Getting the Best Evaluation for the Buck

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an approach to designing a cost-effective, comprehensive evaluation. This approach has been successfully used to evaluate Wisconsin's Focus on Energy (Focus) Business Programs Area during its first two years. The broad objectives of the evaluation approach are to conduct Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations. Designing the evaluation was challenging due to the limited evaluation budget, the number of business programs involved, and the need to accommodate the varying informational needs of program implementers and administrators.

To meet these challenges, the evaluation design has the following key elements:

- Work is organized by evaluation subject (impacts, market effects, and processes), not by individual business program;
- One member of the Business Programs Area evaluation team is assigned to each business program and remains involved in all aspects and at all stages of the evaluation;
- Questionnaires are designed to withstand many types of program changes; and
- The Business Programs Area evaluation team coordinates with other Focus evaluation teams.

This design approach has allowed evaluators to produce accurate impact results for both the Business Programs Area in total and for individual programs that contribute the most savings and program participants. It also has allowed evaluators to develop process, logic, and metrics recommendations fairly early in the program's development that are supported by multiple sources of evidence and analysis. These recommendations are used to improve program performance via internal redesign. Finally, this evaluation approach is flexible enough to respond and adapt as policy objectives shift and programs are realigned.

Introduction

This paper offers an approach to designing a cost-effective, comprehensive evaluation. The approach described here has been successfully used to evaluate Wisconsin's Focus on Energy Business Programs Area during its first two years.
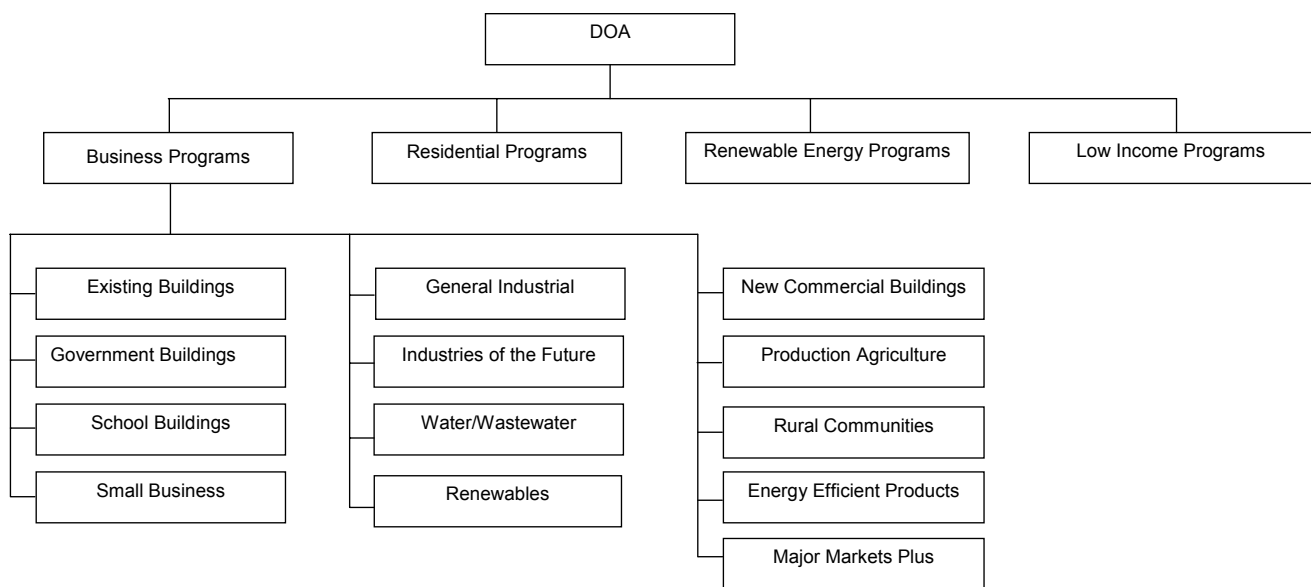
Paper Organization

To begin, Focus on Energy and its evaluation are briefly described. Next the challenges of evaluating Focus on Energy's Business Programs Area are identified. Key elements of the evaluation design in response to these challenges are then discussed. This sets the stage for more detailed discussions of the challenges faced by and approaches taken in the Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations of the Business Programs Area. The paper concludes with the accomplishments of this evaluation design.

