

PROCESS EVALUATION
New Construction Program
Final Report

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Energy Research and Development Authority
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Project Number 9835

NYSERDA
November 2010

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ABSTRACT

The overall goal of this two-year process evaluation of the New Construction Program (NCP) at NYSERDA is to assess the effectiveness of its efforts to meet new goals under Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard funding. This interim memo reflects the first phase of evaluation activities, which included document review, extracts from the Buildings Portal database, and in-depth interviews with: seven key NYSERDA staff; seven Outreach Project Consultants (OPCs) and Technical Assistance providers (TAs) ; and 40 owners and their design teams, representing 29 projects entering the NCP under the previous PON (PON 1222). The plan for second year evaluation activities includes an equal or greater number of interviews with these groups, interviews with partial participants, and integration of further secondary research. First phase recommendations for the program include finding ways to: be more timely and to better synchronize with participating project schedules; ensure that new staff and contractors are well oriented to NCP processes and philosophy; and have NCP management address tensions among program goals. In addition, the first phase of the evaluation revealed further topics that need attention in the second phase research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process team would especially like to thank our evaluation project manager for his insights and helpful oversight of this first phase of the NCP evaluation. In addition, the team thanks all those who generously gave of their time to participate in interviews, including NCP staff, OPCs, TAs, code specialists, and participating owners and design teams.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The **New York Energy \$martSM** programs are funded by an electric distribution System Benefits Charge (SBC) paid by customers of Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation (Central Hudson), Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. (Con Edison), New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG), National Grid, Orange and Rockland Utilities (Orange and Rockland), and Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation (Rochester Gas and Electric). The programs are available to all electric distribution customers that pay into the SBC. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), a public benefit corporation established in 1975, began administering the SBC funds in 1998 through NYSEDA's **New York Energy \$martSM** Program.

During 2008, several changes arising from the New York State Public Service Commission's (PSC's) Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (EEPS) proceeding have affected NYSEDA's **New York Energy \$martSM** Program portfolio and evaluation efforts. The PSC's June 23, 2008, EEPS Order called for an increase in SBC collections and a ramp-up of program efforts by NYSEDA and the state's six investor-owned electricity transmission and distribution utilities to meet New York's "15-by-15" electricity reduction goal. NYSEDA complied with the PSC's Order by submitting a Supplemental Revision to the SBC Operating Plan, incorporating approximately \$80 million per year in additional funds for five new or expanded Fast Track programs, as well as for general awareness, administration, and evaluation associated with those programs.

The NCP's overall mission is to permanently transform how new commercial buildings are designed and constructed; the program also must meet demand reduction goals. The NCP offers owners and their design teams technical assistance and incentives to incorporate greater levels of energy efficiency and green building features into new buildings and those undergoing substantial renovation.¹ The NCP's four paths – Pre-Qualified, Custom Measure, Whole Building Design, and Green Building Option – offer customer various strategies to greater efficiency. The incentives and technical assistance for the Whole Building and Green Building paths are structured to encourage the highest level of energy savings and may also include green features.

The NCP's central Fast Track goal is to achieve greater savings, while at the same reducing its program costs from 22¢ per kWh to 16¢ per kWh. To meet this goal, the NCP has: taken steps to change its incentive structure to attract higher levels of efficiency and whole building approaches; developed a new marketing plan; increased efforts to attract green/LEED buildings; and intends to reach a larger share of smaller projects.

The overall goal of the NCP's two-year process evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of these Fast Track efforts. This interim memo reflects the first phase evaluation activities, which included: document review; extracts from the Buildings Portal database; and in-depth interviews with seven key NYSEDA staff, seven Outreach Project Consultants (OPCs) and Technical Assistance providers (TAs), and 40 owners and their design teams, representing 29 projects entering the NCP under the previous PON (PON 1222). The plan for second phase evaluation activities includes an equal or greater number of interviews with these groups, interviews with partial participants, and integration of further secondary research. Thus, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this interim report will be enriched and will likely change as a result of the second phase evaluation work.

¹ The NCP also assists with multifamily projects pursuing LEED[®] certification and works in concert with the Industrial Efficiency Program (IPE) to fund "projects that improve energy efficiency and productivity of manufacturing processes and data centers in new or substantially renovated facilities" (Program Brochure).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These conclusions and recommendations focus on issues that deserve greater program emphasis in the near term and more attention from the process evaluation team in the second phase.

1. **Conclusion:** The NCP would likely attract more projects – and save more energy – if program and customer timing were better synchronized and turnaround times were shortened. Program staff, OPCs and TAs, and Participants all report synchronization challenges such as missing the optimal time to encourage savings (between conceptual and schematic design), and long turnaround times for requesting information and providing technical reports to customers. While timing affects other areas (such as payment), the front-end timing is the most crucial for ensuring maximum savings.

Recommendation: The NCP should focus on finding solutions in two problem areas – enrolling projects at the optimal time in the design and finding ways to ensure that scoping meetings, TA tasks, and Notices to Proceed run as efficiently as possible. The second phase of the process evaluation should factor in a new operations group report and examine cycle time through the Building Portals database to see where improvements can be made.

2. **Conclusion:** The NCP's growth with new staff and TA firms creates opportunities to improve customer service and trust in the program or diminish it. The program implementers are a core strength of the NCP. New staff and contractors are being added to expand to this strength. While coordination, training, and communication among NCP's implementers can be expensive, lessons from the past and feedback from the first phase of this evaluation suggest these costs are essential if the required levels of customer service and trust are to be maintained between the NCP and the audiences it wishes to attract and influence.

Recommendation: In planning its steps to integrate new staff and contractors with the program, NCP needs to pay careful attention to establishing clear lines of review and authority, accountability, marketing skills, policy consistency, and placing a high priority on how to meet project schedules. New and old team members should all participate in training and other communications that emphasizes consistent team approaches and skill-building. The second phase of this evaluation should assess these program efforts.

3. **Conclusion:** Some tension remains among NCP's goals, particularly between its market transformation and savings acquisition goals, and its ability to serve both large complex projects and small projects cost-effectively. These tensions are not new and may not be able to be completely resolved.

Recommendation: NCP's management should spend time discussing these tensions and how to manage them, especially during a time when savings acquisition and serving smaller projects are key goals for EEPS funding.

4. **Conclusion:** The findings from this Interim Report and a debriefing with NCP staff pinpointed important areas where staff needs more in-depth information. Key areas for further evaluation emphasis include research on: how to ensure optimal scoping meetings; how to make technical assistance a value-added service rather than a potential barrier; how to improve coordination and consistency among staff, OPCs, and TAs; and how best to assess NCP's progress toward other goals, such as serving small projects.

Recommendation: The process team, working with NCP representatives, will review and revise its interview guides for staff, OPCs, TAs, and participants to make sure these elements are being addressed as fully as possible. The same review will determine if any items might be shortened or eliminated. Finally, the process team will further analyze information in the program database to look at the mix of projects NCP is serving.

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

The **New York Energy \$martSM** programs are funded by an electric distribution System Benefits Charge (SBC) paid by customers of Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation (Central Hudson), Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. (Con Edison), New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG), National Grid, Orange and Rockland Utilities (Orange and Rockland), and Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation (Rochester Gas and Electric). The programs are available to all electric distribution customers that pay into the SBC. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), a public benefit corporation established in 1975, began administering the SBC funds in 1998 through NYSEDA's **New York Energy \$martSM** Program.

During 2008, several changes arising from the New York State Public Service Commission's (PSC's) Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (EEPS) proceeding have affected NYSEDA's **New York Energy \$martSM** Program portfolio and evaluation efforts. The PSC's June 23, 2008, EEPS Order called for an increase in SBC collections and a ramp-up of program efforts by NYSEDA and the state's six investor-owned electricity transmission and distribution utilities to meet New York's "15-by-15" electricity reduction goal. NYSEDA complied with the PSC's Order by submitting a Supplemental Revision to the SBC Operating Plan, incorporating approximately \$80 million per year in additional funds for five new or expanded Fast Track programs, as well as for general awareness, administration, and evaluation associated with those programs.

The New Construction Program (NCP) is one of NYSEDA's Fast Track programs. It "offers technical support to building design teams and financial incentives to building owners to effect a permanent transformation in the way buildings are designed and constructed in New York State."² The NCP addresses a multifaceted and technically sophisticated market segment where projects are likely to be driven by tight deadlines.

