Benchmarking and Best Practices Research: Making it Real

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an innovative approach to benchmarking and establishing best practices for energy efficiency programs. Developed in collaboration with Consumers Energy, the approach has yielded significant benefits, including: successful redesign of the utility's multifamily program; strong program savings; high customer satisfaction scores; a rich database of information on peer programs; clearer understanding of how programs perform compared to others nationally; and a road map for future improvements in its residential program portfolio. The Consumers Energy multifamily program was the first program to go through this process; this paper uses the research conducted for this program as a case study on how the process works and how it has positively impacted program design and implementation.

A two-stage benchmarking and best practices exercise was established to quickly determine options and their potential. First, the evaluation team selected peer multifamily programs using metrics such as similar size and geography, similar or contrasting point in program lifecycle, and recognition as exemplary or notable with industry awards. The evaluation team collected data on dozens of key elements for the selected programs. Second, the evaluation team conducted additional research and peer utility program manager interviews for those programs that demonstrated significant innovation, strove for increasingly comprehensive energy savings, or delivered a significant portion of portfolio energy savings. To encourage participation from peer program managers, Consumers Energy shares the results of the best practices research in a memo or webinar with the intent of promoting continued discussion between program managers about common challenges and lessons learned.

Background

Consumers Energy, one of the nation's largest combination utilities, provides electric and natural gas service to nearly 6.6 million of Michigan's 10 million residents and in all 68 Lower Peninsula counties. In 2009, Consumers Energy launched a portfolio of energy efficiency programs in response to legislation,¹ which required the utility to meet annual energy savings targets, starting at 0.5% of utility load in 2009 and increasing to 1% of electric sales and 0.75% of gas sales in 2012. The legislation also created provisions for performance incentives if Consumers Energy exceeded the established targets for annual energy savings. Working with the Michigan Public Service Commission and other stakeholders, the performance incentive has evolved and now also considers the achievement of lifetime savings, encouraging the installation of more comprehensive, long-life measures.

Although many utilities across the country have had programs in place longer, Consumers Energy quickly expanded its offerings, meeting and exceeding the established targets each year the programs have been in place. This quick success does not mean Consumers Energy has not recognized the opportunity to learn from other utilities' experience. It has established a systematic approach to benchmarking and best practices so its program managers can easily gather information on other programs' performance and a range of program designs and ideas for future program enhancements. Figure 1 is an overview of the benchmarking and best practices approach.

¹ State of Michigan. Act No. 295, Public Acts of 2008. Available online: <u>http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2007-2008/publicact/pdf/2008-PA-0295.pdf</u>.

²⁰¹⁵ International Energy Program Evaluation Conference, Long Beach



Figure 1. Benchmarking and Best Practices Approach

This paper describes Consumers Energy's systematic benchmarking and best practices approach. Some specific results are presented from this approach based on its application to Consumer Energy's Multifamily Solutions program. The program uses a combination of in-unit direct install measures and tiered incentives to encourage comprehensive efficiency upgrades in common areas and units. In 2012, Consumers Energy's multifamily program had reached a saturation point, having provided direct installation of measures in over 70% of eligible units in its service territory. Utility managers were concerned with how long the program would remain cost-effective in its current form and wondered if there was a way to quickly assess what options were available based on the experience of other utilities and organizations serving the multifamily market. Because traditional evaluation approaches were viewed as unlikely to yield adequate insights for the magnitude of program changes needed, the evaluation team and program staff developed and conducted a customized two-stage benchmarking and best practices exercise to quickly determine options and their potential. In 2014, the Multifamily Solutions program accounted for 7% of the electric and 14% of the natural gas lifetime savings achieved across the residential energy efficiency portfolio.