Focus on Energy and Its Evaluation

Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy (Focus) is a statewide program begun in April 2001 to improve the energy efficiency of Wisconsin electric and gas customers and to encourage greater use of renewable energy. The program was created in anticipation of utility restructuring and transferred the administration of demand-side management programs to the Energy Division of the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). Focus is funded by a fee assessed on electric and gas bills and serves approximately 85 percent of Wisconsin electric and gas customers. DOA administers Focus at a high level and numerous contractors deliver its various programs: Business Programs, Residential Programs, Renewable Energy Programs, and Low Income Programs. This paper discusses the evaluation of the Business Programs Area and the interaction of that effort with other Focus evaluation activities.

In Winter 2002, the Business Programs Area consisted of the 13 programs shown in Figure 1. Participants in the business programs are nonresidential end users (e.g., commercial, industrial, institutional, and agricultural customers). The Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE), along with nearly a dozen subcontractors, deliver these programs. The budget for the Business Programs Area during its first two years was $39 million.
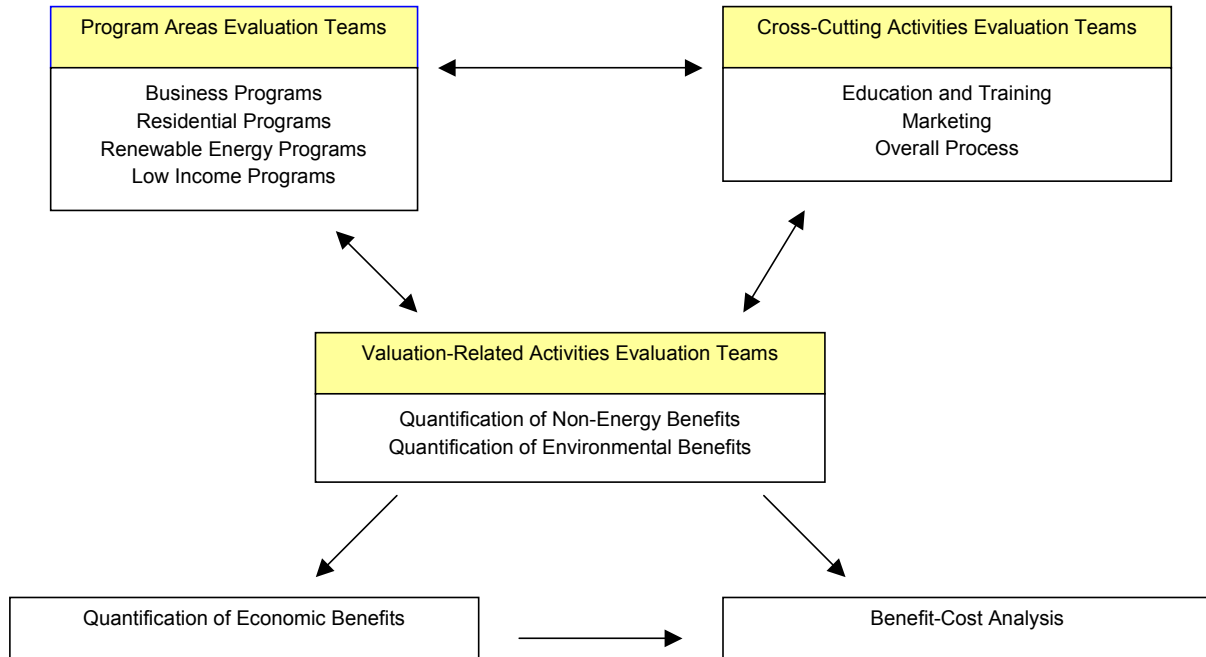
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                              DOA