With EEPS Fast Track funding, the NCP intends to:

1. Increase NYSEDA's capacity to use whole building design analysis to maximize the energy efficiency of all systems within a building
2. Increase the total number of technical assistance providers available
3. Offer additional energy performance incentives through its tiered approach, with higher incentives for projects that achieve energy performance improvements more than 30% above current New York State Energy Conservation Construction Code requirements
4. Target larger, more complex high energy consuming projects (*e.g.*, supermarkets, data centers) to yield a higher level of energy savings per project
5. Increase the focus on industry leaders among various market segments to better promote the program and create examples for others in these market segments
6. Serve smaller projects more cost-effectively

During 2009 and 2010, the program has been ramping up to meet its expanded goals. The NCP operated under Program Opportunity Notice (PON) 1222 until December 31, 2009; at the start of 2010, it began operating under PON 1501. Overall, with the change to EEPS funding and PON 1501, program staff

² New Construction Program – Financial Incentives Program Opportunity Notice (PON) 1501, July 2010.

during the project kick-off meeting reported that the NCP has agreed *to do more with less* under the EEPS funding. This agreement has translated into a number of specific program changes, including:

- **Adjusting the types of incentives** – for instance, deleting natural gas and steam cooling incentives, and adding incentives for industrial process efficiency, super efficient chillers, and thermal storage
- **Lowering dollar levels per incentive** – although the overall project caps remain similar, rates are about 53% to 55% of what they were in PON 1222; the PON 1222 rates took a significant jump above earlier PONs and PON 1501 rates are about 67% of rates from earlier PONs
- **Adjusting incentive tiers to reward people who achieve higher levels of efficiency** – including a tier that rewards 30.1% or better above code
- **Changing the baseline to ASHRAE 90.1.2007** (which stimulus funding required) – the NCP will be temporarily ahead of the state code
- **Dropping total program costs from the previous rate** – 22¢ per kWh to 16¢ per kWh under EEPS

Since EEPS, NCP staff have steered the program toward achieving greater efficiencies.³ PON 1501 reflects notable changes in the NCP's tiered incentive structure with the hopes of attracting higher levels of efficiency and whole building approaches. At the same time, it offers lower incentive levels (although project caps remain the same). The NCP also has put strong efforts into improving its marketing strategies to better target key project types. In addition, it has both strengthened its certification requirements and simplified its incentive structures for its green building services.⁴ The NCP also has worked on strategies to reach a larger share of smaller projects. The baseline used for the program is ASHRAE 90.1.2007, which puts NCP temporarily ahead of the current Energy Conservation Construction Code of New York State (ECCCNYS 2007).⁵

NCP also has recently increased its pool of Technical Assistance providers (TAs) that work hand-in-hand with program staff and other program actors. This increase will further expand program capabilities, especially for customers in Consolidated Edison and National Grid service territories. To become a new TA provider under the current program, firms must demonstrate expertise in computer simulation modeling and green building services.⁶

The overall focus of this two-year process evaluation is to assess NCP's progress toward accomplishing the expanded program efforts under EEPS. The evaluation will observe and document the effects of these expanding activities with the goals to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of enhanced program outreach activities to attain program goals
2. Assess the effectiveness of the program at increasing technical assistance capability and capacity
3. Assess efforts to attract larger, more complex, high energy use projects that yield more energy savings per project

³ The effects of these recent NCP efforts to meet Fast Track goals will be examined in the second year as they become more integrated into the program.

⁴ According to the key program contract on this evaluation, the NCP now requires that LEED and NY-CHPS projects receive certification before green incentives are paid.

⁵ For more information on the current non-residential energy code, visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dob/html/reference/ecccnys.shtml>.

⁶ While previous solicitations for TA services did not require these areas of expertise, several firms were able to provide them.

4. Assess efforts to more effectively serve smaller projects
5. Document the history and progress of the program toward accomplishing its goals and objectives

This interim report is organized into the following sections after the Executive Summary and this Introduction:

Section 2: Program Description

Section 3: Evaluation Approach and Methods

Section 4: Key Findings – NYSERDA Staff

Section 5: Key Findings – OPCs and TAs

Section 6: Key Findings – Program Participants

Section 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

SECTION 2:

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The NCP is one of NYSERDA's oldest conservation programs and has been in continuous operation since 2000. Through technical assistance and financial incentives, it encourages owners, developers, and design teams of new commercial and institutional buildings – and buildings undergoing substantial renovations – to achieve higher levels of energy efficiency and green building features (including their design, construction, and operation).⁷ The NCP's long-term objective is to transform permanently the way that these building projects are designed and constructed.⁸ As one TA provider put it, "One of the goals is to help people think differently."

The program also responds to the state's demand reduction needs, which have ebbed and flowed throughout NCP's lifetime. The NCP's most recent logic model update indicated that the state has experienced a growing and acute need to reduce demand, particularly in Con Edison service territory. In fact, the current PON 1501 sets separate project incentive caps for projects within the Con Edison service area. Thus, the NCP, along with other **New York Energy \$martSM** programs, has increased its demand reduction goals,⁹ while at the same time trying to adhere to its market transformation objective.

Three key groups work together to deliver NCP services:

- **NCP staff** – oversees all aspects of the program and coordinates its contractors
- **Technical Assistance Providers (TAs)** – are approved and under contract to NYSERDA, work closely with owners and design teams to analyze and suggest energy and green improvements
- **Outreach Project Consultants (OPCs)** – also approved and under contract to NYSERDA, market the program and shepherd customers through its various steps; help participants to apply to the program; coordinate and participate in scoping meetings and green building charrettes;¹⁰ coordinate with TAs and review their scopes of work; perform post-construction inspections; and more generally answer participant questions and needs

NCP staff also work with internal and external sources to conduct marketing, outreach, and evaluation of the program.

NCP participants can choose to follow one of four paths through the program:

1. **Pre-Qualified Measure Approach** – is for simple or small projects where incentives are preset for common, straightforward measures. This approach is not emphasized in program materials because NCP wishes to encourage more integrated and high efficiency building designs.

⁷ NYSERDA also offers incentives through the NCP for the Industrial and Process Efficiency (IPE) program. Incentives offset up to 50% of the costs of energy efficiency improvements to manufacturing processes and data centers in new or substantially renovated facilities.

⁸ NCP also assists with multifamily projects (minimum of four stories and at least five units) pursuing LEED® certification.

⁹ *New York State Research and Development Authority New Construction Program (NCP) – Program Logic Model Report Update* (Draft – July 21, 2009), p. 3.

¹⁰ According to the NCP website, "Green Design Charrettes are meetings between stakeholders of a construction project with the purpose of exploring green building opportunities and feasibility."

2. **Custom Measure Approach** – calculates individual incentives for a variety of measures. This approach is best used when projects have progressed beyond the design development phase or where computer simulation to calculate savings and benefits is not needed.
3. **Whole Building Design Approach** – is for projects entering the program no later than the schematic design phase, where interactions among energy efficiency improvements are analyzed to see their impact on overall building energy use.
4. **Green Building Option** – encourages design and construction of healthy, energy-efficient, and resource-conserving buildings.

The NCP’s measure incentives are based upon the anticipated energy performance of the building and pay for a large share of the incremental costs of installing higher efficiency equipment or features. A tiered approach provides increasing incentives for projects achieving higher levels of energy performance. Potential participants are encouraged to enter the program during the early design phase to reap the largest incentives and benefits. Bonus incentives may be available, depending upon funding, for specific types of energy measures.

The NCP also provides financial incentives for technical assistance services, including incentives for design teams with projects using the Whole Building Design or Green Building approach, and incentives for building commissioning.¹¹ Technical assistance is provided to participants from an approved list of TA firms under contract to NYSERDA. Under the direction of NCP staff, TAs work with project teams to analyze the savings, peak demand reduction, and green building potential of energy efficiency measures and design features. Participants share in the cost of technical assistance to identify energy saving opportunities. Additional technical assistance is available to help participants meet requirements for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certification,¹² and to comply with the NY-CHPS guidelines for school buildings.¹³

NCP assistance is offered on first come, first-served basis subject to funding availability. As shown in **Table 2-1**, current funding is available through PON 1501, which runs through December 30, 2011, or until program funds are exhausted.

Table 2-1. Recent NCP PONs

Number	PON Name	Dates	Notes
1501	New Construction Program Financial Incentives	Applications accepted January 4, 2010, through December 30, 2011	EEPS and SBC funding apply; individual incentives lowered, although same project caps in place
1222	New Construction Program Financial Incentives	Ended December 31, 2009	SBC funding only; incentives for the Industrial Process Efficiency (IPE) program were added October 2009

According to PON 1501, the major changes from PON 1222 to PON 1501 include:

- Funding for NCP being increased to \$83,011,949
- Incentives being added for natural gas efficiency

¹¹ Commissioning within NCP is a process to vet the energy performance of new commercial buildings to make sure the energy systems operate according to their intended design and are operating optimally.

¹² LEED® is the rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

¹³ “These voluntary guidelines, known as the ‘Collaborative for High Performance Schools’ (NY-CHPS), were created through a joint effort of SED and NYSERDA. NY-CHPS will help schools develop and maintain learning environments that contribute to improved academic achievement while reducing operating costs and protecting and conserving our natural resources.” – NYSERDA press release, September 27, 2007.

- Funding becoming unavailable for bonus incentives, including demand response, energy storage/electric to non-electric cooling, and super-efficient chiller
- The designated baseline is ASHRAE 90.1-2007

To apply to the program, potential participants complete and submit an initial short application to the NCP. An OPC then works with the applicant to help determine what assistance may be available through the program for their project. The OPC continues to work with the participant through the entire program process, which varies based upon the type of project and the program path. Final incentives are awarded based upon post-installation inspections that verify that planned measures were installed and are operating.

