

Multi-Program Satisfaction Surveys: Lessons Learned from the DOE Energy Partnerships/Climate Change Action Plan

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The Program Evaluated was Energy Partnerships for a Strong Economy (EPSE) which is also the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) portion of the U.S. Climate Change Action Plan.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EE) conducted a survey (1) to gather feedback from partners to show progress, improve programs, and report results; (2) to develop baseline data; and (3) to test a methodology for evaluating multiple programs.

Research Questions

The EPSE partner survey, conducted for DOE/EE by Macro International, Inc., with assistance from Sandia National Laboratories, includes a set of core questions such as value added of the program and overall barriers and satisfaction, which were asked across all programs, as well as some questions targeted to specific types of programmatic activities such as provision of technical assistance and national recognition. The logic of the survey is that in order to understand how to improve organizations and overall satisfaction, one must understand both the level of satisfaction and the relative importance given, each component of its offerings, and the attributes of those components.

Research Design, Methodology, Statistical Techniques, Use of Results

The methodology for conducting the EPSE partner satisfaction survey included development of a sampling frame, survey instrument and sampling plan. After a field test, the survey was administered in Fall 1996 by confidential phone survey using a computer automated system. Several analytic techniques, including correlation analysis, factor analysis, and regression analysis were used to determine the relative impact of each attribute on a component and each component on overall satisfaction, sample size permitting. Findings were analyzed and reported. The Department is using customer and partner survey data to drive its quality improvements. Plans are currently underway to brief the managers of the EOSE programs on the results of the study and to hold a program improvement planning workshop. Also, with the lessons learned, a model survey for evaluation of satisfaction across multiple programs will be documented.

Research Findings

The EPSE programs, many which were new in Fiscal Year 1995, appear to be having success meeting their objectives. Partners believe the EPSE and its component programs are consistent with the mission of DOE. There is support in terms of willingness to get involved again and to recommend the program to others. The majority of participants believe that the benefits of participation outweigh the costs and most can cite examples of impacts that the program has had on their efforts to reduce energy consumption and emissions. EPSE partner ratings fall within a typical pattern demonstrated in other government customer studies. Preliminary analysis also indicates some areas for improvement, and this information will be available in time for inclusion in the paper.

Problems Encountered During the Evaluation

Two problems are worth noting. The lack of demographic and segmentation data collection by government programs limits the level of sophistication and the validity of the sampling. Second, a satisfaction survey for multiple programs and activities is long and the process complex.