Portfolio Process Evaluation: An Enhanced Perspective with Cost-Efficient Options

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ABSTRACT

A unique process evaluation effort began by first assessing the phases in an overall project, such as solicitation, contracting, project design, implementation, etc. A supplemental, cost-effective evaluation was then created by re-analyzing the data by program area to assess program level process improvement opportunities.

An overarching process evaluation of the entire **New York Energy $mart[SM]** Program (the energy public benefits program in New York consisting of more than 35 program offerings) was conducted in the fall of 2001. One overarching issue for any public benefits program should be assessing the quality and ways it can improve its method of program delivery. Evaluation has almost always been conducted on a program-by-program basis. However, this program-by-program approach cannot easily find cross-cutting administration issues and areas where improvements might be made that could affect multiple program efforts. This new, overall evaluation effort was designed to investigate solicitations, contracting, form and project design, feedback loops, and program refinement across all programs and to provide an initial understanding of opportunities for improving program processes.

In addition, further data mining was able to provide a look at program areas and compare results within process phases with implications for program cost-effectiveness, efficiency of time and resources, and dollar savings. The data were examined by five program areas. These are: Energy Services Industry, Market Transformation, Technical Assistance, Low-Income, and Research and Development.

Introduction and the Creation of a Portfolio-Level Process Evaluation

The **New York Energy $mart[SM]** Program was established in January 1998 and is designed to continue energy efficiency, low-income energy assistance, research and development, and environmental protection programs in a competitive electricity marketplace. The program began July 1, 1998, with funds collected from customers by the electric utilities through a non-bypassable system benefits charge (SBC). The Public Service Commission (PSC) designated the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) as the Statewide administrator of most of the program funds. The PSC directed that the remaining funds be administered by utilities to complete or continue some of their existing energy efficiency and low-income programs. NYSERDA's public benefits programs are offered under the service mark name of **New York Energy $mart[SM]**. The **New York Energy $mart[SM]** Program is currently funded through June 30, 2006. The Program has four public policy goals:

- Improve system-wide reliability through end-user efficiency actions.
- Facilitate competition to benefit end-use customers.
- Reduce environmental impacts of energy production and use.
- Improve energy efficiency and access to energy options for under-served customers.

In four years, the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program has made significant progress toward each of these goals. The Program continues to fuel statewide economic growth, protect and enhance the State's environment, improve the efficient and wise use of energy resources, and help facilitate a fair and equitable distribution of energy resources and energy assistance programs. As the State's economy expands, and as electricity and energy demands increase, NYSERDA remains committed to partnering with businesses, industries, local government, and residents to make the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program a strategic tool to help these partners, and the State, achieve statewide policy objectives, and ensure that critical economic, environmental, and energy needs are met.

The **New York Energy $mart℠** Program effort contains numerous evaluation efforts with guidance from, and on behalf of, the SBC Advisory Group as the independent evaluator designated by the PSC. There are research, measurement, and evaluation activities that are specific to individual programs and conducted within these programs. There are also overall evaluation activities led by evaluators in NYSERDA's Energy Analysis group. A summary of overall measurement and evaluation activities and findings for the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program is available through annual reports (***New York Energy $mart℠*** *Program Evaluation and Status Report*, *September 2000*; *January 2002;* and Spring 2003, forthcoming).

The initial PSC order for the SBC funding stipulated $182.2 million for three years and included $650,000 for evaluation.[1] This low level of evaluation funding required measurement activities to occur within programs and provided only limited funding for overall evaluation of the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program. Faced with these limitations, the evaluation team knew they could not afford individual program evaluations for impact, process, or other types of evaluation. This led NYSERDA's evaluation assistance contractor, the GDS Associates, Inc. team, to recommend a process evaluation across programs on the overall portfolio.

To assess the effectiveness of the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program solicitation, contracting, and project start-up processes, one of NYSERDA's evaluation assistance contractors, the GDS Associates, Inc. team, conducted process evaluation interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to assess the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program Request For Proposals (RFP) and Program Opportunity Notices (PON) solicitation methods, including NYSERDA's solicitation process, contracting process, and project implementation, to determine satisfaction of NYSERDA contractors and end-use customers with the way NYSERDA conducts business.[2] As a follow-up to this initial work, a more detailed examination of the overall process evaluation of the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program with program-specific process reviews was recently completed.

