerable local autonomy for sponsors, was an important contribution. So, too, were the development of common specifications for qualifying products, the information dissemination efforts, and the achievement of cooperative relationships with manufacturers and retailers. No other agency or organization provided these crucial inputs.

Problems in conducting this evaluation include the paucity of documentary evidence, the limited universe of knowledgeable respondents, and the close collaboration between the researchers and the clients. These issues are also treated in the paper.

Introduction

The market for resource-efficient clothes washers (RECWs) has changed considerably over the past several years. Virtually all major manufacturers, foreign and domestic, have introduced and promoted RECW models in a fight for market share. In some regions, the penetration of these washers now approximates 20%. Most important, manufacturers reached an agreement in May 2000 to make the current level of premium efficiency specifications standard in 2004, with further improvements in 2007, thus providing a clear signal of the sustainability of the energy-efficiency gains involved. Moreover, the manufacturers successfully lobbied in April 2001 for the Bush administration to accept these standards, at the same time that the Department of Energy was relaxing the standards that had been developed for air conditioners. For these reasons, many commentators have recognized the initiative that precipitated these changes in the clothes washer market as the poster child for success of market transformation.

The Consortium for Energy Efficiency (CEE), as well as its members and other participants in the Residential Clothes Washer Initiative (RCWI, or the Initiative) appear to have made major

contributions to this success. These contributions did not occur in a void, however, but in the context of certain market conditions and following or contemporaneous with activities of other market actors. Among the relevant market conditions are those affecting manufacturers. These include the ongoing search for new products and enhancements that position them as leaders with high value-added products, potential competition from offshore manufacturers with energy-efficient models, and pressures to address the Congressionally mandated review of minimum washer efficiency standards that was to occur in the late 1990s. Other market actors whose activities and contributions also seem likely to have affected the clothes washer market include two groups consisting primarily of individual utilities,¹ as well as the Electric Power Research Institute and the ENERGY STAR[®] program of the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. Accordingly, attribution of changes in the clothes washer market and specification of the value added by various actors, including CEE, is quite complex.

For readers unfamiliar with CEE or the RCWI, the following may be helpful. CEE is a public-benefit corporation whose purposes are: “(i) to accelerate development and availability to the public of energy efficient technologies which decrease energy consumption and promote policies of pollution prevention, and (ii) [to] improve communication and commonality of programs in this field” (Consortium for Energy Efficiency 1991). In pursuit of these objectives in the clothes washer market, CEE initiated the RCWI. It features the voluntary participation of utilities and other organizations that wish to promote the sale of RECWs among their customers or constituents. Participants agree in a Letter of Support to provide marketing assistance or financial incentives to promote RECWs. In turn, CEE provides program support services, including:

- Development of product efficiency specifications
- Periodic review of the specifications in light of market and technical developments
- Lists of qualifying models and relevant product test results
- Compilation and dissemination of information useful to program administrators, such as activities and results of other programs across North America, as well as news of market and regulatory developments
- Monitoring of negotiations relating to the federal minimum appliance efficiency standards

A number of the organizations involved in the RCWI have conducted their own evaluations of program functioning and success in their regions. (See, for example, reports on the web sites of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships, Inc., and the Wisconsin Focus on Energy, which are listed in the References section.) However, no systematic effort had been conducted to review the RCWI effort as a whole, to assess the value-added role of CEE, and to identify lessons that may be transferable to other market transformation initiatives. The project discussed here was designed to fill this gap.²

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: First, we describe the objective of the evaluation and the anticipated uses of the results. Second, after summarizing the study methods, we discuss the challenges encountered in conducting this research and analysis. We then review the major substantive findings of the research. Finally, we explore lessons learned—both those of relevance to the implementation of market transformation programs and those pertinent to the planning and implementation of future evaluations of such interventions.