Business Programs    Residential Programs    Renewable Energy Programs    Low Income Programs

Existing Buildings      General Industrial          New Commercial Buildings

Government Buildings    Industries of the Future    Production Agriculture

School Buildings        Water/Wastewater            Rural Communities

Small Business          Renewables                  Energy Efficient Products

                                                    Major Markets Plus
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Figure 1. The Business Programs Area

Evaluation

Each of the Focus program areas—Business Programs, Residential Programs, Renewable Energy Programs, and Low Income Programs—has an evaluation team. In addition, there is an evaluation team for each of the cross-cutting and valuation-related activities shown in Figure 2. The work of the cross-cutting evaluation teams concerns more than one program area. The ultimate objective of the Valuation-Related Activities evaluation teams is to produce a benefit-cost analysis for each of the program areas. The Business Programs Area evaluation team interacts with the other 10 evaluation teams to varying

degrees. The interactions that affect the design of the Business Programs Area evaluation are discussed in this paper.

The authors of this report are members of the Business Programs Area evaluation team, which designed the evaluation approach discussed here. This team is responsible for evaluating all aspects of the first three years of the business programs: impacts, market effects, and processes. DOA is the client.

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│ Program Areas Evaluation    │◄────────────►│ Cross-Cutting Activities        │
│ Teams                       │              │ Evaluation Teams                │
├─────────────────────────────┤              ├─────────────────────────────────┤
│     Business Programs       │              │      Education and Training     │
│     Residential Programs    │              │           Marketing             │
│  Renewable Energy Programs  │              │        Overall Process          │
│     Low Income Programs     │              │                                 │
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              ▲                                            ▲
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                           │ Activities Evaluation    │
                           │ Teams                    │
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                           │ Quantification of        │
                           │ Non-Energy Benefits      │
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              ▼                                            ▼
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│ Quantification of Economic  │──────────►   │    Benefit-Cost Analysis        │
│ Benefits                    │              │                                 │
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Figure 2. Evaluation of the Business Programs Area

Key Evaluation Design Elements

The broad objectives of the Business Programs Area evaluation are to conduct Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations. To accomplish these objectives for program years one and two, the Business Programs Area evaluation team had an annual budget that was about 4 percent of the Business Programs Area annual budget. While this may seem an ample evaluation budget, the demands on the Business Programs Area evaluation had the potential to overwhelm the available budget as evidenced by the following challenges:

- The large number of business programs—13 as shown in Figure 1.
- The business programs were new and, as it turns out, subject to change.
- All three aspects of the evaluation—impacts, market effects, and processes—are essentially of equal importance.
- Business program managers' desire for program-specific results.
- Necessity of reserving funds to respond to special requests by DOA.
- Business Programs Area staff's interest in utilizing the expertise of the evaluation team.
- DOA's desire for quarterly reporting on evaluation results.
- Reporting on evaluation results had to accommodate various audiences, including DOA and others in state government and Business Programs Area staff at all levels, top management, individual business program managers, and field staff.

- The evaluation of Focus's Business Programs Area is not an isolated effort but overlaps other Focus evaluation activities as indicated in Figure 2.

In response to the challenges listed above, evaluation of the Business Programs Area takes an integrated approach, economizing across business programs as well as across evaluation activities whenever possible. To accomplish this, there are four key elements of the evaluation design:

1. Work is organized by evaluation subject (impacts, market effects, and processes), not by individual business program.
2. One member of the Business Programs Area evaluation team is assigned to each business program (Evaluation Program Lead) and remains involved in all aspects and at all stages of the evaluation.
3. Questionnaire design.
4. The Business Programs Area evaluation team coordinates with other Focus evaluation teams.

Each of these key evaluation design elements is discussed below. Discussions of the specific challenges faced by and approaches taken in the Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations of the Business Programs Area follow. The paper concludes with the accomplishments of this evaluation design.