Methodology

The portfolio-level process evaluation was designed to examine the processes that are employed by the individual programs within the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program. These include the design

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[1] The extension of the SBC program for another five years, from July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2006, has seen an increase in funding to $733.4 million for the five years with a significant increase in evaluation funding to $14.7 million.

[2] A survey was conducted in the fall of 2001 with the contracting entities that work with NYSERDA as part of providing the **New York Energy $mart℠** programs. These surveys served as an overall process evaluation and involved interviews with NYSERDA contractors and customers to solicit opinions and attitudes toward the project development and implementation **New York Energy $mart℠** process. Initial findings were reported in: NYSERDA, *Evaluation and Status Report, Initial Three-Year Program,* January 2002, pgs 3-8 through 3-18.

of the solicitation to obtain contractors to implement programs, such as Small Commercial Lighting, or ENERGY STAR® Products, among many others; the contracting process; project start-up for implementation; and communication with various individuals (*e.g.,* project manager, contracting personnel, legal representative) of NYSERDA. Many of these NYSERDA processes occur with firms that implement programs to end-users, not with the end-users themselves; however, some of the programs, such as Technical Assistance, are direct solicitations with end-users. Therefore, there is a mix in the type of contracts and customers involved in NYSERDA's processes.

This large diversity in the way that contractors and customers directly work with NYSERDA as part of providing the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program in New York directly impacted the research design of this process evaluation. This evaluation surveyed those entities that have a direct contracting relationship with NYSERDA. Sometimes firms contract to implement large programs to end-use customers or services (*e.g.,* advertising), while in other cases, firms contract to implement programs with intermediate service providers (*e.g.,* motors, appliance and lighting efforts). Other contracts are to design programs (*e.g.,* early Standard Performance contract), while some programs have direct customer applications with NYSERDA (*e.g.,* FlexTech and Technical Assistance, and several R&D efforts). In summary, the entities that have direct contracting with NYSERDA include both contractors and customers.

To meet this diversity of needs, NYSERDA issues a variety of solicications. These numerous types of solicitations, contracts, incentive awards, and different types of RFPs and PONs were divided into six solicitation methods to create more meaningful analyses (*i.e.,* greater homogeneity within these groups and differences due to solicitation method could be isolated from overall process issues). These six solicitations methods were: (1) RFP for Program Design and Implementation; (2) PON for Incentives (limited time period); (3) PON for Incentives (open enrollment); (4) PON for Incentives (competitive); (5) PON for Projects; and (6) Participating Service Providers. Due to budget, resource, and time limitations, a stratified sampling plan was developed based upon these six solicitation methods, selecting between 10% and 20% of the population in each strata. Table 1 lists the population sizes and sample sizes by the six solicitation methods.

Table 1: Solicitation Descriptions

Solicitation Method	Type	Population*	# Of Surveys (N)
#1 - RFP Program Design/Implementation	Contractors	30	6
#2 - PON Incentive (limited time period)	Customers	78	8
#3 - PON Incentive (open enrollment)	Customers	433	40
#4 - PON Incentive (competitive)	Customers	399	40
#5 - PON Projects	Contractors	74	8
#6 - Participating Service Providers	Contractors	117	12
			Total N = 114

* Population of contractor/customers with direct NYSERDA interactions as part of operating the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program at the time of this process evaluation effort.

The interview guides were designed to obtain: 1) overall satisfaction with NYSERDA, 2) overall satisfaction with each process area, and 3) satisfaction with the detailed components each process area. The five process areas are: solicitation, contracting, project design, implementation, and communication. Table 2 provides the list of components for each process area that were examined.

Table 2: Process Area Components

Solicitation Process • Duration of the NYSERDA proposal review and selection process • Clarity of the solicitations • Selection criteria and application requirements • Reasonableness of these requirements • Guidance provided during application development • Appropriateness of the time allotted for submittals • How participant heard about the program • Overall satisfaction with solicitation process Contracting Process • Ease of contract negotiation • Reasonableness of paperwork requirements • Contracting duration process • Overall satisfaction with contracting process Project Design Process • NYSERDA's encouragement of innovation • Openness to design improvements • Ability to define project objectives • Timeliness in dealing with problems or issues • Overall level of flexibility • Importance of NYSERDA involvement to program success • Participants' degree of involvement in the creation of project forms/documents • Overall satisfaction with effectiveness of design process	Implementation Process • Frequency of reporting requirements • Clarity of reporting requirements • Appropriateness of reporting requirements • Project startup • Coordination between NYSERDA programs • Oversight by NYSERDA's project manager • Responsiveness of NYSERDA staff • Program coordination with national or regional efforts • The project and firm evaluation processes • General NYSERDA policies • Timeliness of invoice payments • The payment process • Overall satisfaction with the implementation process Communications Process • Ease of communications between participating firm and NYSERDA program staff • Communications with the contracting group • Communications with the accounting department • Communications with evaluation staff • Communications with other NYSERDA contractors working with the project contractor or customer