¹ One utility group was the WUC (Western Utility Consortium), which included California utilities (Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas & Electric, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, and Southern California Gas), and a few other western utilities, as well as the Natural Resources Defense Council. The second group, REAL (Resource Efficient Appliances and Lighting) comprised the utilities most active in demand-side management in the Pacific Northwest, such as the Bonneville Power Administration, Tacoma Public Utilities, Seattle City Light, and Puget Power.

² The complete report is available on CEE’s web site (cf. Shel Feldman Management Consulting, Research Into Action, Inc., and XENERGY, Inc. 2001).

Evaluation of the RCWI: Objective and Anticipated Uses

The objective of this evaluation was to provide CEE's management and Board of Directors with an assessment of the organization's role in the creation, implementation, and ultimate achievements of the RCWI. The evaluation results were seen primarily as providing CEE with guidance for the design and implementation of future initiatives. Thus, one of the issues of interest was to assess the perceived value of program ownership to RCWI participants. (Although CEE provided information about program design, the specifics of design and implementation in a given service territory or region were left to each participant. Moreover, CEE left all claims of program savings and market effects to the discretion of the participants.) Reactions of participants to the opportunity for local ownership could guide the replication or modification of this program element in future initiatives. Other topics of interest included CEE's approach to developing and promulgating common specifications for qualifying products and its information dissemination activities, as well as its development of a cooperative relationship with manufacturers and retailers.

Another use of the evaluation was more strictly political. Several of CEE's members must justify their support of the organization to regulatory commissions by demonstrating that the funds involved are being used effectively to achieve public purposes. It was thus important for such audiences that the evaluation address the issue as to what added value CEE provided to the RCWI, over and above the efforts of program participants themselves.

The reader should note two implications of this discussion of evaluation objectives. First, with respect to the classification framework suggested by Stufflebeam (2001), this evaluation appears to be best characterized as a client-centered study. As described by Stufflebeam, this sort of study is prepared for clients who

support, develop, administer, or directly operate the programs under study and seek or need evaluators' counsel and advice in understanding, judging, and improving programs. The approach charges evaluators to interact continuously with, and respond to, the evaluative needs of the various clients, as well as other stakeholders. (p. 63)

As he further notes, "[These] evaluators are not the independent, objective assessors advocated [by others]." (ibid.) Furthermore,

It requires a relaxed and continuous exchange between evaluator and clients. ... Basically, the approach calls for continuing communication between evaluator and audience for the purposes of discovering, investigating, and addressing a program's issues. ... Concomitant with the ongoing conversation with clients, the evaluator attempts to obtain and present a rich set of information on the program. This includes its philosophical foundation and purposes, history, transactions, and outcomes. Special attention is given to side effects, the standards that various persons hold for the program, and their judgments of the program. (p. 69)

The danger to be avoided most carefully, in Stufflebeam's analysis, is that the study could become a pseudoevaluation, falling into the category of a public-relations-inspired study or that of a politically controlled study. The hallmarks of pseudoevaluation are the lack of information collected or released about the weaknesses of the program studied (pp. 13-16). In his concluding remarks on the client-centered study, he notes that

A major weakness is the approach's vulnerability regarding external credibility, since [clients] have considerable control over the evaluation of their work. Similarly, evaluators working so closely with stakeholders may lose their independent perspectives. (p. 71)

Clearly, these are issue of concern and should be considered as the reader assesses the remainder of this report.

The reader should also keep in mind a second implication of the project objectives. Specifically, the issues of particular interest to the stakeholders center on *program design logic* (how the intervention can be accomplished) more than on other aspects of the intervention. In other words, the evaluation was

concerned with what CEE added to the market intervention rather than with issues such as the energy savings achieved, the cost-effectiveness of the intervention, or the logic of utility promotion of RECWs, consumer rebates, or support of retailers through the use of “circuit riders.” Other studies have addressed the energy savings of RECWs and the broader program portfolio logic.³ In addition, various groups have conducted prospective studies of program cost-effectiveness. This study is unique in addressing the contributions of CEE as an umbrella organization.