Work Organized by Evaluation Subject

The Business Programs Area evaluation is organized by subject—impacts, market effects, and processes—rather than by individual business program. It became clear very early in the evaluation planning process that an annual evaluation budget of about $65 thousand per program could not support separate Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations for each business program,[1] especially when all three evaluation subjects are considered essentially of equal importance and given DOA's desire for quarterly reporting. On the other hand, the total annual evaluation budget across all business programs could support an evaluation organized by subject that recognizes the importance of each evaluation subject and accommodates reporting on evaluation results more often than annually. Furthermore, organizing the evaluation by subject does not preclude program-specific results. Organizing the evaluation by subject also promotes consistency in the evaluation across programs.

For each evaluation subject, there is a member of the Business Programs Area evaluation team who leads that particular evaluation effort. Discussions of the specific challenges and approaches taken in the Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations of the Business Programs Area follow discussions of the three remaining key design elements.

Evaluation Program Leads

Each of the 13 business programs was assigned to one of four members of the Business Programs Area evaluation team who ensures coverage of the program in the Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations. Given the significant responsibilities of an Evaluation Program Lead and the tendency of the timing of those responsibilities to be the same for all programs, it was necessary for several members of the Business Programs Area evaluation team to serve in this role. However, efficiencies were achieved by assigning related programs (all commercial programs, all industrial programs, all agricultural programs) to the same member of the Business Programs evaluation team.

Evaluation Program Leads follow up as necessary with members of the Business Programs Area evaluation team responsible for the Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations, and vice versa. Evaluation Program Leads play specific roles in the evaluation as follows:

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[1] This figure is based on the total Business Programs Area evaluation budget during the first program year and the initial 12 business programs. The Major Markets Plus Program was not one of the initial business programs.

- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of program designs, strategies, processes, and activities.
- Help business program managers articulate their "program theory," including identification of market barriers, strategies for overcoming these barriers, and metrics to measure the degree to which these barriers have been mitigated.
- Ensure program issues are adequately addressed in data collection (e.g., questionnaires, process interviews of program staff) and analysis.
- Interpret evaluation results and provide program-specific recommendations.
- Provide business program managers a single point of contact for any questions or requests they may have concerning the evaluation.

Questionnaire Design

The Business Programs Area evaluation team fields several questionnaires to collect data from end users and suppliers of energy-efficient products and services for the Impact, Market Effects, and Process Evaluations. Each questionnaire addresses all relevant evaluation subjects for all relevant business programs. Using the same questionnaire to address multiple evaluation subjects is common. Questionnaire design is discussed in detail later in the context of the Process Evaluation. The Process Evaluation faced the most challenges with respect to questionnaire design.

Coordination with Other Focus Evaluation Teams

The evaluation of Focus's Business Programs Area is not an isolated effort but overlaps other Focus evaluation activities as indicated in Figure 2. Consequently, the Business Programs Area evaluation team, in addition to evaluating the Business Programs Area's impacts, market effects, and processes, coordinates with other Focus evaluation teams. This coordination typically involves either the collection or provision of data. At the request of members of the Quantification of Non-Energy Benefits and Marketing evaluation teams, questions have been included on the various questionnaires used to collect data for the Business Programs Area evaluation. The Business Programs Area evaluation team provides most of the basic data used by members of the Quantification of Economic Benefits and the Benefit-Cost Analysis evaluation teams in order to produce results for the Business Programs Area. The Business Programs Area evaluation team must also help the Quantification of Non-Energy Benefits evaluation team produce results for the Business Programs Area.

Impact Evaluation

The primary objective of the Business Programs Area Impact Evaluation is to estimate gross and net (attributable to the program) energy savings across all business programs. The methodology employed to estimate gross and net energy savings was developed in response to the challenges faced by the Impact Evaluation. These challenges are identified first, followed by a discussion of the evaluation approach taken in response to these challenges.

Challenges

The Impact Evaluation faces the following challenges:
- The measures implemented by program participants are diverse (most of the business programs do not concentrate on specific technologies).
- The business programs serve a wide variety of customer types.