Methods: Systematic Approach to Benchmarking and Best Practices Research

Identification of Benchmarking Targets

The process began by consulting with the program manager to establish the research objectives, with the intent to identify 12 to 15 programs to characterize and against which to benchmark. Among the criteria considered, the programs or pilots:

- Are of similar size or geography
- Are identified as exemplary (as designated by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy or ENERGY STAR[®], for example)
- Offer similar measures
- Are at similar or different stage in the program lifecycle
- Use similar or contrasting implementation strategies
- Demonstrate innovative or unique features

The program manager then reviewed the target programs to ensure they were sufficiently diverse and support a range of findings.

Benchmarking Data Collection

During the benchmarking phase, the primary data collection was from secondary sources such as program evaluations, industry reports, utility and program websites, and regulatory filings. The evaluation team (Cadmus, NMR Group, and Tetra Tech) also relied on institutional knowledge. Cadmus, in particular, has developed an internal database in which are archived many of the key qualitative and quantitative elements sought through the benchmarking process. **Table 1** lists the typical data fields which provide some consistency and comparison across the Consumers Energy programs for which benchmarking and best practices studies were conducted. It is important to note that not all data are available across all programs, but casting a wide net in terms of programs reviewed and data elements sought allow useful comparisons to be made with the data that are available

Program name	• Additional payments based	• Net-to-gross ratio and
• Program initiation date	on performance budget	method for determining
• Source of information	• Total spent	(e.g., deemed, customer self-
• Evaluator	• Incentives	report)
• Link to published	Administrative costs	• Free-ridership
evaluations	• Other program services	• Spillover
• Implementer	(costs)	Cost-effectiveness
Location of report	Goals: kWh gross	• Trade allies (which ones and
• Targets and eligibility	Goals: kW gross	how they function)
criteria for participating in	• Goals: therms gross	• Trade ally group/contractor
the program	• Delivery strategy (direct	network
Program offerings	install, prescriptive, custom,	Notable program features
(equipment, services,	and/or comprehensive)	Hard-to-reach markets
and/or measures)	• Other non-savings goals	(which ones and how)
• Incentives	• Gross and net kWh savings	• Inclusion of emerging
• Type of incentive (e.g.,	• Gross and net kW savings	technologies (which ones)
fixed, calculated based on	• Gross and net therm savings	• Additional funding source
savings, percentage of cost)		Application requirements
Incentive maximums		Application flaw rates

Table 1. Benchmarking Data Elements

The program manager then reviewed the database of comparison program characteristics, paying particular attention to quantitative factors such as the averages and ranges of rebate levels and initiatives and the costs of conserved energy. The program manager also reviewed qualitative factors such as delivery strategy and how the target market was defined, noting any innovative or unique factors. This review presented a broad perspective of how the Consumers Energy program compared to those offered by other utilities and also informed the selection of the best utilities and programs to target for further best practices research.

Best Practices Research

The best practices research focused on a subset of the benchmarked programs, which had been selected because of high program performance or other notable features (i.e., inclusion of innovative technologies, successful partnerships with key market actors). Typically, the evaluation team interviewed the manager to discuss key topics of the targeted program and to establish a bridge to the broader information-sharing community. During the interview, the evaluation team collected information that was not typically available through publicly available sources, such as:

- Program history and program cycle
- Budget and spending drivers
- Drivers for programmatic approaches and measure inclusion
- Non-energy savings performance metrics
- Implementation barriers and lessons learned

Initially, the evaluation team offered a monetary incentive for participation in the in-depth interview. Although none of the program managers were willing or able to accept, all were interested in receiving a summary of the benchmarking and best practices research. The evaluation team now provides this as a standard practice.

Reporting

At the conclusion of the benchmarking and best practices research, the evaluation team prepared a report that included a summary of the peer program characteristics, library of source material, comparison of Consumers Energy to the benchmarked programs, and findings and conclusions of the in-depth interviews with program managers. Recognizing that the database reflected a snapshot in time and that not all of the data sought were available for all programs, it was designed to be periodically updated as programs evolve and additional information becomes available. The library included program plans, evaluation reports, reviews of exemplary programs, case studies, and links to online resources.