Study Methods and Evaluation Challenges

The research was qualitative, involving the review of relevant documents, where available, and in-depth interviews. The interview guides were developed from hypotheses drawn from CEE executives and committee members as well as members of the research team. Areas of concentration included the history of the RCWI, identification of its particular design features, and assessment of the design and activity benefits as perceived by the informants. A broad sample of respondents was identified for interviews by senior researchers. This sample comprised not only RCWI participants, but also market actors such as retailers and manufacturers, who were included to ensure consideration of multiple perspectives on the issues of the evaluation. The process of completing the final report was extremely collaborative, entailing the circulation and testing of reconstructions of historical events by the research team against the recall of several key informants, in an effort to identify and correct any errors or misapprehensions before coalescing on the conclusions.

Although straightforward in concept and technique, this evaluation encountered severe challenges. These resulted from such factors as the length of time that passed between the initiation of the program and the beginning of the evaluation, the deliberate dispersal of responsibility intrinsic to the design or program implementation logic, concerns about proprietary information among manufacturers, and the close collaboration between the researchers and the clients.

As with many evaluations, the effort to assess the contributions of CEE began well after the program was in operation. Moreover—and, again, as is all too common—the documentary record of activities, decisions, and their rationales was largely missing and had to be resurrected from the fallible and sometimes conflicting memories of participants. This problem was further complicated by the fact that considerable activity had already taken place in the clothes washer market prior to the formation and entry of CEE into these activities. And, to confuse matters further, much of this earlier activity was conducted by informal entities, such as the WUC and REAL, with no official records of any sort. Moreover, their membership included many of the same individuals who became important forces in CEE (and thus had difficulty disentangling the roles and activities of the different organizations to which they contributed).

The greater challenge, however, stemmed from the design logic and its embodiment in the actions and perceptions of program participants and those affected by the program. In brief, CEE’s management based its design logic on the premise that the organization could contribute best to the transformation of the clothes washer market not as the program implementer, but as an active recruiter (for the RCWI), clearinghouse, and facilitator.

The underlying logic of the intervention itself was that manufacturers were hesitant to invest heavily in the production and marketing of RECWs because of concerns as to the expected slow growth of demand and the length of time that would then be necessary to recoup their outlays. CEE believed that this uncertainty and risk could be reduced if an intervention program could commit to financial and promotional support for RECWs over a multi-year period and induce strong penetration of the market

³ The different components of program logic are discussed in Sebold *et al.* 2001, pp. 4-8 to 4-11..

broadly across North America.⁴ To achieve this, it would be necessary to obtain participation from a wide array of utilities and other organizations and agencies interested in transforming this market. Members of such a coalition would have to commit to support and promote the program in their own service territories or regions over a several year period, while agreeing on a common set of qualifying specifications.

It was clear that most participants in such an Initiative would wish to be able to show that their involvement had been effective. Moreover, many would have to obtain regulatory approval for their involvement, contingent on the savings traceable to penetration of RECWs in their regions. CEE therefore designed its design logic to enlist a broad range of sponsors by allowing them to design programs that met the perceived needs of their customers and regional retailers, at a comfortable level of investment, while addressing the requirements of applicable regulatory bodies. CEE did not administer the intervention activities, did not offer a one-size-fits-all design, and did not attempt to identify itself publicly as having achieved specific levels of energy savings.

In its chosen role, CEE strove to obtain program participation agreements from electric, gas, water, and wastewater utilities, along with regional market transformation organizations. To secure their involvement, CEE provided numerous services, including documentation of program opportunities and costs suitable for regulatory review and approval. The organization also provided opportunities for interchange of design and evaluation information, as well as regular market news updates. Additionally, CEE developed and promulgated common performance-based specifications for qualifying models of RECWs through a systematic and open process.⁵ The decision to use performance-based specifications also allowed CEE to achieve ongoing working relationships with various members of the industry and to facilitate contacts between program participants and the manufacturing community.