- The magnitude of program-reported gross energy savings varies widely across program participants.
- For the vast majority of measures implemented, the program tracking database does not contain sufficient information to conduct an engineering review.
- Business program managers' desire for program-specific results (i.e., each of the thirteen business programs).

Evaluating net energy savings is also challenging for the following reasons:

- The various business programs do not all offer the same services nor do they necessarily deliver the same service in the same manner.
- Participants in the same business program do not necessarily receive the same services, and it is not clear from the program tracking database exactly what services are received.

Approach

In response to the specific challenges listed above, the key elements of the Impact Evaluation are:

- The Impact Evaluation sample is stratified by the magnitude of program-reported gross energy savings and the cost to evaluate, which will result in the most efficient sample for the business programs overall.
- The level of the engineering review of energy savings depends on the magnitude of the energy savings and the complexity (standard versus custom, number of measures) of the measures implemented.
- A request is sent to the business programs managers for documentation and electronic files demonstrating energy-savings calculations and assumptions (e.g., old and new equipment specifications, operating schedules) for a sample of program participants in order to conduct an engineering review.
- For each measure for which an engineering review is conducted, brief comments on the results of the review are provided to the business programs managers.
- Data are collected from the entire Impact Evaluation sample to estimate the installation rate and the net-to-gross adjustment factor applied to energy savings. Only a subset of the Impact Evaluation sample receives an engineering review, typically program participants in strata associated with non-small energy savings. The data collected from the engineering reviews along with the estimate of the installation rate are used to estimate the gross adjustment factor applied to energy savings.
- Gross and net energy savings across all business programs are estimated using relatively aggregate adjustment factors, but estimates of program-specific adjustment factors are provided for informational purposes.
- The question sequence to estimate program attribution is consistent across all business programs, varying only by the type of interaction with the program.

The basics of the Impact Evaluation are discussed next followed by further discussion of some of the key elements just identified.

Basics. The Impact Evaluation uses engineering reviews of program-reported gross energy-savings calculations, onsite visits, and telephone surveys to estimate gross energy savings (verified gross energy savings). It also uses telephone surveys to estimate the fraction of verified gross energy savings attributable to the program (verified net energy savings).

An Impact Evaluation was conducted after the second, third, and fourth quarters of the first program year and after the second and fourth quarters of the second program year. Although DOA

initially requested an Impact Evaluation be conducted each quarter, the decision was made to conduct an Impact Evaluation only every other quarter due to its high fixed costs. The fixed costs of conducting an Impact Evaluation are essentially

- pulling the frame (from an ever-changing program tracking database),
- designing the sample (the population of program participants whose implemented measures have different characteristics each time period),
- requesting documentation from the business program managers necessary to conduct the engineering review,
- updating the questionnaire to reflect program changes,
- managing the survey effort, and
- producing the impact results.

An every-other-quarter Impact Evaluation sample consists of about twice the number of program participants than would have been included in a quarterly Impact Evaluation sample. So, the move to an Impact Evaluation only every other quarter from every quarter did not affect the number of program participants included in the analysis.

Sample. The Impact Evaluation sample is designed to obtain the most efficient sample for business programs overall. In particular, to maximize the value of the engineering reviews, typically only program participants with non-small energy savings receive an engineering review. And, to constrain Impact Evaluation costs, only about 60 program participants each round receive an engineering review. However, at minimal additional cost, data are collected from another 100 program participants each round and are included, along with program participants receiving an engineering review, in the estimates of the installation rate and net-to-gross adjustment factor applied to energy savings. Therefore, although the Impact Evaluation sample is designed to obtain the most efficient sample for business programs overall, data are collected to support estimates of program-specific installation rates and net-to-gross adjustment factors. Estimates of program-specific gross adjustment factors are also provided, but the sample sizes may be small.