Findings for the Multifamily Solutions Program

The evaluation team benchmarked the Consumers Energy program against 16 other programs located primarily in the Midwest and Northeast and in 13 different states.² It also conducted in-depth interviews with the managers of three particularly notable programs.

The evaluation team compared programs by magnitude of savings, the comprehensiveness and diversity of measures offered through the program, and cost-effectiveness. Consumers Energy's Multifamily Solutions program was found to be a top performer in savings and in the diversity, depth, and breadth of the measures offered. The program achieved higher net natural gas savings (measured in therms) than any comparison program. Representing over 20% of the Consumers Energy residential portfolio natural gas savings achieved in 2012, the Multifamily Solutions program makes up a greater portion of the portfolio than do similar programs. Consumers Energy achieves these savings cost-effectively; in both the utility cost test (UCT) and total resource cost test (TRC), it was in the middle range of target programs' cost-effectiveness.

The success of the Multifamily Solutions program presents a market saturation challenge. At the time of the benchmarking study, the program had served an estimated two-thirds of the multifamily housing stock in the service territory. To achieve deeper program savings, the program had to even more effectively engage

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² The programs selected and the criteria driving their selection are available in the appendix.

property managers and owners (PMOs). Consumers Energy was not alone. Although several peer programs had strong direct install components, many were seeking ways to achieve deeper, whole-building savings.

Barriers to participation for multifamily programs were numerous and varied. PMOs need to know the program exists, want an incentive and sense of urgency to participate, and must have the resources—notably time and investment capital—to do so. Even if a program addresses such needs, engaging PMOs can still be difficult. The benchmarking and best practices research identified several effective strategies that utilities used to reduce barriers and facilitate participation:

- Support PMOs and be their resource throughout the process, from energy audit to installation to monitoring/verification.
- Use the whole-building approach to capture all available savings and ensure that PMOs share in the realized savings.
- Create a network of contractors to perform energy efficiency improvements for the multifamily segment; train contractors and provide oversight to ensure quality service and installations.
- Identify low-interest financing options that PMOs can pay over time; for example, on-bill financing can be serviced through the savings to provide immediate positive cash flow.

As generally acknowledged, the multifamily sector has significant energy efficiency potential should participation barriers be overcome. At the time of the benchmarking research, the Multifamily Solutions program had already made strong progress in capturing savings and it has continued to seek ways to improve. Case studies of the experiences of the program's early participants and trade allies demonstrate these accomplishments and the benefits to PMOs, trade allies, tenants, and the utility.

Quantitative Comparisons

Quantitative comparisons across programs can be difficult to make due to the limited availability of public information and variation in reporting requirements and formats. However, where they can be made, these comparisons can provide powerful insight on the magnitude of savings opportunities and overall program performance.

Savings from Comparable Utilities. Consumers Energy achieved more evaluated net gas savings (therms) than any of the comparison utilities. On the electric side, only two (Wisconsin's Focus on Energy and Ameren Illinois) achieved more evaluated net savings in absolute terms than Consumers Energy. Focus on Energy combines three multifamily programs to achieve its savings. Ameren Illinois achieved its savings largely through its direct install program. **Table 2** shows the evaluated net electric program savings, residential portfolio savings, total residential sales, and the percentage of portfolio savings and percent of total sales represented by the multifamily program savings.

Table 2. Program and Residential Portfolio-Wide Net Savings, Total Residential Sales, and Normalized

 Program Savings – Electric

				Percent of		
	Program	Total	Total Res.	Residential	Percent of	
Program	Savings	Savings	Sales	Program	Residential	
Administrator	(kWh)	(kWh)	(GWh)	Savings (kWh)	Sales (kWh)	
Consumers Energy*	6,126,614	144,782,333	12,932	4.2%	0.05%	
Ameren Illinois **	7,385,000	354,254,000	11,771	2.1%	0.06%	
Wisconsin Focus on	7,883,342	126,367,389	22,229	6.2%	0.03%	
Energy***						

*The Consumers Energy data are from the 2012 Certification Report, 2011 EIA Sales and Statistics, 2012 Annual Report.