SECTION 3:

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

3.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

The overall goal of the 2010-2011 process evaluation for the NCP is to help program staff, contractors, and NYSERDA assess the effectiveness of NCP's Fast Track efforts. This process evaluation is being conducted in two phases. The first phase included: document review; extracts from the Buildings Portal database; and in-depth interviews with seven key NCP staff, seven OPCs and TAs, and a sample of 40 owners and their design teams, representing 29 projects that entered the NCP under PON 1222.

The second phase will include an equal or greater number of interviews with staff, OPCs, and TAs, as well as an additional sample of owners and their design teams, including projects under PON 1501. Interviews with partial participants are also planned. In addition, analysis and integration of information in the Buildings Portal database and other secondary sources (such as prior process, market, and impact evaluation reports) are planned. This report is therefore preliminary and reports just on the first phase of data collection.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this interim report thus do not reflect a full set of views of key market actors associated with the program; these elements should be expected to change as more data are gathered and analyzed, and as the NCP services evolve during the second phase. The remainder of this section describes the methods used in the first phase of the 2010-2011 NCP process evaluation.

3.2 METHODS

3.2.1 Introduction

The overall strategy for this evaluation is to interview a representative set of key NCP actors on a rolling basis over the two years it is being conducted, with more interviews being performed in the second year, as more projects enter under the new PON 1501 and new OPCs and TAs come on board. **Table 3-1** shows that 54 in-depth interviews were completed for this interim evaluation; these interviews were spread among NYSERDA staff, OPCs, TAs, and owners and their design teams. The table also shows that the total number of interviews will triple during the second year of the evaluation.

Table 3-1. Interviews Conducted for Interim Report

NCP Interview Groups	Estimated Population	Interview Goal Across 2 Years	Interviews for Year One
NYSERDA staff	16 (12 FTE)	10	7
OPCs	2 firms / 20 contacts	9	3
TAs	14 firms / 30 contacts	12	4
Owners/developers	250	66	21
A&E firms	500	66	19
Total		163	54

In-depth interview guides were tailored for each of the interview groups (see Appendix A), with OPCs/TAs and owners/A&E Firms using similar guides. Interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted between 30 minutes and 1½ hours. Results of the interviews were transcribed, coded, and

analyzed. Given the small sample sizes for this round, the results are more qualitative than quantitative; in the next round, the number of owner and design team interviews will allow for greater manipulation of the data, so that different types of respondents and projects can be compared.

3.2.2 Sampling

NYSERDA Staff, OPCs, and TAs

Respondents for these groups were selected from lists that NCP staff provided. NCP staff characteristics varied in members’ level of experience, their responsibilities in the NCP, and their locations (both Albany and New York City). Additional NYSERDA staff included the energy code coordinator and the marketing specialist working with the NCP. OPCs and TAs also reflected a range of firms, professional and project experience, and location.

NCP Projects

The sampling strategy for NCP projects was designed, overall, to be as representative as possible, and to yield an in-depth look at NCP projects and the key market actors that affect them. To be eligible for inclusion in the population of PON 1222 projects, the participants had to have at least accepted an NCP incentive offer. In addition, the projects needed to be mutually exclusive from those used in the impact evaluation.

Project data needed to complete the sampling and interviewing process were stored in several places on the Building Portals database. These data were retrieved and compiled into a separate database, fed into a statistical package (*SPSS*), and analyzed so that a composite picture of the population of projects could be constructed. Key characteristics of the projects – including project size, location, program path, and type of building – were summarized. Then, using a computer-generated procedure, an initial random sample of the eligible population of projects was chosen. Frequencies and cross-tabs of their key characteristics were compared with the overall population for representativeness. Iterative adjustments were then made to improve the fit of the sample to the population characteristics.

To the extent possible, owners/developers and A&E firms were both interviewed for each project. **Table 3-2** shows the distribution of projects by type of respondent and project size.

Table 3-2. Distribution of NCP Sampled Projects by Respondent Type and Project Size

Type of Respondent	Small Projects < 30,000 SqFt	Large Projects > 30,000 SqFt	Total
Owner	10	11	21
Designer	11	8	19
Owner/designer	1	—	1
Total	22	18	40

Note: The number of respondents exceeds the number of projects (29) because more than one person may have been interviewed for each project.

Table 3-3 shows a variety of attributes about the sampled projects, including: where they were in the program process; whether they had participated before; how long they had been aware of the NCP; and where they were in the design process when they entered the program. Based upon the Buildings Portal database information, one-quarter of the projects were under construction or had completed the program and received their final incentive, while the rest of the projects were spread across the other phases of the NCP.

Based upon participant self-reports, 90% of participants believe they entered before the end of schematic design (making them eligible for whole building design services).¹⁴

Just over one-half (58%) of participants had been involved with other NCP projects. The length of time participants had known about the program varied; about one-third had been aware of NCP for less than 2 years, another one-third for 2 to 5 years, and the final one-third for more than 5 years.

Table 3-3. NCP Project Sample by Various Attributes

Attribute	Frequency	Percent
Point in NCP Process (n=40)		
Accept incentive offer	6	15%
Accept incentive offer /under construction	3	8%
Under construction	10	25%
NCP inspection	3	8%
Commissioning	3	8%
Waiting final payment	5	13%
Incentive paid	10	25%
Timing of Entry Point (n=38)		
Conceptual design	22	56%
Early	3	8%
Schematic design	10	26%
Design development	2	5%
Don't know	1	3%
Only NCP Project to Date? (n=38)		
Yes	15	39%
No	22	58%
Don't know	1	3%
How Long Aware of NCP? (n=40)		
Under 2 years	12	30%
2 to 5 years	12	30%
Over 5 years	14	35%
No answer	2	5%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

¹⁴ These self-reports should be double-checked against program records.

SECTION 4:

KEY FINDINGS – NYSERDA STAFF INTERVIEWS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings in this section are based on seven in-depth interviews with NYSERDA staff involved with NCP in various capacities; all were thoughtful and knowledgeable about the program, although some had been with it much longer than others. Five of the interviews were with NCP staff, and two were with other NYSERDA staff associated with the program.

The purpose of this section is place NCP staff views – across all interview questions – into one of the following categories:

1. **NCP Strengths** – areas where there is general and positive consensus about program practices
2. **NCP Areas to Improve** – areas where most respondents reported being concerned about the effectiveness of NCP practices
3. **Mixed Views** – areas where respondents noted both positive and negative views about program practices
4. **Upcoming Evaluation Issues** – areas where it is too soon to determine how well new program initiatives are working

These same general categories have been used throughout the report to organize input from OPCs, TAs, and NCP Participants, so that views can be compared. Quotes from respondents are used to illustrate and embellish findings.

4.2 NCP STRENGTHS

4.2.1 Staff/Contractor Expertise

When asked about the strengths of the NCP, several respondents immediately said “the people.” They pointed to many positive attributes of NCP staff, OPCs, and TAs that included their commitment to saving energy, their willingness to work hard and to do whatever is needed, and their ability to work as a team. Staff also complimented their co-workers for specific talents, such as marketing skills, being a strong manager, and conquering internal requirements, such as *PeopleSoft*, the relatively new and, by their own reports, challenging accounting software that NYSERDA has adopted. As one staff person summed it up by saying “[They are a] very smart hardworking bunch. It’s gratifying to work with them from the ground up.”

4.2.2 Program Influence on Efficiency and Reputation

Staff members are proud of the accomplishments of the NCP. While they acknowledged there are still areas to improve, they feel the program is advancing whole building efficiency with its tiered incentive structure and with its active promotion of green buildings through its Green Buildings path, which has jumped from “maybe 6% . . . to 12%” in the past year.

Several staff also emphasized their accomplishments in reducing the proportion of pre-qualified projects and paying for fewer energy efficiency improvements that customers would likely have done on their own. This is consistent with their goal to advance the highest levels of efficient design and to influence and help transform the new building market. As one staff person put it, “Our strength is to provide customers with support on making high performance buildings – be influential on some projects to

expand people’s thinking, make them aware of opportunities – things they wouldn’t have ordinarily pursued.” Another respondent summed up their focus on pushing the market with this question: “What’s the point if we were only giving incentives to what they already planned to do?”

NCP staff members also feel they have established a strong reputation of expertise and helpfulness in the marketplace, with one person saying they “have a record of achievements [and they know that] we’re here to help.” A few respondents specifically mentioned the success they’re having with ramping up to serve the New York City market, which shows that NCP has a wide delivery system and that they are “not just out of Albany.”

4.2.3 Tracking of Project Information

Several respondents talked about the positive evolution of the data-tracking system for the NCP – from one that was unwieldy and difficult to keep current, to the fairly new Building Portals Database that is comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible. One program manager said having a workable database is particularly important since “our program managers have somewhere between 80 and 200 projects apiece.”

4.3 NCP AREAS TO IMPROVE

4.3.1 Length/Responsiveness of Process

Of all the topics in the staff interviews, issues involving timing, responsiveness to customer deadlines, and slow turnaround times surfaced the most. Overall, though, as one respondent put it: “It could be more streamlined – the feedback I’ve heard from contractors and customers is that the process takes too long.” Several also noted that new commercial buildings have their own scheduling stresses apart from the NCP, causing them to speed up and slow down, or even stop for a while. These project uncertainties, in turn, increase the synchronization challenges for NCP.