Data Collection. Essentially the same questionnaire is administered to all program participants included in an Impact Evaluation sample. However, an engineer delivers the "manual" version to program participants receiving an engineering review and a survey house delivers the CATI (computer-assisted telephone interview) version to program participants not receiving an engineering review but included in the estimates of the installation rate and net-to-gross adjustment factor applied to energy savings. These two delivery methods suit their respective situations. The engineer must verify gross energy savings, which often requires a series of questions tailored to the specific energy-efficiency improvements made by the respondent. Furthermore, engineers are assigned to interview program participants who typically have implemented complex or custom measures and/or have non-small energy savings; whereas the survey house is assigned to interview program participants who typically have implemented simpler or standard measures with small energy savings.

The verification of gross energy savings is largely unaffected by program specifics. On the other hand, program specifics do affect the estimate of program attribution or the net-to-gross adjustment factor. The question sequence to estimate program attribution is consistent across all business programs, but varies by the type of interaction with the program. During the first two program years, the program attribution question sequence had to accommodate several types of interaction with the business programs. The program attribution question sequence typically assumed awareness of Focus and referred generally to Focus services because the exact nature of the services delivered to a program participant is not necessarily known from the program tracking database. However, for several business programs (Small Business Program, Production Agriculture Program, New Commercial Buildings

Program, and Major Markets Plus Program[2]), awareness of Focus could not be assumed. In the cases of the Small Business and Production Agriculture Programs, the program attribution sequence referred specifically to the financial assistance received (discount or rebate). In the cases of the New Commercial Buildings and Major Markets Plus Programs, an interview was conducted first with the end-user's supplier to determine how the supplier changed the services they provided as a result of the supplier's participation in a business program. The program attribution sequence delivered to the end user then referred specifically to the supplier's characterization of the end-user's changed services.

Market Effects Evaluation

The Market Effects Evaluation is primarily concerned with the Business Programs Area's market transformation initiatives, but it is also concerned with any lasting effects attributable to the business programs. Regarding the Business Programs Area's market transformation initiatives, the primary objectives of the Market Effects Evaluation are:

- Assist business program managers with the development of short-term market effects (observable within one year) and longer-term market effects. Short-term market effects are included in the Milwaukee School of Engineering's annual contract with DOA and are also referred to as "contract metrics."
- Measure these short-term and longer-term market effects.
- Project the energy savings resulting from these market effects. These energy savings are not included in the program tracking database.

The Business Programs Area Market Effects Evaluation faces the expected and standard challenges to measuring market effects and projecting the resulting energy savings. The primary challenges faced by the Market Effects Evaluation are all related to assisting business program managers with the development of contract metrics. In particular, in this effort the Business Programs Area evaluation team has struggled to inform program design without becoming program designers. The basics of the Market Effects Evaluation are discussed next followed by a discussion of the struggle to inform program design without becoming program designers.

Basics

The Market Effects Evaluation uses telephone surveys of participants and nonparticipants in business programs to find evidence of lasting changes in participants, as well as nonparticipant effects brought about by the business programs. The market actors surveyed include end users as well as suppliers of energy-efficiency products and services. The Market Effects Evaluation also uses data from these surveys to identify barriers to making energy-efficiency improvements and assess the extent to which the business programs are mitigating those barriers.

The Market Effects Evaluation deals with contract metrics, which can be very program specific. However, organizing the evaluation by subject (i.e., impacts, market effects, processes) rather than by individual business program, facilitates reporting on broader market effects issues for the Business Programs Area, groups of business programs (e.g., commercial programs, industrial programs) and individual business programs. Results are reported at these various levels in order to provide informative context for future business program development. In addition, a Market Effects Evaluation that considers market effects issues for all business programs combined rather than separately for each

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[2] The Major Markets Plus is a demand-side management bidding program.

program is in a better position to develop methodology that can be employed to evaluate the market effects issues of multiple programs.

Informing Program Design Without Becoming Program Designers

Both DOA and Business Programs Area staff often seek the advice of the Business Programs Area evaluation team in program design. Evaluators have the grounding in program theory and the familiarity with evaluation results to provide valuable guidance on program design. However, they also face serious risks by getting involved in program design decisions. First, any confusion over the ownership of the program design may affect the efforts of program managers to make necessary changes and the extent to which program managers feel responsible for poor program results. Second, conflict-of-interest concerns may be raised. Evaluators may be accused of being less willing to report negative results for programs they had a hand in designing. Third, because program redesign decisions are often highly contentious, evaluators risk antagonizing program administrators (e.g., DOA), program managers, or both.