** The Ameren Illinois data are from the 2011 Evaluation Report and the 2012 Annual Report.

*** The Wisconsin Focus on Energy represents all energy generators in Wisconsin except for small municipal utilities and coops. These data are from the 2012 Evaluation Report and the statewide electrical generation data for 2010.

Table 3 provides similar information for gas savings. Gas savings achieved by the Consumers Energy multifamily program represents a larger portion of the portfolio savings and a greater percentage of gas sales than the Ameren Illinois and Focus on Energy programs.

Table 3. Program and Residential Portfolio-Wide Net Savings, Total Residential Sales, and Normalized

 Program Savings – Gas

Program Administrator	Program Savings (therms)	Total Porfolio Savings (therms)	Total Res. Sales (therms)	Percent of Residential Program Savings (therms)	Percent of Residential Sales (therms)
Consumers Energy*	2,355,768	11,730,412	2,031,000,000	20.1%	0.12%
Ameren Illinois **	293,274	5,268,109	490,000,000	5.6%	0.06%
Wisconsin Focus on	527,313	3,273,440	1,158,960,905	16.1%	0.05%
Energy***					

Cost-Effectiveness. The Consumer Energy program is cost-effective by both the UCT and TRC test. The program cost-effectiveness falls in the middle of the range of other programs' costs-effectiveness values. **Table 4** displays the range of cost-effectiveness of studied programs. The evaluation team reviewed program characteristics to see if there were drivers for cost-effectiveness results, but no patterns emerged.

Table 4. Multifamily Program – Benefit/Cost Ratios

Utility/Consortium	TRC	UCT
Consumers Energy: Multifamily Residential	2.59	2.60
Consumers Energy: Multifamily Business	1.98	2.67
Peer Utility - Maximum	3.34	4.05
Peer Utility - Minimum	0.80	1.30

The Consumers Energy TRC and UCT values are from the 2012 Certification Report (May 2013). The values for the other programs are from the latest publically available evaluation reports.

Net-to-Gross. The evaluation team identified the net-to-gross (NTG) values applied to selected multifamily programs. Multifamily programs tend to have a higher NTG ratio than other programs in energy efficiency portfolios or do not apply a factor to account for free-ridership at all. PMOs and tenants have sometimes divergent interests, so this segment is particularly hard to reach and PMOs are unlikely to invest in energy-efficiency improvements if the multifamily program offers no financial or other incentives. **Table 5** shows the NTG ratios applied to selected multifamily programs.

Utility/Consortium	NTG
Consumers Energy	0.90**
Com Ed	0.84*
Con Edison	1.00*
Entergy	0.85*
Wisconsin Focus on Energy: Direct Install	0.97*
Wisconsin Focus on Energy: Prescriptive	0.66*
NYSERDA	0.90**

* NTG values are from the latest publicly available program evaluation reports.

**Denotes a deemed value.

Market Saturation. During its lifetime, Consumers Energy's Multifamily Solutions program has served more than two-thirds (68%) of the multifamily housing stock in its service territory, over 180,000 units of the approximately 264,000 multifamily units.³ Only one other program had achieved similar market saturation (Focus on Energy). Its program manager approximated that the program has served 65% to 70% of units in the service territory, but also noted that this number is difficult to quantify because the program started in 2001 and the multifamily housing stock has changed over time.

Barriers and Strategies

Informed primarily through the interviews with selected program managers during the best practice phase of the research, the evaluation team identified or confirmed several barriers to participation in multifamily programs and the strategies the different programs use to address and overcome them.