Respondents talked about a number of interrelated factors that affect the speed of the program overall and its difficulties in meeting specific project schedules. They noted that the NCP process is complex and has many steps. They also said it was challenging to coordinate the many possible program actors in a timely manner. Other timing problems stemming from program complexity and coordination included: slow turnaround times for contracting and report reviews, including Notices to Proceed and technical reports; and staff and contractors getting behind due to the large number of projects that may need attention simultaneously. As one respondent expressed it, “Some projects take a while to get reviewed, but somebody doesn’t get to it quickly because they have 10 other projects in line.”

Respondents also pointed to the new *PeopleSoft* accounting software as being especially responsible for slowdowns in data entry and payments, sometimes at extreme levels as these quotes show:

- *The whole new accounting software program that’s been put in place – the last year was torture – was taking 15 minutes to enter applications into the system.*
- *Example: Simple payment request. . . entered middle of August. Only because I followed up and hounded, it got paid by the end of October.*

Still, staff had some ideas for how to improve the timing and responsiveness issues, with one saying, “We need to cherish each project” and another saying he is hopeful it is possible to “cut a few days here – a few weeks there” if they looked more carefully at processes such as cycle times, workloads, cutting out unneeded steps, and a coordinator.

4.3.2 Customer and Market Feedback

All respondents said that formal feedback from customers was limited. While they report they do get quite a bit of informal feedback from customers and through the OPCs and TAs, they also say that it's "definitely not on the forefront of what's expected of us as project managers." The respondent went on to say that they "just assume the [evaluation department] solicits feedback, but have never seen anything." Staff also recognized that meeting EEPS goals would require more emphasis on marketing; making customer insights are more important than ever. Several were looking forward to the results of a sizable commercial and industrial market level survey sponsored by NYSERDA's marketing department that they hoped would give them a larger picture of the new commercial marketplace and help inform the NCP's marketing approaches.

4.4 MIXED VIEWS

4.4.1 Coordination

Aside from the timing challenges of coordinating the varied actors who take part in the NCP process, respondents talked about other challenges – but also improvements – in coordinating among OPCs, TAs, staff, Focus Contractors, and Energy Smart Community Coordinators (ESCCs). All these actors need to be able to operate consistently on behalf of the program and to clearly understand the authority and limitations of their roles.

Respondents noted that coordination works better in some cases than others. Some talked about the continuing need to improve coordination with the ESCCs, who, as a largely an educational and marketing arm of NYSERDA, are spread across the state, not required to be highly technical, and represent a variety of programs. As one respondent said:

- *"[There's] always an opportunity for improving ESCC or Focus coordinators, and others to improve program understanding. . . heard some instances where some ESCCs were delivering inaccurate information. . . educational thing. . . it's a more complex program. . . all the different incentive structures of what does and does not qualify."*

Others talked about challenges with figuring out with OPCs and TAs the services and incentives for the Industrial Process Program (IPE), since IPE's incentive requests flow through the NCP. For instance, one noted that "defining a line between the data center and the rest of the building is not straightforward." Still, respondents report that the coordination is "going pretty well so far."

One or two staff members mentioned that with the growth in the program, it is taking on new people both as staff and as contractors, and this is likely to increase coordination issues until the new hires learn the program's intricacies. And one person talked about a difficulty with OPCs managing TAs when they have no contractual authority over them, saying:

- *"[It's a] fundamental issue – OPCs and TAs are under contract to us, but TAs and OPCs don't have any contractual relationship. When a TA puts a report together, have to have review by OPC before it comes to us [but]...the OPCs can't force [TAs] to do anything."*

While staff noted the problems in coordination, they still thought it had greatly improved, with regular meetings being held among the parties, templates being developed for reports, and the establishment of good working relationships over time. Some also noted the new requirement that customers be required to select their own TA from an approved list and hoped that this arrangement of sharing "one pot of money" would help them be "more aggressive" in getting clients.

4.4.2 Serving Small Projects

Staff assessments about the program's ability to serve smaller project varied and was fairly limited. Overall, there seems to be some uncertainty about the NCP's goals and strategies for serving smaller projects. Some respondents said they are already serving a lot of small projects. Others were uncertain how well small projects were being served. One said NCP really is more focused on serving "customers that are 100 kW or higher in their usage – really more interested in more complex properties to save the state energy." Finally, one talked about the challenges of serving small projects, such as controlling the costs for technical assistance if the goal is to get them into a whole building option. He said the costs to serve small buildings may exceed the gains, and that they need to develop ways to put limits on the incentives available. He described a situation where "...there was a building about 5,000 square feet. The TA proposal came in at \$30,000 to \$40,000. The customer wanted all sorts of green building measures and services...but we couldn't justify the amount of money we were putting in."

4.5 UPCOMING EVALUATION ISSUES

4.5.1 Marketing

Marketing often has not been an NCP or NYSERDA focus; in fact, as one respondent said, "One of NYSERDA's flaws is that it's the best kept secret in New York." In particular, the NCP has not focused on marketing due to strong participation in the program and, at times, even oversubscription. Staff also noted that "one of the big things is trying to bring consistency" to marketing and to build marketing from the perspective of customer needs and requirements.

With the program's increased savings goals, a short time frame to achieve them, and lower incentives, the NCP staff has realized that the program is not likely to "sell itself" with greater marketing. Respondents point out that they would like to emphasize that "the incentive dollars are just a little piece of the puzzle and that the bigger [reward] is the energy savings down the road." They would also like to "position themselves as a steward of the environment and the state's energy" and do more to "showcase our good projects."

To increase effective marketing, program staff members and NYSERDA's central marketing have been working hard to develop a marketing plan and to put it into action. The market-level survey, previously mentioned, will be used to inform the program about the attitudes, motivations, barriers, and desired messages of key target audiences (not including A&E firms).

Staff hope this new marketing emphasis will create more program awareness among target audiences, allow them to reach projects earlier, and help the NCP better tailor key program benefits to target audiences. As one respondent put it, "One of the big things is trying to bring consistency. . . [we] have not built from a customer need base and delivered that customer message...the code messages and making sure that everyone reinforces those messages...rather than on the fly."

At the time of these interviews, all of this marketing activity was just underway; one respondent said they "hope to be in marketplace with bolstered marketing by late summer" 2010. Bolstered marketing includes educating all program players in how to deliver NCP core messages, creating some new collateral materials, creating good stories to tell about past projects, and having more face-to-face presence with owners and their design teams. Some of the core messages NCP expects to emphasize are:

- NCP provides LEED guidance
- NCP offers great technical expertise
- NCP can help make large renovations more efficient
- NCP is a leader for efficiency

- NCP is here to help you

4.5.2 The New Regime – EEPS, PON 1501, and TRC

At the time of the interviews, several new elements of the program raised questions marks among staff, including:

- **Lowring the program’s incentives under PON 1501** – so far, staff members report there has not been much “kicking and screaming” from customers
- **Having greater DPS review and oversight** – this can add time to development and approval of key documents (for instance, one staff person reported that PON 1501 was begun in June 2009 and didn’t get signed off until December 2009)
- **Changing the TA contracting structure so that TA providers will be more competitive with one another**
- **Having OPCs doing more marketing**
- **Needing to calculate the TRC by individual measure** (rather than through a whole building approach) – this may result in lower savings and lower incentives; in addition, as one staff person said, “TRC is not customer friendly speak”

Everyone was concerned about producing a lot of savings in a short amount of time – all encumbered within a two-year time frame, and completed and paid out by 2014. The second year of the process evaluation will examine these program changes and their effects.

SECTION 5:

KEY FINDINGS – OPC AND TA INTERVIEWS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section, like the previous, will report on the NCP’s strengths, key areas to improve, mixed viewpoints, and upcoming issues for the program and process evaluation; however, this discussion relies on three in-depth interviews with OPCs and four with TAs. Many of the perspectives of these groups overlap substantially with those of staff, adding both depth and nuance.

5.2 NCP STRENGTHS

5.2.1 Committed NCP Staff and Consultants

Several OPCs and TAs noted that the people involved with the NCP are a key asset for the program, complimenting both NYSERDA staff and other contractors. They especially noted that people at NYSERDA are passionate and committed to changing the construction ethic and supporting buildings that will save energy and benefit the environment. As one respondent described it:

- *“People at NYSERDA and the consultants are committed. They like saving energy.... It is not just a job. It is from a value base.... I think it shows. You will not talk to anyone that is not committed. That is rewarding.”*

Even though some respondents thought that NCP staff would benefit from more technical training (with one or two noting the NCP needed more engineering expertise on staff), they still admired the staff’s professionalism, high standards, and ability to communicate.