In order to inform program design without becoming program designers, the Business Programs Area evaluation team pursues several strategies:

- Facilitate the education of business programs managers in program theory.
- Provide Business Programs Area staff with expertise in market transformation and program design so they may become more actively engaged in defining program designs and goals.
- Place a greater emphasis on clearly identifying the problems with program theories rather than recommend specific solutions for these problems.

The Business Programs Area evaluation team acted as facilitators at a number of workshops designed to help business program managers articulate their program theory. At the workshops, the Business Programs Area evaluation team helped business program managers identify market barriers to implementing energy-efficiency measures, devise program strategies to mitigate these barriers, and develop metrics for measuring progress toward the mitigation of these barriers.

Process Evaluation

The primary objective of the Business Programs Area Process Evaluation is to identify areas where the business programs could improve and areas where the programs are doing a good job. The Process Evaluation faces the following challenges:

- The Business Programs Area team structure is complex.
- The business programs are new and, as it turns out, subject to change.
- Many of the business programs services seem ad hoc, depending on an end-user's needs.
- It is not necessarily clear from the program tracking database what services an end user or a supplier has received.
- The evaluation is occurring in a political environment.

The basics of the Process Evaluation are discussed next followed by a discussion of the evaluation approach taken in response to these challenges.

Basics

The Process Evaluation uses telephone surveys of end users and suppliers of energy-efficiency products and services participating in the business programs, telephone surveys of end users familiar with Focus but have chosen not to participate, as well as interviews with Business Programs Area and DOA staff persons. Reporting by the Business Programs Area evaluation team on processes is intended

to supplement, not replace, the information the business programs may collect on its own regarding various program services. The business programs, not the evaluation team, are in the best position to assess program services quickly and at a detailed level. On the other hand, the evaluation team is in the best position to assess program processes from multiple perspectives (end users, suppliers of energy-efficiency goods and services, Business Programs Area, and DOA) and their outcomes.

Organizing the evaluation by subject rather than by individual business program allows the Process Evaluation, like the Market Effects Evaluation, to report on issues for the Business Programs Area, groups of business programs and individual business programs. Many of the business programs offer similar services, which can be evaluated in the same manner. At the same time, unique program services are addressed as necessary. Cross program data collection, which ensures a consistent approach across similar business program services, along with program specifics allows process issues to be reported on at various levels. In addition, the individual business programs do not "stand alone," but operate within the larger organizational structure of the Business Programs Area. Therefore, it is important the Process Evaluation be able to identify process issues at that higher level.

Process Questions Emphasize the Outcomes of Program Services

The Business Programs Area evaluation team decided to use process questions that emphasized the outcomes of the program services received by an end user or supplier rather than the services themselves, for two primary reasons. First, although some business program services are explicit and reasonably well defined, such as an energy audit and an action plan, many of the program services seem to be less defined and more ad hoc depending on an end-user's needs. In order to write informative process questions about a specific program service, it must be well defined. In addition, it is not necessarily clear from the program tracking database what services an end user or supplier has received. Therefore, it is not possible to determine prior to the survey the program services a respondent should be asked about.

Second, even if it had made sense to write process questions for specific business program services, as it turns out, process questions emphasizing the outcomes of program services rather than the services themselves was almost a necessity due to changes in the business programs. Process questions emphasizing the outcomes of program services rather than the services themselves remained largely relevant throughout changes in the business programs. Simply remaining abreast of program changes can be challenging. Also, the results on the outcomes of program services designed to achieve similar outcomes can be meaningfully compared; whereas in order for the results on the delivery of these services to be meaningfully compared, the delivery method must be largely the same. Furthermore, the timing of the various surveys is not necessarily tied to a particular period of program participation. The Implementing Participants Questionnaire is tied to measure implementation and the Participating Supplier Questionnaire is tied only to participation in a business program at some point in time. Therefore, respondents to the same survey may have received different program services.