The expectation was that the role adopted by CEE would facilitate the development of a broad coalition to support the development of a profitable market for RECWs, thus encouraging market entry by an initial set of manufacturers, followed by others once the opportunities for profit (and the threat of lost market share) were demonstrated. However, the ultimate indicators of program success—increased sales of resource-efficient clothes washers, energy savings, and water savings, could not be traced directly to the efforts of CEE, but would have to be allocated among other market actors as well as the Consortium. Similarly, more proximate indicators of market progress, such as the number of manufacturers entering the RECW market also fail to pass muster as unambiguously traceable outcomes of CEE's activities. Thus effects of CEE's activities had to be judged by more qualitative criteria—particularly, the perceptions of various market actors.

However, another consequence of CEE's chosen role was that, for the most part, only participants in the RCWI were likely to be aware of the organization's activities and their effects on the clothes washer market. This severely limited the sample of respondents able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of CEE's contribution. For example, state regulators focused on the investments and activities of the utilities under their jurisdiction, paying no regard to CEE. Similarly, most retailers were likely to be familiar only with the specific regional or service territory programs affecting their stores.⁶

⁴ This statement of the program logic was not articulated so clearly at the beginning of the evaluation effort. Indeed, several conflicting logics appear to have been in place when the RCWI began. In particular, some sponsors appear to have believed that the RCWI was necessary to force manufacturers to consider the development of RECWs at all. Others stressed the importance of inducing sufficient sales to support the argument that RECWs were not only technically feasible, but also cost-effective, thus meeting the criteria established by Congress for setting the minimum efficiency standard.

⁵ Feedback from the industry led to the use of performance-based, rather than prescriptive specifications. This decision provided manufacturers with opportunities to design their own technical solutions and to compete among themselves to reach different solutions and different levels of effectiveness. Such competition was further encouraged by the development of several qualifying levels and tiers, based on different performance levels.

⁶ Even among many "national retailers," participation in programs such as those promoting RECWs is often a function of the regional or local store manager—and sometimes even the manager of a particular department.

Within some manufacturing companies as well, managers or directors might not be aware of CEE's role as aggregator or facilitator, unless those individuals had been in their position for several years and their responsibilities included governmental affairs or related duties of a broad character. Furthermore, because many members of the RCWI used the ENERGY STAR program as part of their marketing platform (and because CEE cooperates closely with that program), the lack of clear understanding of CEE's efforts was sometimes compounded by a confusion about different organizational inputs. Finally, managerial staff of nonparticipating utilities attributed their disinterest in RECWs to a lack of perceived need (e.g., because of low electric or water rates) or a lack of regulatory support or pressure, and had little impression of the strengths and weaknesses of the RCWI or of CEE's activities.

Differences in perspectives and a lack of open access to information from manufacturers was also a major barrier to the evaluation. It would be expected that the perspectives of manufacturers would differ from those of CEE and its members. In particular, the respondents have no reason to credit CEE or the RCWI with having had any strong influence on their manufacturing or marketing decisions. Their culture is competitive and, while responsive to their perceptions of the market, the stress is necessarily on internal reasons for their decisions. Moreover, no documentary evidence was available to help resolve differences that emerged between the interview results from RCWI participants and those from manufacturers. The other market actors receive little if any benefit from contributing to the evaluation and their culture militates against sharing internal documents, lest those provide leverage to competitors, regulators, or other outsiders. (The fact that the negotiations on federal standards were going on at the time of the evaluation was probably not irrelevant.)

The close collaboration between the evaluators and the client was generally quite useful, but it also created some difficulties. On the positive side, the evaluators had ready access to staff of the organization and those documents that were available. Moreover, the sponsors' committee and its endorsement were extremely helpful in identifying many of the potential interviewees and securing their cooperation. Finally, the committee provided useful guidance in wrestling with the uncertain recollections of early program participants and their implications. However, the close involvement of the client does raise concerns about the independence of the evaluators and the credibility of the evaluation. These are treated in the final section of this paper.