5.2.2 The Opportunity to Influence Design

OPCs and TAs said that the NCP afforded them the opportunity to meet with people, consider options, and influence building design and efficiency. As one respondent said:

- *“Meeting with the customer to talk to them about opportunities is a huge opportunity that does not exist elsewhere. Even if we do not give incentives, the opportunity to talk about efficiency... up front, from a 3rd party...is invaluable to the customer. It also not the kind of thing that gets captured in a benefit cost.”*

Respondents saw this aspect of program design as not only a program strength, but also a personal benefit. They appreciated the whole building approach because it allowed them to do what-if analysis, to look at the whole building rather than individual measures, and to be able to maximize savings. One TA provider suggested that the NCP should only allow whole building analysis, saying, “Whole building is right on and is where the program needs to be.”

Respondents emphasized that for the whole building path to be optimized, and to avoid a higher proportion of free-riders, projects need to be involved early; projects that enter later generally reduce the opportunity for savings. They added that optimal timing – that is, catching a project at the right point between conceptual and schematic design – is especially important because there may only be a small window of time to influence the design.

One respondent gave more detail about this pivotal point in a new construction project, saying:

- *“[This timing] gives you the ability to compare alternatives and engage the design team...creatively. You [can] talk more about envelope, right sizing of systems – things that do*

not show up in a custom measure tool approach. That is really transformational in integrated design. It gives the owner and design team a chance to look differently at how to design, build, and even operate the building.”

In addition to reaching the project at the right time, program services must also be timely, because, as one person described it:

- *“Accepting projects late in the game or having paperwork delayed can really affect...savings. The earlier the better. After that, you get into the paperwork. Everyone loses steam while we wait for the paperwork to be done. The design advances and they lose their ability to change it.”*

Respondents identified the scoping meetings as one of the most important aspects of the NCP’s whole building approach. Scoping meetings include all the key people who can influence the design of the building, including the owner, the design team, and NYSERDA staff and contractors. As one person said, the “scoping meeting is a really great tool...where everyone is open-minded” and where those in attendance both learn new things and make important decisions about the building’s efficiency. He continued on to say that, “I have rarely seen a job that did not change as a result of the scoping meeting. That is, without any analysis – just the experience in the room.”

After the scoping meeting and the Notice to Proceed, the TAs submit a Request for Information to the design team to obtain the information that will allow them to do the technical analysis. One TA provider said that this was also a crucial step, because it is the “quality and timeliness of the TA provider’s Request for Information...and the response of the design team that sets...the tone for how it goes” throughout the project.

5.2.3 NCP Longevity

Respondents talked in various ways about NCP’s longevity being a strength of the program, particularly since customers have not always been able to rely on energy efficiency programs persisting over the long term. With NCP celebrating its tenth year, respondents report that it is well known to many owners, developers, architects, and engineers – especially the larger ones. These key individuals and firms can now point to their past success with NCP and also know that they would be welcome to participate again.

5.2.4 NCP Incentives and Energy Savings

Respondents emphasized the value to customers of NCP’s incentives. As one person described the program: “It’s a no brainer.... They gain knowledge. They save thousands of energy dollars. And they get an incentive for it.” But they also said these incentives were just the beginning of savings, since customers are putting in measures that will “pay benefits over the life of the building.”

5.3 NCP AREAS TO IMPROVE

5.3.1 Timing and Streamlining of NCP processes

Echoing comments from the NCP staff, the most common suggestions for improving the NCP involved developing better ways to synchronize program requirements with the pace of projects and reducing the time it takes for projects to move through the process. The respondents brought up a complex set of interrelated issues that affect synchronization and speediness, and suggested both general and specific solutions.

One bright spot: OPCs and TAs viewed the application process as an example of how processes have been simplified and timing has been improved, with one respondent saying:

- *“The application process has been improved dramatically. It used to be that some were done very quickly, others sat for a week. Now they have a good process where things are turned around pretty quickly.”*

Otherwise, however, both OPCs and TAs hoped that turnaround times could be faster and noted that faster times should result in lower costs and higher savings. They thought processes could be streamlined by having fewer people handling reports and other documents. They also noted slow-downs in TAs requesting information from the design teams and those teams, in turn, not always providing the requested information in a timely manner, so that the result would slow down the technical analysis. One OPC noted that differences in the quality/capability of TAs is most evident in whole building analysis and that when things go slow, it has a lot to do with the TA.

Respondents said the paperwork between the scoping meeting and the Notice to Proceed is often delayed. One person described this as the “sweet spot” where they can “engage the design team early on.” Another bottleneck occurs in resolving program policy issues. TAs want more clarity and consistency on program policy, but say that different program managers may see “different takes on the same situation” and note that they “can’t go to an applicant and say we know for sure it is this – we should be able to say this is the accepted route or answers.”

Another critical factor for success is getting projects on-board early in the design process and finding them at the right time to influence design and savings. For some OPCs and TAs, this is the most important factor if the whole building process is to work well. Some respondents said that the NCP often does not reach projects in time to make “large scale changes” and that they encounter many projects where the blueprints are ready and the designers are “almost ready to submit the design for the building.” One said:

- *“[This means that]...the best we can do is say you can use better windows or a roof-top unit. Maybe they can squeeze that into the specs and improve equipment performance. I would say [there are] 50% free-riders. A lot of projects I get are 100% free-riders.”*

Respondents brought up a variety of other issues related to synchronizing and timing. They said that even when TA work is done early in the design of a whole building project and the incentive offer made, changes can still be made (for instance, to equipment choices) and that will affect the incentive offer. Re-analyzing the savings is a problem because the TA provider is not on board, and the OPC is not qualified to do the analysis. Respondents from these groups noted the process needs to account for these types of changes, with a few suggesting that funds could be encumbered, but the final incentive offer not made until the design is final.

Some TAs and an OPC brought up the issue of needing multiple baselines for LEED and the energy code, but the NCP will only pay for one baseline. They felt some simple adjustments of savings from one baseline to another should be allowed, or more than one baseline paid for (instead of requiring a separate contract with the owner).

Other respondents noted that with the quantity of complex projects, the program needs more in-house staff with greater technical skills in architecture, construction, engineering, and energy. On the other hand, one TA provider noted there are lots of expectations for the TA provider and that some requests – including cost estimating – are beyond the scope of what TAs should be asked for. One OPC said there are not enough resources to stay up-to-date on new technologies and that NYSERDA is not willing to pay for this. Another OPC noted that OPCs are severely understaffed.

When asked why project owners and design teams don’t participate, most respondents continued to talk about timing issues, noting that timing is particularly crucial for large projects where the relative benefit (incentives) is lower.

- *“We have one or two big developers we’ve been trying to go after. I have found out about projects later and called the architect, and they say they do not have time for paperwork. It is just not worth time for the amount of incentives. PON 1501 works for small projects, but for big projects, 1.6 million on a 50 million project is not worth the work and you are not guaranteed the money at the end.”*

Other respondents said that some architects and engineers may not be interested because they do not want someone “looking over their shoulders” and it involves extra work not covered in their fees.

When OPCs and TAs were asked to recap the most important issues to resolve for NCP program delivery, most mentioned timing and timeliness again:

- *“They [NCP] will be defensive. Timeliness of getting responses from NYSEDA has been one of the major sticking points. One of the PMs has a day in the office where they allow time for conference calls with firms to address issues – excellent process.”*
- *“We end up filing extension requests a lot. Pretty tedious process and they added some more requirements. You do not want us spending all our time on paperwork. I do not know what the answer is.”*
- *“PMs [should be] accountable for responding [on time]. If we do not deliver things by a certain date, they withhold funds from our fees. But a report can sit on their desk for 6 months.”*

5.3.2 Serving Smaller Projects Effectively

Everyone interviewed recognized the problems of serving smaller projects, but they weren’t aware that the NCP may make greater efforts to reach small projects. OPCs and TAs agree there is a minimum amount of effort required on any project, regardless of size. Smaller projects can require a higher level of effort; design teams are smaller and less sophisticated, and tend to need more help than a large project, yet the buildings produce less energy savings. One respondent said he felt the NCP had “been serving a lot of small projects,” but that he didn’t know how effectively they were being served.

Some felt the NCP makes it harder to serve small projects. They suggested the following solutions:

- Reducing program changes to allow providers to get more efficient at what they do
- Using the Pre-qualified Approach more often for smaller projects
- Moving smaller projects to the Existing Facilities Program, which focuses on pre-qualified measures
- Making the pre-qualified measure worksheets available
- Capping incentives to small projects

5.4 MIXED VIEWS

5.4.1 Coordination, Roles, and Relationships

About one-half of respondents said coordination among OPCs, TAs, and program managers was good. Notably, those who were most satisfied with coordination said they had established long-term working relationships with each other longer.

The other one-half of OPCs and TAs had some concerns about coordination. The mentioned inconsistencies between different NCP program managers and OPCs in how they handled processes, policy, and products – particularly their review of reports. One OPC noted they have no authority over the TAs, but are responsible for doing quality control on their work. Several respondents noted that the

managers at firms have regular calls with the NCP, but said that that information does not always filter down to all staff (although one OPC says he regularly gets the summaries from these weekly calls and that is good).