Barrier: The split-incentive problem. A PMO can have little interest in making in-unit energyefficiency improvements because any expenditures increase the PMO's costs but any savings goes to the tenant who pays the energy bills. This creates a split incentive. Strategies for resolving this problem are:

• Strategy: Promote the ancillary or non-energy benefits from making energy-efficiency improvements. Such improvements increase the value of buildings, improve building aesthetics, improve tenant health, improve tenant satisfaction, reduce water use, and reduce tenant mobility. These non-energy benefits can enhance the reputation of the property and the PMO throughout the multifamily marketplace. For example, NYSERDA encourages PMOs to make improvements to increase the property's long-term value, make the building easier to maintain, and provide a healthier and more comfortable place for tenants to live. NYSERDA also provides case studies citing the

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³ Consumers Energy. 2009 Residential Saturation Study. Includes apartments and condominiums.

benefits of reduced energy bills for both tenants and PMOs. By publicizing such benefits, a program manager can align incentives for the program, the PMO, and the tenants.

- Strategy: Encourage PMOs to reduce whole-building energy use, not just in-unit consumption. Some multifamily programs require building-wide savings over a baseline scenario. For example, in order for a PMO to receive incentives (both rebates and financing), NYSERDA requires a commitment to save at least 15% of building-wide energy use over a baseline. Although there is no penalty for failing to achieve building-wide savings (PMOs do not need to return the rebate), additional incentives are available for buildings that exceed savings targets. NYSERDA offers four incentive tiers; the highest is a \$300 rebate per unit if the building as a whole reduces its energy consumption by more than 29%. This approach encourages PMOs to deploy both in-unit and common-area measures to reduce energy use throughout the building.
- Strategy: Offer bonus incentives through another path. Wisconsin Focus on Energy allows PMOs to earn additional incentives in its custom benchmarking program one year after measure installation if overall energy reduction is greater than was projected through modeling.⁴ (The PMOs must provide the building's energy data for review.) This approach provides incentives for PMOs to conduct deeper retrofits and to educate tenants about energy-efficient behaviors. Incentives are aligned among the program, the PMO, and the tenants to save energy.
- Strategy: Implement regulations, provide incentives, offer resources, and allow for PMO flexibility. The City of Boulder eliminated the split-incentive problem using all of these strategies. As part of its overall climate policy, the city has promulgated energy-efficient regulations for the multifamily sector. The city also made incentives and other resources available to help PMOs achieve compliance. By establishing the regulations, the city aligned incentives for the PMOs to install energy-efficiency improvements.

Barrier: Few contractors offer energy-efficiency improvements in multifamily housing. The multifamily segment is a hybrid of commercial and residential segments, which requires the skills of both commercial and residential contractors. Contractors who work on multifamily buildings may not see the opportunity or know how to educate PMOs on the energy-efficiency upgrades available outside the contractors' specialized area.

- Strategy: Create a market-based network of building-performance specialists (trade allies) to deliver quality services to PMOs. Programs that set an explicit goal to develop the network of contractors can reduce the costs and increase the uptake of making energy-efficient improvements. Programs can offer frequent training sessions to educate contractors on various types of energy-efficient retrofits and new technologies available in the contractors' specialties. For example, by focusing on market transformation, NYSERDA has created an industry of qualified professionals who service the multifamily market by establishing a performance partnership with large-installation contracting firms (with 100 or more staff, including sales and marketing teams). NYSERDA acts as a broker among the PMOs, the financing resources, and the contractors to engage in large-scale retrofit projects.
- **Strategy: Expand the trade ally network.** Focus on Energy has widely expanded its trade ally network by regularly soliciting new contractors to join its trade ally network and encouraging trade allies who already serve other Focus on Energy programs to expand their offerings to the multifamily segment.

⁴ Information available at <u>http://www.focusonenergy.com/sites/default/files/MESP%20Summary%20Sell%20Sheet.pdf</u>

Barrier: High transaction costs to PMOs for installing energy-efficiency measures. Engaging PMOs in making energy-efficiency upgrades in multifamily buildings can be a complex process for a utility. PMOs may not know which energy-efficiency improvements are most applicable or cost-effective. Even if they do, they may not know the type of contractors to employ, how to select the contractors, or how to verify that the measures were installed correctly. PMOs may also lack the financial resources to make investments in their buildings and be unaware of preferential financing options for efficiency upgrades. Altogether, these unknowns increase PMOs' transaction costs associated with making energy-efficiency improvements.