Findings and Conclusions

This section first summarizes information that the interviews developed as the perceptions of Initiative participants regarding the benefits of CEE's efforts, along with their views of relevant strengths and weaknesses. This is followed by a summary of the perceptions of manufacturers and national retailers who participated in interviews. The final portion of this section offers several comments on the impact of particular aspects of the Initiative and conclusions relating to the main concerns of the sponsors..

Perceptions of CEE's contributions among Initiative participants

Almost without exception, respondents associated with participating utilities, regional market transformation organizations, and energy-efficiency advocacy groups believe that the activities of CEE have been integral to the success of the Initiative in making RECWs widely available and capturing market share in the double-digit range.⁷ Several respondents believe that a number of participants would have made efforts to stimulate the sales of RECWs, regardless of the development and flowering of the

⁷ It must be reiterated that these respondents represent participants in the RCWI and are familiar with the activities of CEE (albeit to varying degrees).

RCWI. However, they believe, those programs would have been uncoordinated, would likely have focused solely on resource acquisition rather than efforts to transform the clothes washer market in a sustainable fashion, and would probably have had limited effect on manufacturers or the broader market.

Perhaps even more important, several program managers indicate that the development and promulgation of qualifying standards by CEE was a crucial element in their decision to participate in the Initiative. The availability of a common design also allowed them to focus their resources on program implementation. Moreover, they believe that the use of common standards helped immeasurably in gaining cooperation from other market actors and thus contributed to the success of their programs.

A further contribution to the success of the RCWI was identified as CEE's activity in fostering communications about program designs and recruiting participants all across North America. By working with utilities that had been part of earlier efforts and providing a solid infrastructure, CEE was able to secure enough early participants so that other sponsors were willing to join once products were available. Reciprocally, the mobilization of new participants helped create a sense of momentum—of an organization and an initiative that was growing—and thus reinforced the initial participation decisions of the early recruits.

Several respondents who are familiar with the early history of the Initiative reported that the development of CEE was, in itself, an important step toward success. In their view, the informal groups leading efforts prior to the RCWI were simply not credible to other market actors. As purely *ad hoc* efforts, they could not communicate to manufacturers that utilities and other organizations interested in more resource-efficient clothes washers were about to do anything different from than the on-again, off-again rebate programs they had conducted in the past. It was important that CEE included large utilities, representing sizeable segments of the population, but perhaps even more crucial was the message that the organization would be an ongoing one.

Informants also identified the recruiting activities of CEE as a major determinant of the support that has been provided by manufacturers. By bringing together a variety of sponsors, CEE created a greater potential market, helping persuade several manufacturers to address the entire market rather than to develop a niche product targeted only to a limited audience of energy efficiency advocates and technophiles.

Critical comments from participants and their allies were limited. In particular, concerns relate to the perception of limited effectiveness of CEE in enlisting certain other participants, such as water utilities, and in clarifying the different roles and resources available from CEE, DOE, EPA, and other market actors. Confusion was also evident among some participants with regard to CEE's (non-)role in the efficiency standard-setting process.⁸ The one concern voiced with regard to the specifications was a concern on the part of some interviewees that the creation of several qualifying levels and tiers might complicate relationships with market actors and confuse the marketplace.

Perceptions of CEE's contributions among retailers and manufacturers

Interviews with representatives of several large national retailers confirm the effect of RCWI participants on the development of the market for RECWs. All of these respondents were quite aware of a variety of regional and local programs as well as the ENERGY STAR labeling program.

The retailers have only a sketchy awareness of CEE and its particular role in the Initiative, however. Nonetheless, they noted the consistency in qualifying standards across utilities and commented on this being particularly helpful to them. They also mentioned the value of several program elements, in addition to customer rebates, that may have been spread, in part, through CEE's clearinghouse efforts.