Respondents mentioned these opportunities for improvement:

- Reducing the number of people that review reports
- Coming up with consistent answers and processes
- Having more regular calls that include all the OPCs; or making sure that those who attend the calls pass along the guidance and decisions made; or having a conference where all come together, perhaps once or twice a year.
- Having a central place TAs and OPCs can access information on demand, or have a conference where they all come together

5.4.2 Ability to Influence Project Design

When OPCs and TAs were asked “*How well do you think NCP is able to meet its goal of accelerating the inclusion of energy efficiency and green building features in the design construction and operation of commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings?*,” opinions were generally positive but diverse. Respondents differed on the extent to which the program is influencing designs.¹⁵ Some believe the program has significant influence on transforming the market. Others see the NCP as more of a rebate program, where incentives are calculated and pay for energy improvements that people are already intending to do. Some thought it was fine for the NCP to be this kind of reward program. A few respondents mentioned merging with the existing buildings program. The importance of getting involved early in a project was also brought up. One OPC noted the importance of doing better marketing. The following quote recognizes the ambivalence that some respondents felt about NCP’s influence on the market:

- *“I think 50% of the design teams are already there; the other 50% – we are having influence. Not a poor reflection on the program. Energy efficiency is more prevalent. Sometimes we are just incentive calculators. If the designs are good, no reason why those projects shouldn’t get rewarded. But maybe that’s not exactly the intent of program.”*

5.4.3 The Custom Measure Approach

OPCs and TAs expressed a range of opinions about the custom measure path – they made positive and negative comments within one response. In addition, they had many specific and individual comments. Most respondents thought the custom measures tools have improved. They said this path allowed for making easy changes and that it was more uniform. They thought it worked well for simple, straightforward projects that have a standard set of measures and that it is best for validating an existing design.

Still, respondents had a lot of caveats about and suggestions for the custom path and its tools. Some respondents said the path does not account for interactive effects, tends to overestimate savings, and does not easily allow for *what if* scenarios. Individual comments included:

- A TA provider who thought the tools simplify things too much and don’t allow the engineer to do what they are hired for
- A TA provider who thought some of the inputs don’t make sense and would like to be able to override them

¹⁵ Note: The ability of the program to influence design also was raised in relation to timing issues.

- A TA provider who said they use some other analysis tools and an OPC who said he encourages the TAs to use other tools, including simple models like *Equest*
- A TA provider who wants the custom measure tools to be able to check for code compliance
- A TA provider who thinks NCP has over simplified the custom measure report to a set of tables that is not user friendly, saying it should add some summary text
- An OPC who liked that the TA provider is required to submit a copy of the spreadsheet tool with the report so he could see where the numbers come from; he also noted the program should be expanded to include natural gas incentives, because heating is a significant energy expense in a lot of buildings

5.5 UPCOMING EVALUATION ISSUES

5.5.1 The Success of the New PON 1501

Most OPCs and TAs felt it is too early to tell how the NCP would fare under PON 1501 because they have only dealt with a few projects using it. They said the lower incentives in PON 1501 present the main challenge. A few did not think this would have a big impact, but others thought the lower incentives would make it harder to encourage people to go through the bother of participating in the program. Some mentioned they had received complaints about the incentives, particularly from repeat customers who knew what they were before.

Although not directly about the new PON, one TA provider added they are moving away from allowing multiple models for the TA studies and thought that reducing involvement with the design team was going in the wrong direction. One OPC was glad to see that green design incentives can now be paid to the applicant's green consultants and are not limited to NCP TAs. He felt this would encourage architecture and engineering (A&E) teams to bring in projects to NCP.

5.5.2 The Success of New Marketing Efforts

While TAs and OPCs had some awareness of the new marketing plan and NCP's increased emphasis on marketing, they did not have a lot of input on this topic. A few had been doing marketing in New York City, but even these OPCs said there has been little to no coordination on marketing. OPCs hope that will change as NCP develops marketing strategies and would like to see both program managers and OPCs authorized to do more marketing.

The OPCs said they have not done much marketing lately and they did not have a way to know what was most effective. One said it works best when the architect and engineer are invested in the program. They used to make presentations at A&E firms, but have not done that recently. Another OPC said they are focusing on networking and socializing at events and are doing presentations at A&E firms in New York City, but they are concerned that a lot of firms in the city already know about the NCP. Still, they have had some feedback that "our marketing has been paying off in the last couple of months." Another OPC said word-of-mouth is most important. They work with the owners and design teams they are doing projects for, and they use phone and e-mail to get to face-to-face meetings.

SECTION 6:

KEY FINDINGS – PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

This section will present findings from interviews with 40 NCP participants (owners, developers, and design team members) representing 29 NCP projects. The section report on NCP areas of strength, key areas to improve, mixed viewpoints, and one upcoming issue.

Participants were asked a variety of closed-ended and open-ended questions during their in-depth interviews. For this report, only straight frequencies are possible due to the small sample size; however, in the final report it will be possible to conduct more analysis that compares results across different types of customers and variables.

6.1 PROGRAM STRENGTHS

6.1.1 Awareness of NCP's Basic Features

As Table 6-1 shows, most NCP participants are familiar with the program's basic offerings; not surprisingly, almost all participants (97%) were aware that the program offers financial incentives. The large majority of participants were also aware that the program offers TA and energy analysis services (87%). About three-quarters were familiar with building commissioning incentives (76%), that the NCP serves both new and substantially renovated buildings (75%), and that the NCP supports green buildings (71%).

Table 6-1. Awareness of NCP Features

Have You Heard that NCP. . .	Frequency	Percent
Provides Financial Incentives? (n=39)		
Yes	38	97%
No	1	3%
Provides Technical Assistance and Energy Analysis? (n=38)		
Yes	33	87%
No	5	13%
Provides Incentives for Building Commissioning? (n=38)		
Yes	29	76%
No	7	18%
Unsure	2	5%
Serves New Buildings Only, Major Renovations Only, or Both: (n=40)		
Both	30	75%
New buildings only	4	10%
Major renovations only	2	5%
Don't know	4	10%
Provides Green Building Services and Incentives? (n=38)		
Yes	27	71%
No	9	24%
Maybe	2	5%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

6.1.2 Satisfaction with Many Program Aspects

Satisfaction ratings varied depending on the program component being rated. While the ratings discussed in this section reflect areas of high satisfaction, some components of the program offer opportunities for improvement (see section below). As shown in Table 6-2, participants agreed with other program actors that the application process usually presented few challenges, with a strong majority (72%) reporting the process was very (51%) or somewhat (21%) easy. Most said the form was simple or short. A notable minority did not rate the application process, reporting that they had others (*e.g.*, the OPCs, contractors) complete the form for them. Only a few said they found the application tedious.

Table 6-2. Ease of the Application Process

How Easy Was The Application Process?	Frequency (n=39)	Percent (n=39)
Very easy	20	51%
Somewhat easy	8	21%
Neither easy nor hard	1	3%
Somewhat hard	1	3%
Very hard	1	3%
Don't know / NA	8	21%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 6-3 shows several areas of strong satisfaction with the NCP; fewer than 10% of respondents gave the program low marks in these areas and over 50% gave them the highest rating. Participants rated OPCs highly, none were dissatisfied, and three-quarters were very satisfied (74%). When asked to give the reasons behind their ratings, Participants often mentioned: that OPCs had good communications skills (*e.g.*, “clear”); that they were knowledgeable (“he spoke engineer”) and responsive (“he was the go-to guy, got the job done”); that they knew the program; and that they helped applicants navigate the NCP process. As one participant put it: “Good process management -- so pleasant it was painless.”

Almost all participants were also very or somewhat satisfied with the final TA report and the incentive offer. Although the sample sizes are very small, 80% of respondents said they were very satisfied with the inspection process and 100% of the six respondents who had received green services were very satisfied. (Please note that all these percentages may change when the sample sizes increase in the second phase of the evaluation).

Table 6-3. Areas of Strong Satisfaction

Levels of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Overall OPC services (n=31)		
Very satisfied	23	74%
Somewhat satisfied	7	23%
Neither satisfied / unsatisfied	1	3%
Final Technical Assistance Report (n=28)		
Very satisfied	18	64%
Somewhat satisfied	9	32%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	0	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	4%
Incentive offer (n=20)		
Very satisfied	11	55%
Somewhat satisfied	6	30%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	1	5%
Somewhat dissatisfied	2	10%
Inspection Process (n=10)		
Very satisfied	8	80%
Somewhat satisfied	0	0%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	1	10%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	10%
Green Building Services Option (n=6)		
Very Satisfied	6	100%

Two other measures of satisfaction – how likely a participant was to recommend the NCP to others or to participate again – were also very positive (**Table 6-4**). A large majority were very likely to recommend the NCP (79%) or participate in it again (81%). While some other results show that participants may find aspects of NCP less than satisfying, these data show that by the end of the process, most participants are willing to champion the program.