Between October 15 and November 7, 2001, 114 contracting entities[3] of the **New York Energy $mart[SM]** Program were surveyed regarding their satisfaction with NYSERDA's program planning and implementation practices for this portfolio-level process evaluation.[4] This sampling is as shown above in Table 1. The January 2002 *Evaluation and Status Report* provided results by type of solicitation method across all respondents. A summary of these results is provided in the following section.

[3] For purposes of this process evaluation survey, a contracting entity includes energy service providers, contractors, and direct end-use customers as defined earlier in this paper.

[4] The survey sample was based upon a stratified random sampling design, stratified by customers versus contractors and six distinct solicitation methods.

As a follow-up to this initial process evaluation work, additional analyses were conducted to address the "next steps" identified in the January 2002 report and to prepare for future portfolio-wide and program-specific process evaluation efforts. This additional work is presented later in this paper after the summary of the initial portfolio-level process evaluation.

Highlights of the Portfolio Process Evaluation Results

Process evaluation goals, provided in the January 2002 *Evaluation and Status Report*, specified that the overall **New York Energy $mart[SM]** Program achieve a 75-80% satisfaction approval rating for each process area and that any component with either a dissatisfaction score greater than 10% or a satisfaction rating of less than 70% would be further examined. Overall satisfaction levels determined through NYSERDA's 2001 portfolio-level evaluation activities were found to be reasonable across all program processes, especially given that the 2001 detailed process evaluation included all the **New York Energy $mart[SM]** Program's initial start-up activities. Satisfaction ratings were obtained on a 1 to 5 scale with one being very dissatisfied and five being very satisfied. Approximately 80% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with NYSERDA's solicitation, contracting, project design, implementation, and communication processes. The highest level of satisfaction was recorded in the solicitation process, where 81.8% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the process. The lowest satisfaction level was 73.5% for the contracting, followed by the implementation process at 73.9% (NYSERDA, 2002). These results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Overall Satisfaction with the Project Processes – All Respondents

Process	*N**	*% Indicating satisfied or extremely satisfied*	*% Indicating dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied*	*Mean Rating*
Solicitation	99	81.8	5.0	4.1
Contracting	83	73.5	8.4	3.9
Project Design	95	74.8	6.4	3.9
Implementation	92	73.9	6.5	3.9
Overall**	**112**	**79.5**	**6.3**	**4.0**
Communications with NYSERDA program staff	105	83.8	4.8	4.3
Communications with contracting group	67	65.7	7.5	4.0
Communications with accounting department	31	64.5	0.0	3.9
Communications with evaluation group	8	87.5	0.0	4.1
Communications with other NYSERDA contractors	31	67.8	6.5	4.0

* Study sample size for the results presented.

** The study was designed to assess these individual project processes, provide an overall rating, and then examine communication with each of the possible interaction groups. Overall communication was not deemed meaningful in addition to communication with specific groups, and thus, an overall satisfaction rating with respect to the Communication process was not part of the survey effort.

The analysis then looked in detail at the process ratings by solicitation method, analyzing the results in the context of the type of program participant (*i.e.,* customer versus contractor) and solicitation method. This provided a better understanding of the results obtained by clarifying participant factors influencing process ratings versus ratings that might be an outcome of characteristics of the solicitation method. An example is provided by the analysis of the solicitation area and component ratings for Method #6, Participating Service Providers. The competitive nature of this type of solicitation, along with the services required by NYSERDA which include activities that are different than the contractors' normal business practices, may provide a context where this group has the most difficulty understanding what is required of them. There were several programs that use solicitation method; one example of which is the Commercial/Industrial Performance Program (CIPP). CIPP targets energy service companies (ESCOs) and contractors with the goal of fostering the growth of the energy service industry in New York by providing incentives to these groups to promote energy-efficiency capital improvement projects. A standard performance contract is signed between NYSERDA and the ESCO or contractor. Then, a contract is designed and approved between the contractor and the customer. This latter contract can be an energy performance contract or a fee-for-service contract.