⁸ CEE is dedicated to fostering and implementing voluntary programs to raise efficiency levels. It does not conduct the types of advocacy activities involved in the federal efficiency standard-setting process.

These include sales training programs to support ENERGY STAR appliances, point-of-sale materials, and lists of qualifying models. These factors all appear to contribute to reports of the RCWI having increased stocking and sales of RECWs by these retailers.

A major benefit of the RCWI explicitly recognized by most manufacturers interviewed was the timely, comprehensive information that CEE provides regarding clothes washer programs and product introductions by competitors. Most of those questioned did not credit the RCWI or its antecedents with having affected their RECW designs or their initial production decisions. Indeed, they were adamant that their companies had invested in early research and development for RECWs for their own independent and competitive reasons. Some manufacturers also credit the Initiative with only minimal effect on their sales. At most, they acknowledge that local and regional programs have influenced their production levels and related marketing activities, but stress that they design and conduct major marketing efforts at a national level.

Nonetheless, several points suggest that the RCWI has affected manufacturers. First, the market aggregation effort has commanded their attention. Second, they note the importance of performance standards and the commonality of qualification criteria across North America. Third, the tiered specifications have created additional consideration and interest in the competitive opportunities they offer.⁹ On this evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that the RCWI helped reduce the perceived risk to the upstream market actors of investments in RECWs and, in turn, facilitated their entering into the agreement to move forward in this market over the next several years.

Comment

The evaluation results indicate that CEE made several specific contributions to the development and success of the RCWI. Substantively, the most important of these contributions appears to be the development and promulgation of the common specifications for qualifying models of RECWs.¹⁰ Manufacturers praised this achievement and contrasted it quite favorably against other efforts by energy efficiency advocates, in which specifications for qualifying products were apt to differ from one service territory to another. As they noted, differing requirements pose serious transaction costs for manufacturers and others who are attempting to serve broad national markets. Informants associated with utilities also found the common specifications of considerable value. For them, the early availability of the product requirements (and regular updated information as to what specific products qualify) simplified the processes of program design and achieving regulatory approvals, reducing administrative costs or allowing those expenditures to be shifted to other program activities. This was particularly important for smaller utilities that might not otherwise have had the resources to participate in the program.

The decision to shift from an initial preference for prescriptive standards—specifically, requiring that RECWs use a horizontal-axis design—to a set of performance standards also appears to have been crucial to the success of the initiative. In particular, the entry of Whirlpool into the RECW market, first with the top-loading Resource Saver model and more recently with the Calypso, may not have been accomplished otherwise with the ease and collaborative relationships that transpired. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the federal standards negotiations would have succeeded to the extent observed, had manufacturers perceived that agreement would lock them in to a particular technological solution.

We conclude that the key elements of CEE's design logic were effective in this market intervention program. Participating utilities and other organizations accepted the autonomy of designing

⁹ The full report also recounts anecdotal reports from participants that support these findings.

¹⁰ By implication, it is also likely that the efforts of CEE and its sponsors to keep ENERGY STAR qualifying specifications for RECWs consistent with those of the Initiative was an important accomplishment.

and implementing their own programs within the framework of the RCWI. Both the participants and other market actors found considerable value in the common specifications for qualifying products and in CEE's information dissemination activities. And CEE achieved a cooperative relationship with important manufacturers and national retailers. Finally, a review of the roles and activities of other contributors to changes in the clothes washer market indicates that no other agency or organization provided the opportunities and support needed for the aggregation, development of common specifications, or related activities. These resulted from the involvement of CEE; they clearly represent value-added contributions.

Lessons Learned

This section addresses two different, but related, sets of conclusions and recommendations that may be drawn from this evaluation. The first set pertains to CEE's role in future market transformation initiatives; the second, to the planning and implementation of efforts to evaluate such programs.