Table 6-4. How Likely to Recommend NCP or Participate Again

How Likely Are You To...	Frequency	Percent
Recommend NCP to Others (n=36)		
Very likely	29	78%
Somewhat likely	4	11%
Neither Likely/nor Unlikely	0	0%
Somewhat unlikely	1	3%
Very unlikely	2	5%
Participate in NCP Again (n=35)		
Very Likely	30	86%
Somewhat Likely	1	3%
Neither Likely/Nor Unlikely	0	0%
Somewhat Unlikely	1	3%
Very Unlikely	3	9%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

6.2 AREAS TO IMPROVE

This section discusses two distinct areas where participants thought NCP services could be substantially improved.

6.2.1 Synchronization and Timing

Participants in the Whole Building Design and Green Building Approach say the timing of NCP services is often not in sync with the building development process. A number of respondents said that the ability of the NCP process to be responsive to varying design and construction timeframes is limited and that this lack of nimble timing may decrease the windows of opportunity available for choosing high efficiency options.

In addition, the process can take too long. For example, respondents noted situations where the development process can move faster than the services that the NCP hopes will influence the building design (such as technical assessments and the level of incentive that may be available for an efficiency improvement). They described how this timing disparity has resulted in situations where the design is complete or the building is under construction before the technical assistance work is complete and an incentive offer is made.

Basically, respondents said projects can't wait for the NCP process. To create the building model, the design team needs to provide drawings and building information that may not be available early in the design process. When this building information is available later in the design, the ability of the TA process to influence the design is limited. A project can also be delayed for extended periods, so TA work can be complete and an incentive offered, but the project is on hold.

As one participant emphasized:

"I do have one concern. That is the timing issue. I'm sure you're hearing this time and again. The process takes too long. I learned. . . that with NCP, you have to apply very early in the project to get anything before you go to construction, because, obviously, once you're into construction, it's hard to make any changes. Even though we apply in the early part of the

schematic design, we don't usually get the input we need for the design process until the design is almost done."

6.2.2 Perceptions About Technical Assistance and Program Influence

Participants often viewed technical assistance as a program requirement rather than a service to them. They said TAs focus more on producing an energy model to calculate the incentives rather than providing input to the design team about different design options for improving building energy efficiency. A number of participants said they wanted the TAs to be a creative design partner instead of just quantifying savings based on a single design scenario. As one respondent explained:

"They were perfectly competent at putting together the energy model and reporting the results to us – I'm not sure if it's on their end, or if it's the fee structure that NYSERDA offers them – but I would have liked more back and forth with them. I would have liked it if TA offered a variety of potential scenarios, creative ideas, because the point of the process is to optimize the energy efficiency of the building so that represents a balancing act between how much money you have the client spend and the rate of return. So maybe the TA could build up three different scenarios in the energy model instead of just one – maybe the TA could do three models to see which measures would give you the best savings."

A group of participants said they already had identified the energy efficiency measures they were going to do before they entered the program and that the NCP had no influence. Many of these were well experienced with the NCP through prior projects or from the experience of close colleagues. Thus, NCP is standard practice for them.

6.3 MIXED VIEWS

This section presents information about the NCP where results suggest program gaps or areas for improvement, but with both positive and some negative ratings.

6.3.1 Awareness and Satisfaction

As **Table 6-5** shows, compared to other program components, substantial minorities of participants were unaware of two types of offerings: incentives for design teams and bonus incentives that the NCP sometimes offers for specialized measures. Still, over one-half of participants did know about these more unusual incentives.

Table 6-5. Lesser Known NCP Components

Did You Know NCP Provides...	Frequency	Percent
Design Team Incentives for Whole and Green Building Design? (n=39)		
Yes	23	59%
No	14	36%
Maybe	2	5%
Bonus Incentives for Specific Energy-Efficient and DR Measures? (n=37)		
Yes	21	57%
No	14	38%
Maybe	2	5%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

While the application process got high marks from most participants, many initially did not fully understand the NCP program steps and requirements (only 13% were very clear at the outset), nor the specific program services that matched their projects (only 31% were very clear). These ratings (shown in **Table 6-6**) suggest that participants' first impressions of the NCP could generate confusion and questions; they also underscore the importance of the OPCs' role. Unlike their views of wanting more from TA services, participants appreciate that OPCs guide them through a somewhat challenging process.

Table 6-6. Clarity of Program Steps

Initially, How Clear Were...	Frequency	Percent
NCP's Program Steps and Requirements? (n=40)		
Very clear	5	13%
Somewhat clear	22	55%
Neither clear/unclear	2	5%
Somewhat unclear	6	15%
Very unclear	2	5%
Don't know	3	8%
Services for Projects Like Yours? (n=38)		
Very clear	12	31%
Somewhat clear	16	41%
Neither clear/unclear	2	5%
Somewhat unclear	4	10%
Very unclear	2	5%
Don't know	2	5%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Design charrettes and scoping meetings are the cornerstones of the more complex Green Building and Whole Building Design options in the NCP, and staff, OPCs, and TAs see them as the catalysts for the highest levels of savings. Charrettes gather all a project's key decision-makers together to brainstorm about – and hopefully achieve buy-in for – optimal energy efficiency approaches. The participant ratings in **Table 6-7** suggest these services are effective for some participants, but not for others. While about one-half of participants gave each service the highest rating, the rest did not. (Please note that the helpfulness of the design charrette is based upon a very small number of cases and further interviews may change this finding.)

Table 6-7. Helpfulness of Design Charrettes and Scoping Meetings

How Helpful Was the...	Frequency	Percent
Design Charrette? (n=10)		
Very Helpful	5	50%
Somewhat Helpful	3	30%
Neither Helpful/Unhelpful	0	0%
Somewhat Unhelpful	1	10%
Very Unhelpful	1	10%
Scoping Meeting? (n=29)		
Very helpful	14	48%
Somewhat helpful	11	38%
Neither helpful/unhelpful	2	7%
Somewhat unhelpful	0	0%
Very unhelpful	2	7%

Table 6-8 presents a variety of other program attributes that received mixed ratings of satisfaction. Overall, these ratings suggest that the services that participants receive through the NCP may vary and that there is room for greater consistency and improvement. Given the importance of each of these services – TA consulting, technical assessments, commissioning, and the payment process – it would be good to have a majority of these ratings in the *very satisfied* category, with fewer than 10% of the ratings in the *dissatisfied* categories.

Participant ratings of the commissioning process also suggest room for improvement, especially because 3 of the 12 cases gave the service the lowest rating. Again, however, it’s important to keep the small sample sizes in mind and to see if more interviews will preserve this figure.

The sample size for satisfaction with the payment process is even smaller, but, again, is something to track into the future.

Table 6-8. Mixed Satisfaction Ratings

How Satisfied Were You With the...	Frequency	Percent
Technical Assistance Services (n=27)		
Very satisfied	13	48%
Somewhat satisfied	10	37%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	0	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	4%
Very dissatisfied	3	11%
Technical Assessment (n=32)		
Very satisfied	8	36%
Somewhat satisfied	10	45%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	1	5%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	5%
Very dissatisfied	2	9%
Commissioning Process (n=12)		
Very satisfied	5	42%
Somewhat satisfied	3	25%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	1	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	0%
Very dissatisfied	3	25%
Payment Process (n=7)		
Very satisfied	3	43%
Somewhat satisfied	2	29%
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	0	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	2	29%
Very dissatisfied	0	0%

Note: Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

6.4 UPCOMING EVALUATION ISSUE

The NCP staff collaborating with the evaluation team on this research wanted to get a barometer reading on whether or not the structure of the technical assistance payment served customers well. Under the NCP, the program shares the cost of technical assistance with the customer and pays the first \$5,000. The customer pays their portion of the cost six months after the TA study is completed. When asked how important it was to maintain this program feature, reactions varied (**Table 6-9**). Although proportions were not evenly split between positive and negative levels of importance, the results are not clear, given the small sample size. Just over one-third of participants (38%) said the feature would have influenced their decision to participate in the NCP, but only 14% said it was very important. On the other hand, 62% said the feature was not too or not at all important.

Table 6-9. Importance of TA Payment Feature in Deciding to Participate in NCP

Importance	Frequency (n=21)	Percent (n=21)
Very important	3	14%
Somewhat important	5	24%
Neither Important or Unimportant	0	0%
Not too Important	5	24%
Not at all Important	8	38%

SECTION 7:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These conclusions and recommendations focus on issues that deserve greater program emphasis in the near term and more attention from the process evaluation team in the second phase.

1. **Conclusion:** The NCP would likely attract more projects – and save more energy – if program and customer timing were better synchronized and turnaround times were shortened. Program staff, OPCs and TAs, and Participants all report synchronization challenges such as missing the optimal time to encourage savings (between conceptual and schematic design), and long turnaround times for requesting information and providing technical reports to customers. While timing affects other areas (such as payment), the front-end timing is the most crucial for ensuring maximum savings.

Recommendation: The NCP should focus on finding solutions in two problem areas – enrolling projects at the optimal time in the design and finding ways to ensure that scoping meetings, TA tasks, and Notices to Proceed run as efficiently as possible. The second phase of the process evaluation should factor in a new operations group report and examine cycle time through the Building Portals database to see where improvements can be made.