The analysis for this solicitation method showed that ratings were statistically significantly lower than all other methods with respect to clarity of requirements and reasonableness of requirements, but this solicitation method had high ratings on the level of guidance provided to the program participants. This led to the suggestion that the amount of guidance and information provided during the solicitation process should be examined and expanded in areas where NYSERDA is asking experts to perform tasks that may be beyond their normal business practices. For example, after experiencing a slow start-up, the CIPP has sustained steady growth over the past four years in the number of projects and also in the number of ESCOs participating in the program. Several program changes, such as providing additional guidance, have been adopted to initiate and sustain this growth. Table 4 presents the overall process area results by solicitation method. More detailed findings from this level of analysis may be found in the January 2002 *Evaluation and Status Report*.

Table 4: Overall Satisfaction with the Project Processes– By Solicitation Method

	Solicitation	Contracting	Project Design	Implementation	Overall
Method	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	4.33	3.83	4.00	4.17	4.33
2	4.13	3.71	3.67	3.38	3.75
3	4.19	3.85	3.86	4.12	4.18
4	4.12	4.16	4.13	4.03	4.00
5	4.38	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.38
6	3.42	3.09	3.60	3.00	3.45

The 2001 process evaluation results by solicitation method showed that:

- The contractors involved in the RFP Program Design and Implementation method and the PON for Projects were the most satisfied (83% and 87.5% satisfaction levels, respectively) with NYSERDA's processes;

- The customers involved in the PON for Incentives (competitive) were among the most satisfied (87.5% satisfaction level), followed closely by customers of the PON for Incentives (open enrollment, 82.5% satisfied);
- The least satisfied participants were contractors responding to solicitations seeking Participating Service Providers (9.0% dissatisfied) and customers responding to PONs for Incentives (limited time period, 12.5% dissatisfied); and
- Both groups (contractors and customers) rate the implementation process as their most problematic.

Looking more closely at the areas of relative strengths and weaknesses, further assessment of the process evaluation data found that:

- The least favorable process was the contracting process, with 8.4% of those responding indicating that they were dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the contracting process;
- Another area for possible process improvement identified in 2001 centered on coordination of programs at both the national and NYSERDA levels. Results consistently revealed that, for some methods, respondents see significant room for improvement;
- One of NYSERDA's most important assets is its staff; and
- For all solicitation methods and processes, results show that customers and contractors view NYSERDA's program contracting, accounting, and evaluation staff very favorably.

Additional "Bang for the Buck" by Using a Program Area Analysis in an Interactive Process

Within the *January 2002 Evaluation and Status Report*, the NYSERDA evaluation team recognized that the process evaluation approach designed due to the evaluation budget limitations in the initial years of the NYSERDA program also provided a unique opportunity for further cost-effective process analyses. From this, the NYSERDA evaluation assistance contractors recommended that the 2001 survey data also be analyzed by program area. The original survey was designed by solicitation method and analyzed as such. However, by using this original sampling plan, data detailing the overall process as experienced by contractors and customers in specific programs was also collected. Each of these programs was within a program area, so the data could then be examined by analyzing it along a different axis. This second phase examined the survey results for the processes by the five program areas (Energy Services Industry, Market Transformation, Technical Assistance, Low Income Efforts, and Research and Development) to identify potential process improvements. Table 5 shows the five program areas that were analyzed for this evaluation work, the population of the program, and the number of interviews completed for each area.

Table 5: The Portfolio Process Survey by Program Area*

Program Area	Population of Program Area**	Total # of Surveys (n)
#1 – Energy Services Industry	176	17
#2 – Market Transformation	518	55
#3 – Technical Assistance	334	36
#4 – Low Income	6	2
#5 – Research & Development	53	4
Total	1,087	114

* Table 1 presented the original sampling plan. This table presents the re-analyzed sample where the original sample is analyzed by a different criterion, by program area instead of solicitation method. These 114 surveys provide feedback across the more than 35 **New York Energy $mart**[SM] programs.

** Population of contractor/customers with direct NYSERDA interactions as part of operating the **New York Energy $mart**[SM] Program.

