

Utilizing GIS Software to Define and Understand Target Markets

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Background

Geographic information system (GIS) software is an important tool that can be used not only to locate and characterize target populations, but also to correlate their behavior and attitudes with their location. Such software can be cost-effectively applied to even small and medium-sized evaluations that seek to illuminate the dimension of geographical location.

The policy questions that can be answered by target market assessment using GIS software include: are programs, at the utility or statewide/regional level, reaching the intended target markets? What markets are typically under-served in a particular geographical area, such as a state or region? Should the services/programs be expanded and/or marketed appropriately to meet under-served markets? Does the current program design meet the needs of the target market?

Approach

The poster will illustrate successful approaches employed by two evaluations that made use of desktop GIS mapping software to illuminate issues regarding program reach and market needs.

In an evaluation of SCE's energy centers (Customer Technology Application Center, or CTAC, and Agricultural Technology Application Center, or AGTAC), GIS software was employed to identify and characterize each center's target audiences using seminar participant data. Then, SCE's non-residential customer population was mapped and characterized by their size, business type, and interest in using the centers' services. Finally, the evaluation results were used to determine whether the centers' target markets should be expanded through increased service offerings.

In a separate evaluation on behalf of the City of San Jose, GIS software was employed to assess the historic reach and overlap of participation among City residents in environmental and energy efficiency programs. An assessment of previous participation by zip code was then performed to identify locations in the City that were associated with relatively low participation rates. These under-served markets were subsequently characterized using census data, and the assessment was used to guide future City program design and marketing efforts.

