

Frequently Asked Questions for State Energy Program (SEP) National Evaluation

1. What is the purpose of the SEP National Evaluation, and what are the key Program outcomes that will be studied?

The principal objective of the National Evaluation of SEP is to develop an independent estimate, at the national level, of the following key program outcomes:

- Reduction in energy use and expenditures;
- Generation of jobs through the funded activities;
- Production of energy from renewable sources; and
- Reduction in carbon emissions associated with energy production and use.

This study does not attempt to quantify other important benefits that also are associated with SEP, including the effects on national security, the economy, and individual health and safety. Also, this study does not quantify the achievements of state energy emergency plans, which help communities address possible supply shortages and interruptions but typically do not cut the total amount of energy used. These non-energy benefits are important and intended products of SEP and contribute substantially to its social value but fall beyond the scope of this evaluation.

2. What time period will the SEP National Evaluation Cover?

Because of the magnitude and temporal nature of ARRA funding, this evaluation effort has two different but coordinated paths. The evaluation team will examine key program outcomes for both the SEP 2008 program year (July 2008 to June 2009) and for the ARRA period (program years 2009 to 2011). Substantial effort is being devoted to the study of program year 2008 because of its likely similarity to the program after the ARRA period, when funding is expected to return to pre-ARRA levels.

3. Who will perform the evaluation?

A team of independent evaluators, led by KEMA, Inc., is performing the evaluation. Management and oversight of the study is being provided by Oak Ridge National Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy.

4. What broad types of SEP activities will be studied?

The SEP National Evaluation will focus on the broad program types that cumulatively account for approximately 80% of SEP funding in each study period, as outlined in the following table:

PY 2008

Building Codes and Standards
Building Retrofits
Clean Energy Policy Support
Loans, Grants and Incentives
Renewable Energy Market Development
Technical Assistance

ARRA Period

Building Codes and Standards
Building Retrofits
Loans, Grants and Incentives
Renewable Energy Market Development

5. How many activities from each Grantee will be examined and how will the sample be selected?

A random sample of 82 programmatic activities has been selected for in-depth study to represent those program types receiving the greatest amount of SEP funding during each of the two study periods (PY 2008 and ARRA). The term “programmatic activities” refers to a related set of activities performed in a single year under a common administrative framework. Typically, the programmatic activities designed and carried out by Grantees with SEP support involve a number of actions (e.g., multiple retrofits performed or loans given). The final sample represents a combined total of 46 states and territories.

As mentioned above, activities related to energy emergency planning are not included in the scope of the national evaluation. In addition, activities that are purely administrative in nature and are not expected to result in direct or indirect energy savings or carbon emissions reductions have been excluded from the scope of the evaluation.

6. How will program outcomes be determined for the sampled activities?

Program outcomes will be estimated for each of the 82 programmatic activities sampled for this evaluation, using data collection and analysis techniques appropriate to the particular type of activity under study. The four program outcomes, listed above in FAQ #1, will be determined as follows:

Reduction in energy use and expenditures:

- Program information will be obtained through tracking system analysis, program records review, varying levels of interviewing and, in the case of building retrofits, on-site verification and surveying. The collected data will serve as the input into an energy savings calculator which derives savings from industry-accepted engineering standards. The calculator will have built in parameters that adjust savings estimates based on regional climate and program differences.

Generation of jobs through the funded activities:

A 51-region (state) REMI Policy Insight simulation model will be populated with short-term and long-term project-related effects to determine the annual projection of job impacts.

Production of energy from renewable sources:

- Estimation of energy generation from renewable energy projects will take an approach similar to measurement and verification of savings for building retrofits with the exception of on-site visits.

Reduction in carbon emissions associated with energy production and use:

- In this study, the carbon emissions avoided from SEP-funded energy efficiency and renewable energy activities will be reported nationally. The assessment of gross CO₂ savings will be done for each broad program category and for the individual programmatic activities. Annualized CO₂ reductions achieved as a result of SEP-funded efforts will be calculated and reported for each year over the effective useful lifetime (EUL) of the measures evaluated.

7. How will program outcomes be expanded to the broader population?

Outcomes determined for the individual programmatic activities will be expanded to the broader class of activity that each represents using a ratio estimation approach that calculates outcomes per dollar expended or other measurable program characteristic. Savings estimates and the associated funding levels (expressed in ratio form) from sampled programmatic activities will serve as the basis for estimating savings of the population of all programmatic activities for each Broad Program Area Category addressed in the study.

8. What type and quantity of information will individual Grantees be expected to provide for the SEP National Evaluation, and when?

Grantees will be asked to provide the following information, when applicable, for each activity selected in the sample:

- Program implementers' contact information (contractors, vendors, co-sponsors, training providers, etc.).
- Copies of all reports or studies developed using SEP funds (e.g., energy efficiency potential studies, policy documents, code documentation, etc.).
- Copies of progress reports (e.g., monthly, quarterly, annual).
- Copies of marketing, outreach, and training-related documentation, including marketing and outreach materials, training curricula, etc.
- All available data sets, lists and documentation that contain contact information and project-specific details for program participants and/or service recipients.
- Documentation on energy savings calculations and assumptions.
- Documentation on project funding sources, including SEP as well as leveraged funding sources.

Depending on the specific activity, data collection will occur between May and October 2012.

9. How will the effects of SEP support be separated from the effects from other sources of support for energy efficiency and renewable energy activities that Grantees receive?

Grantees' SEP efforts commonly receive funding from multiple sources; therefore the evaluation will need to separate impacts attributable to SEP support from those resulting from other inputs. This determination of attribution will be performed separately for each individual programmatic activity studied. The multi-step attribution approach employed in this study will use logic models, model validation, direct questioning of participants and market observers, and cross sectional analysis techniques. The specific methods for each programmatic activity will be selected based on the nature of the state effort, its stage of development, documented accomplishments, and the data available within the study period.

10. When will findings from the study be available?

Interim reports on the results of individual studies of specific SEP programmatic activities will be available starting in late summer of 2012. Summary reports on the outcomes of each broad program type will be made available as each one is completed, beginning in the fall of 2012. A final report on all outcomes for both study periods is expected in early 2013.

11. Is there a plan for the study and how can I obtain a copy of it?

Yes. Please visit the following link for access to the study plan:

<http://weatherization.ornl.gov/pdfs/DetailedSEPEvaluationPlanFinal063011.pdf>

12. I work for a State Energy Office and want to know how I will be notified if a Program in my state has been selected in the sample for the national evaluation?

All Grantees with programmatic activities selected in the sample were notified by DOE via mail and e-mail during the week of September 4, 2011. There is a combined total of 46 states and territories represented in the sample.

13. I work for a State Energy Office and want to know how much time will be required on my part if a Program in my state has been selected in the sample for the national evaluation?

If a Program in your state or territory has been selected, approximately 1 to 1.5 hours of the program manager's time will be needed to answer survey questions related to the sampled activity. In addition, the State Energy Office will be asked to provide relevant data and information that will assist with the evaluation (See FAQ #8 above – "What type and quantity of information will the individual Grantees be expected to provide for the SEP National Evaluation, and when?").