The Role of CEE in Market Transformation Initiatives

The RCWI program logic appears suited to situations where a technology is market-ready, but product availability is problematic because of the risk-related concerns of manufacturers or retailers. It may not be suitable for encouraging the research and development needed for products that are not close to market-ready, however. The adaptability of the program logic also seems problematic with respect to service programs, such as building commissioning, or complex technological interactions, such as increasing the efficiency of compressed air systems.

Certain characteristics of the Initiative *design logic* also bear further consideration. Relevant features include CEE's assessments of product performance, promulgation of common performance specifications, and information dissemination activities, as well as development of cooperative relationships with manufacturers and national retailers. Furthermore, the strategy of providing other organizations and agencies with perceived ownership of the local or regional program, as matched to indigenous conditions, appears to have been an important element of the RCWI success. Finally, the provision of staff, managerial, and information resources appear crucial in that it helped attract a number of sponsors who found that this infrastructure simplified their program approval processes and allowed them to leverage their internal resources.

One issue that may require further review when replication of the RCWI is considered is the degree to which CEE's role is publicized. Given the program implementation model, it would not be appropriate for CEE to claim direct credit for energy savings that ensue from interventions such as the RCWI. Furthermore, it would seem to be in the interests of CEE and its members that other market actors, such as manufacturers, national retailers, and federal agencies, take credit for their contributions to achieving increased energy efficiency. But it does seem reasonable for CEE to identify its contributions as enrolling a broad array of program supporters, facilitating relationships between the energy efficiency community and private sector market actors, and providing important infrastructure elements to the enterprise. By pointing to these contributions, CEE in no way diminishes the efforts of other stakeholders in the Initiative, or their claims to energy savings. However, CEE may be able to increase recognition of the organization itself and the benefits it offers. This would enhance awareness of CEE among other stakeholders and firmly establish its position as a facilitator and contributor to future initiatives. As a further result, this may add to CEE's ability to mount additional programs and improve its ability to achieve useful working relationships with other market actors.

Evaluation of CEE's Role

CEE is taking important steps in sponsoring its own evaluation of its contribution to the RCWI in recently instituting an evaluation staff within the organizational structure. It is to be expected that further experience with the evaluation process will increase the awareness of certain process issues, such as the value of formal documentation for program design decisions and, indeed, the development of an explicit program intervention logic and design logic in future initiatives. The lack of documentation and the failure to collect contemporaneous data that could be used to assess program effects or responses to implementation efforts constrained this evaluation. Moreover, the lack of a clearly articulated program logic forced the evaluators to spend considerable time on issues that were later recognized as tangential.¹¹

Reciprocally, future evaluators can improve on the efforts of the current team in focusing early in the process on the issues specific to CEE's activities. In retrospect, the project described in this report spent too much time wrestling with issues such as the relationships between CEE's activities and the market penetration of RECWs. It is likely that earlier, greater efforts to identify the program logic and its implications for issues to be evaluated would have resulted in a more focused and smoother evaluation process.

Finally, the difficulties of conducting an effective and credible client-centered evaluation should not be minimized. We believe this evaluation avoided the dangers of a pseudoevaluation, as described by Stufflebeam. The evaluation team consisted of several independent practitioners, with different views and different long-term interests. The sample was not limited to Initiative participants or to those who were most aware of and most favorable to CEE. Negative findings were reported and considered by management. Nonetheless, the danger of an overly favorable evaluation remained, in that only limited sources of information were available and in that the evaluators worked closely with CEE management in completing the final report. It may be wise in future such endeavors to institute an explicit review by a completely independent expert at such points as the completion of the research plan, the data collection, and the initial draft report.

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¹¹ We recognize that it is important to strike a balance on this issue. Sometimes the development of a highly explicit or rigid program logic that appeals to a broad coalition may entail an inappropriate amount of effort and may run the risk of causing some potential sponsors to withdraw from participation.

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