- Strategy: Be a single point of contact, providing information and guidance and helping PMOs reduce transaction costs of energy-efficient upgrades. On behalf of ComEd, CNT Energy guides PMOs through the process by performing energy audits, recommending measures, and assisting in hiring contractors.⁵ CNT Energy also helps craft requests for proposals, reviews bids, and lists recommended contractors. Once a PMO selects a contractor, CNT Energy oversees installation of measures, inspects that measures are correctly installed, and monitors measure performance. As another example, PSE&G contracts with vendors who perform energy audits and recommend improvements. PSE&G assists PMOs in selecting contractors, approves the bid to ensure it aligns with the recommended measures, and requires that the vendor who performed the original audit inspect the installed measures for quality assurance. This process supports the PMOs throughout the entire project, enables project continuity, and reduces the overall transaction costs of improving the property.
- Strategy: Bundle prescriptive measures to capture deeper savings and reduce transaction costs. By combining rebates for popular measures with those less likely to be considered and installed, the program can encourage PMOs to make comprehensive upgrades rather than piecemeal improvements. For example, Midwest Energy's multifamily program has bundled measures for high-efficiency improvements with low-cost thermal measures and also offers financing for insulation, air sealing, and new heating and cooling systems. By bundling low- and high-cost measures, Midwest Energy's program captures savings and still provides an acceptable payback to PMOs.
- Strategy: Where different utilities provide gas and electric service, create partnerships to provide comprehensive assessment and implementation of energy-savings opportunities. Projects in Focus on Energy's statewide energy efficiency and renewable resource program save both electricity and natural gas. Multifamily programs can also coordinate across utilities. Partnering with water utilities is a largely untapped opportunity for additional savings (and possibly funding).

Barrier: Multifamily buildings vary widely and have unique efficiency opportunities. Although many residential and commercial measures apply in multifamily structures, some measures are uniquely suitable to the multifamily sector.

- Strategy: Add measures specifically applicable to multifamily facilities. Implementation contractors, energy advisors, trade allies, or other contractors can suggest new measures. For example, an energy advisor for Focus on Energy suggested that ventilation fans that run continuously in parking garages in multifamily buildings are an opportunity for energy savings. The program manager identified the most energy-efficient ventilation fans and submitted the measure to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. The commission approved the technology as an eligible prescriptive measure for the multifamily program.
- **Strategy: Multi-sector funding.** Multifamily buildings can be metered at the individual unit level or master metered (i.e., a single meter tracks consumption for multiple dwelling units). In addition, they

⁵ CNT Energy is now called Elevate Energy.

may be served on a residential rate code, a commercial rate code, or both (e.g., individual units on a residential code and common areas served on commercial rate code). Some utilities provide both residential and commercial multifamily program funding as a way to achieve savings regardless of the rate code under which a multifamily property is served.

Program Awareness and Participation

In interviews, program managers noted the difficulty of engaging PMOs with multifamily programs. One said, "There is no harder segment to reach." These managers reported they have developed specific strategies, such as regularly and directly contacting PMOs. Other strategies programs use to engage PMOs and build relationships are:

- Participate in local apartment associations to increase program staff's knowledge of the broad range of issues concerning PMOs and to identify possible areas of coordination. For example, some energy-efficient upgrades could be made during other property maintenance activities.
- Publish case studies of properties that have successfully participated in the program to help PMOs see the benefits of the program.
- Educate tenants directly by sending mailers or conducting other outreach about energy-efficient measures available in their buildings.
- Ask trade allies who serve multifamily buildings to educate PMOs on the benefits of measures available through the programs and seek trade allies that have marketing and outreach capabilities.
- Develop relationships with utility representatives who work with PMOs on service issues and other matters and encourage them to direct the PMOs toward the multifamily program.