Consider the following example of process questions that emphasize the outcome of program services. The Implementing Participant Questionnaire includes a series of questions on identification of energy-efficiency improvements and another series of questions on cost-effectiveness information. The questions in these sections do not refer to possible specific program services received but, rather, to the outcome of whatever services were received with respect to identification of energy-efficiency improvements and cost-effectiveness information. As an example, the first four questions regarding cost-effectiveness information on the Implementing Participant Questionnaire are as follows:

q1. Did your organization use any information provided by Focus to assess the cost-effectiveness of energy-efficiency improvements?

q2. [If the response to q1 is "yes."] Which of the following types of information provided did it use? (Energy-savings estimates, equipment cost estimates, installation cost estimates, operation and maintenance cost estimates, energy cost projects, and other.)

q3. Does your organization have all the information it needs today to determine if energy-efficiency improvements are cost-effective?

q4. [If the response to q3 is "no."] Which of the following types of information is it missing? (Accurate energy-savings estimates, accurate equipment cost estimates, accurate installation cost estimates, accurate operation and maintenance cost estimates, energy cost projections, and other.)

This sequence of questions shows the emphasis on the outcomes of the program services received—various types of cost-effectiveness information—rather than the services themselves.

Not all of the Process Evaluation questions focus more on outcomes than delivery methods. An exception is financial assistance services provided by the business programs. Both the Implementing Participant and Participating Supplier Questionnaires include questions on the financial assistance application, acceptance, and payment processes. The Business Programs Area evaluation team presumes the program tracking database accurately reflects the financial assistance applied for and awarded. In addition, the interview guide the Evaluation Program Leads use when interviewing Business Program Area staff persons is modified as necessary to address changes in the business programs.

Evaluation in a Political Environment

The Business Programs Area, like other large energy-efficiency programs, can be highly political and evaluators must learn how to navigate these treacherous waters. A consequence of this appears to be hesitancy on the part of business program managers to accept less than positive evaluation results, especially Process Evaluation results. Unfortunately, Process Evaluation results that identify areas where improvement is needed are likely to be most informative.

The Business Programs Area evaluation team pursues several strategies to maintain its effectiveness in a political environment:

- Employing sound evaluation methodologies,
- Providing clear explanations of these methodologies,
- Balancing concerns about program results with identification of program successes, and
- Trying to maintain good relationships with program managers.

Furthermore, Process Evaluation results are excluded from Focus-wide reports specifically written for the public. The ultimate goal of these strategies is for the Business Programs Area staff and DOA to rely on the Process Evaluation to identify the areas where improvement is needed.

Accomplishments

Accomplishments of this Evaluation Approach

This evaluation approach had a number of notable accomplishments, including:

- The production of accurate impact results for both the Business Programs Area in total and for individual programs that contribute the most savings and program participants.
- The development of process, logic, and metrics recommendations that
  - could be determined fairly early in the program's development,
  - were buttressed by multiple sources of evidence and systematic analysis,
  - provided a coherent and consistent picture across business programs, and
  - were also available at a program-specific level.

- The use of these recommendations to improve program performance via internal redesign.
- Flexibility that allowed the evaluation approach to respond and adapt as policy objectives shifted and programs were realigned.

Ongoing Challenges and Limitations

Although this evaluation approach did have significant accomplishments, it also faced considerable challenges. These included:
- Accommodating program managers who want more program-specific information and tend to discount the value of higher-level findings.
- Operating in an open public process that heightens the usual sensitivity of program implementers and administrators to evaluation findings.
- State budget pressure on public benefits dollars that increases pressure on evaluators to defend their results.

Conclusion

While the evaluation approach described in this paper is not a magic bullet, it does accomplish a number of valuable things within a fixed or shrinking evaluation budget. These include timely information, credible information on program accomplishments and needs for improvement, and both high-level and program-specific information. It provides these things while still being responsive to the changing needs of program implementers and administrators.