An internal analysis for each program area was produced. In most cases this internal analysis contained a quantitative analysis of each process, including each process area's greatest strength for a specific program area and the process components where the survey respondents indicated the greatest opportunity for improvement. Due to the small number of surveys within the Low Income (n=2) and Research & Development (n=4) program areas, these areas were not analyzed statistically but were assessed using a qualitative case-study approach instead. These qualitative analyses also included program area strengths and opportunities for improvement but focussed less on statistical evidence since the sample size was not adequate for quantitative analysis.

Each program area was provided an internal draft of the results for their program area, highlighting the strengths and opportunities for improvement in each process area examined. A workshop was then held with the program team (consisting of evaluation staff and consultants that conducted the analysis and other NYSERDA staff involved in the program area, *e.g.,* contracting, legal, etc.) to discuss the research results and brainstorm past and future changes that could affect these and future findings. The results of this analysis will also be used for comparing baseline measurements to post-refinement measurements.

This re-analysis by program areas was done with minimal additional evaluation budget monies since NYSERDA, in its January 2002 report, identified the opportunity to re-analyze the existing data collected from a different perspective. In this way, greater process evaluation findings and input to program areas were made without the cost of additional surveying.

Highlights of the Outcomes from the Program-Area Analysis and Interactive Process

The following summary reports major findings from NYSERDA and its evaluation contractor's re-examination of the process evaluation data from 2001 by the five program areas. All program area results have been reviewed and discussed with NYSERDA program staff and action plans have been developed for improving processes where appropriate.

There were multiple ways to analyze the data collected for the overall **New York Energy $mart**[SM] Program process evaluation. A process evaluation working team was formed that examined and discussed various analyses. One of their early conclusions was that the most useful form of analysis would be to assess each program area against itself, rather than against each other. While analysis by process is very useful for improving areas that span across all programs and projects (*i.e.,* the

contracting department), program managers needed to see the data at their own program level in order to make most improvements. Results from this analytical perspective will also be extremely useful in establishing baselines and targeting areas for program improvements.

In support of assessing each program area against itself, there appear to be systematic differences between the program areas in how any one process is rated. There are also reasonable hypotheses that would expect systematic differences between program types and sectors given prior process evaluation results in the energy efficiency evaluation field. For example, it is common for participants in programs that require significant cost-sharing to have somewhat lower overall satisfaction ratings for their programs in comparison to participants in programs where the same measures are provided at no cost (significant gifts made to the participants, such as in low-income programs). This is quite logical as the expectations (*i.e.,* the degree that the participant is grateful for the program) are different based upon differences in gift and contribution proportions. Similarly, programs that require more cooperative work and changes to normal business practices might be held to a more rigorous standard than those where program participation is similar to the way work is usually performed in a given business or sector. This higher standard may cause satisfaction levels to be lower since innovative and unfamiliar work is required in order to deliver the services requested by NYSERDA. These types of systematic differences appear to exist in the program-area analysis, yet, they are not useful in directing process improvements (as these are generally inherent within a program area). Comparing a process rating, or a component rating, within the program area allows this effect to be negated. Equally important, a program area-by-program area focus creates the perspective that the data reported could be used as a baseline for the program area and action plans can be developed. Then, the overall process evaluation surveys can be repeated in one to two years to measure whether strengths have been maintained and to assess whether enhancements made to the program have resulted in higher satisfaction levels.

The program area-by-program area format is used for reporting initial findings, highlighting a few of the process changes that program managers have already made related to these findings, and also identifying other changes program managers are planning to investigate. Only summary information is provided herein. These summaries were taken from a larger effort recently conducted at NYSERDA that encouraged direct program area management involvement in understanding and responding to the findings.

Across all program areas, program participants frequently mentioned that a higher-level of program promotion was needed. In fact, while this question of promotion was not asked in the survey, over 15% of all respondents mentioned (unaided) the need for increased advertising of their program. Mean overall satisfaction ratings for each process were also examined as a function of contract signing periods for the various program areas. This was done to test the hypothesis that customers and contractors with later signing dates might have higher levels of satisfaction since many of the initial program start-up issues had been resolved. However, for the most part, no major improvements were found in respondents' satisfaction with the various processes when results were examined based on early (before January 1, 2001) and late (post January 1, 2001) contract signing dates. The Market Transformation and Technical Assistance program areas were exceptions to this finding. The satisfaction rating of the Market Transformation program area showed improvement in the later contract signing dates for the implementation process and "Overall Satisfaction with NYSERDA." In addition, the Technical Assistance program area revealed a considerable improvement in satisfaction within the project design process. Overall, though, it was often found that either satisfaction ratings remained unchanged across the contract signing periods or that there was even a slightly higher rating in the early contract signing period. An in-depth qualitative investigation into the contracting process and recent changes to this process has been examined by NYSERDA and is part of the current *Evaluation and Status Report* being completed in the Spring of 2003.