Conclusions

Benchmarking and best practices research effectively and quickly assesses the strengths and opportunities of key programs and identifies finite program resources in the areas most likely to improve or optimize program performance. Benchmarking validates key program design parameters such as qualifying measures, rebate levels, and savings targets. Best practices research provides more nuanced insights about participant engagement and ways to address barriers to increased participation.

Guided in part by the research conducted, some of the areas in which Consumers Energy's Multifamily Solutions program has adopted best practices are:

- **Multiple participation path.** The Multifamily Solutions program offers direct install, prescriptive, and custom measures for both in-unit and common areas.
- **Increased incentives for deeper savings**. The program provides customers with additional incentives for multi-measure installations and for projects that achieve greater savings (measured as a percentage of baseline consumption).
- **Multi-sector funding base**. Because multifamily customers can have either residential or commercial rates, multi-sector funding allows the program to serve customers regardless of their rate code. In 2014, the commercial component of the multifamily program contributed 14% of the funding, 37% of annual electric savings, and 19% of annual natural gas savings.
- **Partnership with alternate fuel providers and others.** Consumers Energy has dual-fuel, natural gas-only, and electric-only service areas, and it has cooperated with an alternate fuel provider to deliver projects in their services areas. Consumers Energy has also partnered with nonprofit service providers to offer financing options and additional project assistance for multifamily properties serving low- and moderate-income residents.

- Adoption of new technologies. The program continually seeks new measures and increases in the savings and persistence of existing measures. In 2014, 84% of all bulbs installed through the Multifamily Solutions program were LEDs and the rest were specialty CFLs.
- **Growing trade ally network.** Consumers Energy has been building its trade ally network. Its website provides an interactive map that allows potential program participants to find contractors by location and type of services.

Consumers Energy continues to track the best practices throughout the industry to ensure its Multifamily Solutions program effectively delivers savings, provides a positive customer experiences, and continues to develop the strong infrastructure required to serve this market segment.

Similar benchmarking and best practices research has been conducted for other programs in the Consumers Energy residential portfolio and identified quantitative and qualitative data that guide enhancements to program design, operation, and impact. Consumers Energy summarizes and shares these data with the contributing utility program managers and invites them to follow up with any information about lessons learned in the pursuit of program best practices. Establishing this systematic approach has enabled the evaluation team to launch benchmarking and best practices research quickly, while still being flexible enough to effectively address issues specific to a particular segment, program, or program manager. Senior management at Consumers Energy recognize program managers for ways in which their programs currently exemplify best practices, but encourage them to pursue continuous improvement. Benchmarking and best practices research helps to establish a roadmap for both short-term and long-term program enhancements and allows the program manager to plot their progress along the continuous improvement path.

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APPENDIX **Table A1.** Benchmarked Programs

Program Administrator	Comparable Geography and Demographics	Recognized as an Exemplary Program	Direct Install Component	Effort to Capture Comprehensive Savings	Property Owner/ Manager Support (One-Stop Shop)	Trade Ally Network	Financing	Tenant Education
Ameren (IL)	X		X	Х		Х		
Ameren (MO)	X		X					
ComEd Energy								
Savers**		Х		Х			Х	
ComEd	X		X	X				
Con Edison			X	X				
DTE Energy	X		X		Х			Х
Efficiency Maine						Х		
Focus on Energy*	X		X	X	Χ	X		
Mass Save			X	Х				
National Grid			X	X	Х			
NYSERDA*				X		X		
PSE&G*		X		X	X		X	
SMUD			X	X			Х	
Snohomish PUD				X		Х		
Vectren (OH)	X		X					

* Indicates program manager interviewed ** CNT Energy (now Engage Energy) implements an aspect of the multifamily program specifically for the regions around Chicago and Rockford.