

Evaluation of Public Benefits Programs: A Review of the NYSERDA Experience to Date

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Presentation

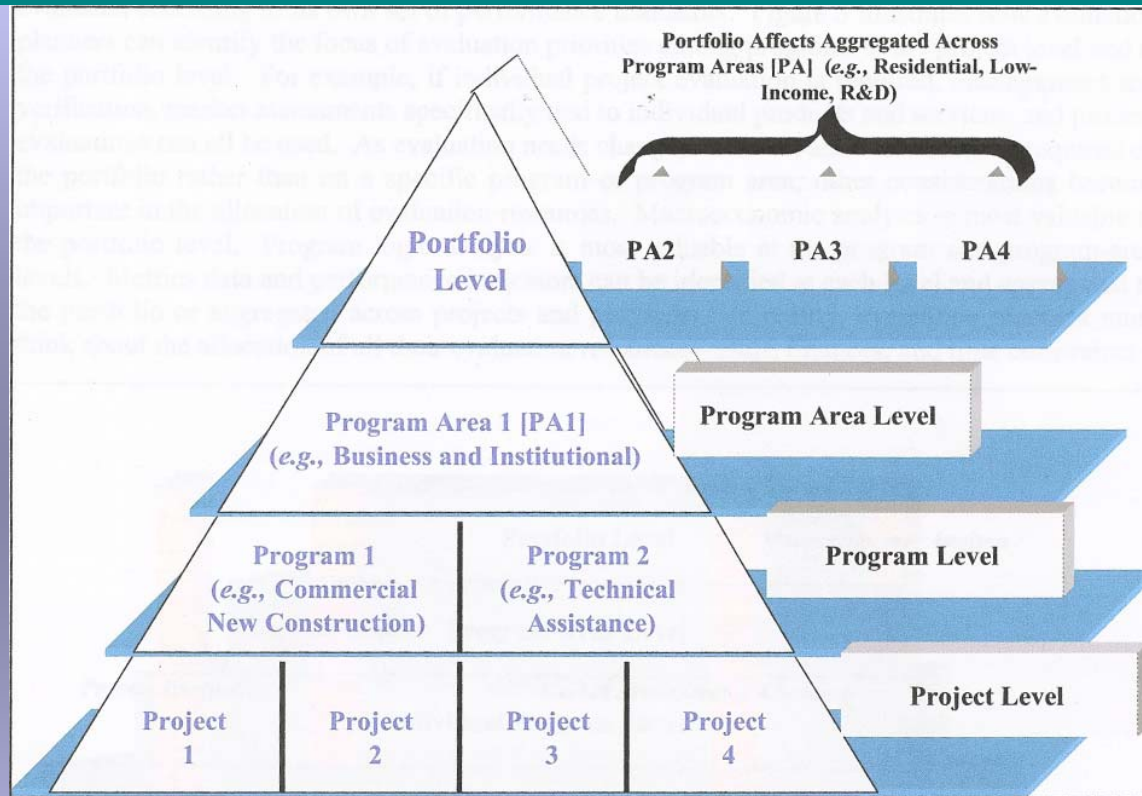


- **Evaluation structure**
 - **NYSERDA Approach**
 - **Multi-level literature**
- **Evaluation review approach**
- **Findings on the evaluation process**



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Levels of NYSERDA Evaluation



→ There are four levels for which evaluation issues can be identified



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Multi-Level Evaluations - Energy Efficiency

→ Multi-level evaluation issues for energy programs

- Persistence and durability are measure level issues
- End-user behavior and changes in occupancy are project level issues
- Program implementation, administrative management issues are program level issues
- Overall savings is a portfolio level issue
- There are sector level, market level issues as well