The Technical Assistance Program Area demonstrated a high satisfaction rating in "Overall Satisfaction with NYSERDA" with approximately 86% of respondents indicating that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied. Furthermore, survey results from this program area also revealed that only 6% of the Technical Assistance respondents were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with NYSERDA as a whole. The Technical Assistance programs have been designed with a customer-oriented focus, thus allowing for relatively easy access and participation. For example, one of the earlier significant changes in the contracting process was a special contracting process developed for the FlexTech Program. This program and its contractors and customers did not fit well in the prior NYSERDA contracting process, so a special process was designed for this program.[5]

With a mean rating score of 4.2 (out of 5), the Market Transformation Program Area demonstrated a high satisfaction rating in "Overall Satisfaction with NYSERDA." In fact, 82% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied in their dealings with NYSERDA. Perhaps even more impressively, only 2% of program respondents indicated that they were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the program as a whole. At first glance, these high ratings might appear to indicate that there is little room for program improvements. However, there were some process components where almost 10% or more of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied. These components were seen as areas where potential improvements are likely to have the largest impacts and the focus to assess opportunities for changes.

Another interesting program area analysis was revealed through examination of the responses from Research and Development (R&D) programs. Due likely to the complex nature of R&D projects, the time period between proposal submittal and contract signing was lengthy. This period ranged from seven months to one year for the four R&D program respondents. Satisfaction levels, however, do not appear to have been affected by this long time period. In fact, the contracting process received the highest overall rating, with all four respondents stating that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the process. The one R&D respondent who gave a low overall satisfaction rating with NYSERDA indicated extreme dissatisfaction with the contracting negotiations. It may be, that for R&D firms, a lengthy contracting process is an expected occurrence compared to the other programs that NYSERDA operates within the Energy Services Industry or Market Transformation program areas. This different expectation could create significant differences in satisfaction ratings.

More detail on the program area findings and the program area changes that have been occurring, and are planned, is provided in the *Evaluation and Status Report* currently being completed (forthcoming Spring 2003).

Recommendations for Others and Future Efforts

There are three major lessons this work offers to others within the energy efficiency field. First, conducting a portfolio-level process evaluation across all programs within a state, utility, or SBC-administrator can provide a more effective way to examine the overall process and discover potential areas of process improvements that can positively affect multiple programs simultaneously. This is an opportunity that has not been taken advantage of by most utilities or SBC-type program implementing organizations.

[5] The FlexTech program had been operated by the New York State Energy Office prior to the SBC responsibilities given to NYSERDA. With the creation of the **New York Energy $mart**[SM] Program, the FlexTech program was incorporated into this SBC effort. The FlexTech program serves a large number of customers that can be quite time-consuming in a full contract negotiation process. Thus, this program uses a more standardized program-application process that allows for easier and faster project initiations.

Second, from a fairly small-scale effort, NYSERDA was able to "mine" a large amount of extremely useful information. By reclassifying the respondents and re-analyzing the data, research results were made available to a larger audience. Often when a project is completed, the results are not analyzed nor applied to the greatest extent possible. Due to the success of this process evaluation effort, it is suggested that evaluators take the time to think about other possible uses for their data. This planning could result in not only lower costs and less time spent out in the field, but provide companies with meaningful data and results that can be used across various programs and processes.

The third lesson is that the process examination by program area provided many indications of the importance of the context for proper interpretation of process evaluation results. Program-specific process evaluations are often seen within the confines of that program and the importance of their context may not always be recognized. This could easily lead to some misinterpretation of a specific satisfaction rating in light of what has been found in other programs. Understanding the context may help to ascertain where program processes need to differ or where specific populations may need additional services or changes to make the process work better in their particular context. This is an element of using process evaluation findings that has seldom been undertaken since the larger context of a portfolio of programs becomes less obvious within a program-specific evaluation framework. It is suggested this be larger context be considered since it is particularly important for conducting comparative analysis and portfolio level analyses.

This work was quite beneficial to the **New York Energy $mart℠** Program evaluation effort. It is recommended that NYSERDA consider follow-up portfolio level analysis in the future along with the equivalent program-area analysis to track the effects of the process changes that are being implemented.

References

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