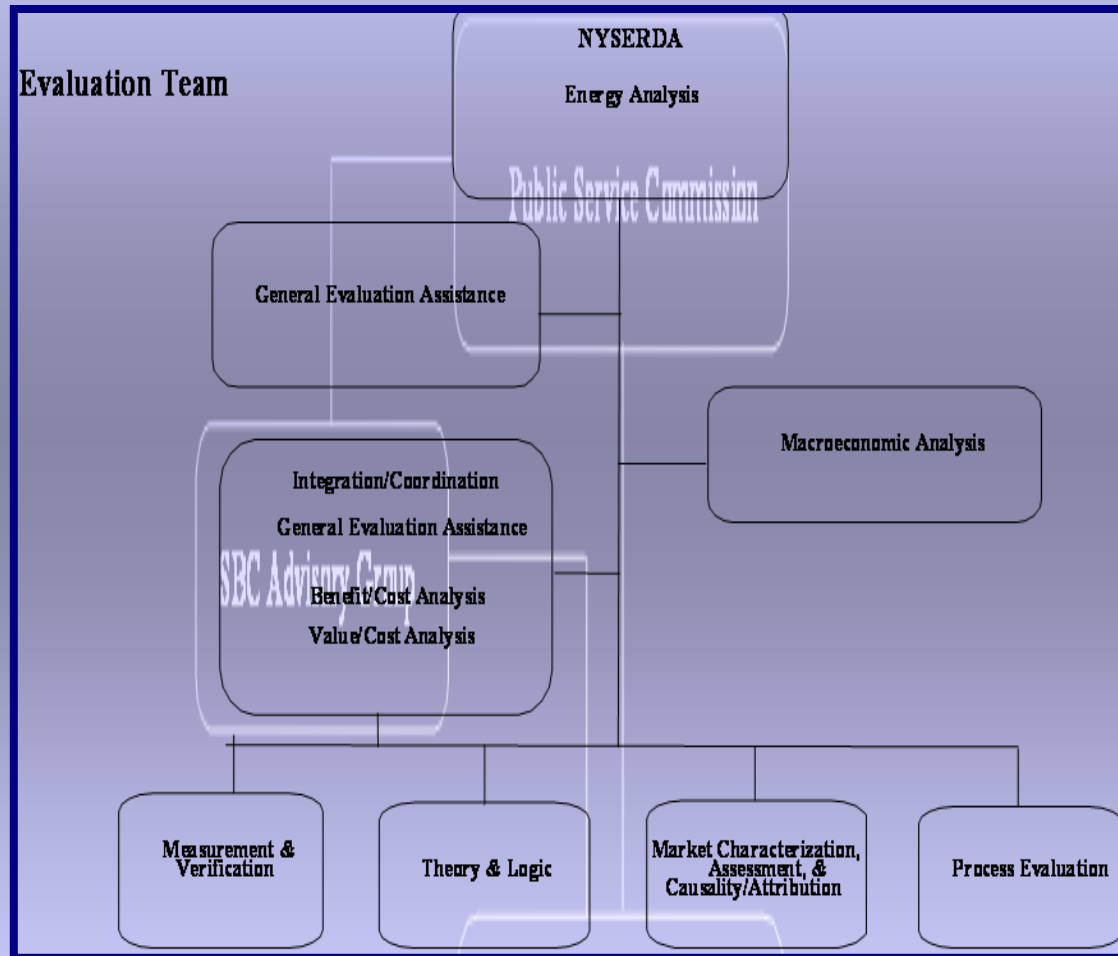
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Evaluation Review Approach

- **Review program recommendations**
 - **Assess response by program staff to recommendations**
- **Query program and evaluation staff**
 - **Experience with evaluation process**
 - **Suggestions for improving the process and the usefulness of the evaluation**



NYSERDA Evaluation Structure



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Recommendations Query

- **Two years of evaluation**
 - 223 total recommendations
 - 174 actionable recommendations
- **Twenty (20) program staff involved directly in the evaluations**



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Results of Recommendations Query

Outcome	Residential & Low-Income		Business & Industrial		Research & Develop.		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Action taken	24	44%	35	37%	5	21%	64	37%
Action taken; felt already doing it	—	—	6	6%	4	17%	10	6%
Partial action	1	2%	6	6%	1	4%	8	5%
Subtotal of actions taken	25	45%	47	49%	10	42%	82	48%
Considered; felt already doing it	9	16%	24	25%	5	21%	38	22%
Considered; no action	10	18%	7	7%	6	25%	23	13%
Not considered	11	20%	17	18%	3	13%	31	18%
Subtotal of actions not taken	30	54%	48	50%	14	59%	92	53%
Total¹	55	99%	95	99%	24	101%	174	101%



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Recommendations Findings

- Just under 50% of the 1st and 2nd year recommendations were acted on either fully or completely or were already being implemented
- Many of the recommendations were not actionable or were imprecise
- 13% of the recommendations were considered by not taken



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Findings on the Evaluation Process

- Evaluation thinking is increasingly evident in program design and implementation
- The first year was the most challenging for staff, second year saw improvement in process
- Program and evaluation staff did not share common expectations for their roles and responsibilities



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Program Staff Views of the Evaluations

- Program staff often felt they were not getting sufficiently specific information about their programs
- Program staff thought requirements for cost benefit tests failed to capture full benefits of market transformation activities
- Program staff found the process burdensome



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Energy Analysis Staff Views of the Evaluations

- Program and Energy Analysis staffs thought the evaluations reflected the reality of their programs
- Energy Analysis staff's views of the usefulness of the results for program managers were more positive
- Energy Analysis staff seemed to more often give precedence to the public reporting purposes of the evaluation



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Conclusions

- The evaluation budget is quite limited and must be focused at the portfolio level, yet staff are focused at program level issues
- Efforts to clarify program and evaluation staff roles and responsibilities can be improved
- Evaluation contractor recommendations can be improved



Recommendations

- **Communicate with staff**
 - About the portfolio focus of the evaluation
 - About their roles and responsibilities
 - About ways to gain program level information
- **Develop the skills of all staff in supporting evaluations**
- **Evaluators recommendations should**
 - State action to be taken and responsible party
 - Discuss feasibility before recommending
 - Be sensitive to burden on respondents
 - Use care with 'continue to' recommendations