2. **Conclusion:** The NCP's growth with new staff and TA firms creates opportunities to improve customer service and trust in the program or diminish it. The program implementers are a core strength of the NCP. New staff and contractors are being added to expand to this strength. While coordination, training, and communication among NCP's implementers can be expensive, lessons from the past and feedback from the first phase of this evaluation suggest these costs are essential if the required levels of customer service and trust are to be maintained between the NCP and the audiences it wishes to attract and influence.

Recommendation: In planning its steps to integrate new staff and contractors with the program, NCP needs to pay careful attention to establishing clear lines of review and authority, accountability, marketing skills, policy consistency, and placing a high priority on how to meet project schedules. New and old team members should all participate in training and other communications that emphasizes consistent team approaches and skill-building. The second phase of this evaluation should assess these program efforts.

3. **Conclusion:** Some tension remains among NCP's goals, particularly between its market transformation and savings acquisition goals, and its ability to serve both large complex projects and small projects cost-effectively. These tensions are not new and may not be able to be completely resolved.

Recommendation: NCP's management should spend time discussing these tensions and how to manage them, especially during a time when savings acquisition and serving smaller projects are key goals for EEPS funding.

4. **Conclusion:** The findings from this Interim Report and a debriefing with NCP staff pinpointed important areas where staff needs more in-depth information. Key areas for further evaluation emphasis include research on: how to ensure optimal scoping meetings; how to make technical assistance a value-added service rather than a potential barrier; how to improve coordination and consistency among staff, OPCs, and TAs; and how best to assess NCP's progress toward other goals, such as serving small projects.

Recommendation: The process team, working with NCP representatives, will review and revise its interview guides for staff, OPCs, TAs, and participants to make sure these elements are being addressed as fully as possible. The same review will determine if any items

might be shortened or eliminated. Finally, the process team will further analyze information in the program database to look at the mix of projects NCP is serving.

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW GUIDES

NYSDERDA NEW CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM PROCESS EVALUATION 2010 FINAL STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE – PHASE 1

Name	Date
Title	
Phone	E-mail

INTRODUCTION [NOTE: The narrative is for guidance and often will not be delivered verbatim.]

Today I want to talk with you about various aspects of the New Construction Program. I'm a member of the process evaluation team and our job is find out from various people involved in the program – staff, OPCs, TAs, participants, non-participants – their views about how well the program is operating and provide constructive feedback. NCP's expanding activities to meet the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standards (EEPS) Fast Track goals are of special interest in this evaluation.

This interview is confidential. Do you have any questions before we start?

First, please tell me about your background with the New Construction Program or NCP.

1. What are your position and responsibilities?
2. How long have you worked with NCP and in what capacities?

PROGRAM DESIGN

Now I want to ask you about program's current intent and design. Please feel free to give us your in-depth thinking on these questions.

3. As we understand it, a key goal of NCP is to achieve higher energy savings per project. What strategies are being used to meet this goal? **(For each one named, ask)** How well is this strategy working? What, if anything, can improve this strategy? **(If not mentioned, probe each of the following strategies)**

How to provide small customer services more c/e

- A. Increase use of whole building design analysis;
 - B. Increase technical assistance providers
 - C. Have a tiered incentive approach that rewards energy performance improvements that exceed current code;
 - D. Attract higher energy consuming projects;
 - E. Attract industry leaders who can influence the market.
4. One recurring theme that emerged from the NCP kick-off meeting was that NCP has agreed "to do more with less" with the change to the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standards or EEPS funding. What do you see as the key challenges of doing more with less? Of the strategies we've been talking about, which ones do you see as most important to meeting this goal?
 5. Under EEPS Fast Track funding, NCP also wants to more effectively serve smaller projects. How does NCP define a "smaller project?" What strategies are being used to meet this goal? How well is each strategy working? What, if anything, can improve this strategy?
 6. As NCP transitions from PON 1222 to the new PON 1501, what are the key challenges the program faces? How can these challenges best be met?

Now I'd like to ask you more about program coordination.

7. What parties work together to deliver NCP (e.g., NYSERDA staff, the OPCs, the TAs, others)? What is the role of each party? How well is each party able to meet program demand?
8. How effective is coordination among these parties? What improvements to coordination, if any, do you suggest?
9. How does NCP work with the US Green Building Council? How effective is this coordination? What, if anything, could improve this coordination? We plan to talk with a representative from USGBC – what questions should we be sure to ask? Not involved with USGBC -
10. How does NCP work with the NY-CHPS (the High Performance Schools Guidelines)? How effective is this coordination? What, if anything, could improve this coordination? We plan to talk with a representative from NY-CHPS – what questions should we be sure to ask? Not involved with that all -
11. How does NCP work with code officials, both state and local? How effective is this coordination? What, if anything, could improve this coordination? We plan to speak with state and local code officials – what questions should we be sure to ask them?
12. What other programs at NYSERDA does NCP work with most often? How would you describe the effectiveness of these working relationships? What improvements, if any, are needed between NCP and other NYSERDA programs? **(If not mentioned: Please tell me about how the Industrial Process Efficiency Program and NCP work together.)**

PROGRAM MARKETING

My next questions are about program marketing.

13. How has the market for NCP services changed over time? What factors have driven these changes?
14. Who are the target audiences for NCP? Are any audiences more important than others? How effectively is each of these target audiences being reached?
15. What types of outreach and marketing does NCP use to reach its target audiences? Which of these types are most effective in attracting projects? Why? **(PROBE:**
16. How well are outreach and marketing activities coordinated? Are there any improvements to outreach and marketing activities you would suggest?

PROGRAM DELIVERY AND PARTICIPATION

Now let's talk more about program delivery and participation.

17. How do potential participants apply to NCP? How well does the application process work? **(PROBE if needed:** Can you tell me more about the application's effectiveness?) What influences participants to choose one NCP path over another? What improvements, if any, are needed for the application process?
18. What are the key differences in NCP for non-Con Ed and Con Ed projects? How would you assess the adequacy of coverage in both areas?

19. Briefly walk me through the steps in the Pre-Qualified path. About what proportion of the chosen measures are installed? Why do measures drop out? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for this path?
20. Now briefly walk me through the steps in the Custom Measure path. About what proportion of the chosen measures are installed? Why do measures drop out? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for this path?
21. Next, please describe the steps the Whole Building Design path. (**PROBE: Use of design charrettes and scoping meetings.**) Which steps do you think are the most important for fostering maximum savings? (**PROBE if needed:** Can you tell me more about how this path's step influences savings?) Anything more about the application's effectiveness?) About what proportion of recommended measures are chosen? Why do measures drop out? About what proportion of chosen measures are installed? Why do some measures not get installed? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for this path?
22. Finally, please describe the steps involved in the Green Buildings path. (**PROBE: Use of design charrettes and scoping meetings.**) Which steps are the most important for fostering maximum savings? About what proportion of recommended measures are chosen? Why do measures drop out? About what proportion of chosen measures are installed? Why do some measures not get installed? How important are Green Building services to the success of NCP? Why? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for this path?
23. How well does NCP provide benchmarking and commissioning services? Can these processes be improved? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for benchmarking and commissioning services?
24. Overall, given all we've talked about, how would you assess the effectiveness of NCP's current delivery approach? What works particularly well about program delivery? What areas, if any, need to be changed?

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The next few questions are about NYSERDA's internal processes for NCP.

25. How well does the contracting process work for NCP participants? For TA providers? For OPCs? **For each entity:** Are you aware of any contracting issues that need to be resolved? How would you suggest resolving them?
26. What data are most important for understanding how NCP is doing? How are these data tracked? How satisfied are you with program tracking? What improvements, if any, would you recommend for program tracking and reporting?
27. How well does the payment process work for NCP? Are you aware of any payment issues that need to be resolved? How would you suggest resolving them?
28. Typically, how many NCP projects are in progress at any one point in time? Are there any problems with the flow or volume of projects? If so, to what would you attribute these problems? How might these problems be resolved?

29. Is the participation rate matching program expectations? Why or why not?
30. Are there any other internal program management issues that you would like to mention? If so, what suggestions do you have for resolving these issues?

TARGET AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Now I have a few questions about the feedback you get from your target audiences.

31. How do you obtain and track feedback from NCP participants (A&E firms, owners, other decision-makers, vendors etc)? What feedback do you have from customers about their experience with NCP, including their primary reasons to participate, barriers to participation, satisfaction with the program, program challenges and benefits, etc?
32. How adequate is the current level of customer feedback and tracking? If current methods are not adequate, how could feedback and tracking be improved?
33. What are the characteristics of customers who begin NCP but “drop out?” Do these customers have anything in common?
34. What do you know about firms or owners that don’t participate at all?
35. What questions should we be sure to ask participants?
36. What questions should we ask those that drop out of the program?

CONCLUSION

Finally, I’d like have you summarize a few things for me about NCP.

37. How well do you think NCP is able to meet its goal of *accelerating the inclusion of energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and green building features in the design construction and operation of commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings?*
38. What would you say are the greatest strengths of the program?
39. What would you say are the most important areas that need improvement?
40. Finally, is there anything else you think we should include in this process evaluation of NCP?

THANKS SO MUCH!

**NYSERDA NEW CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM PROCESS EVALUATION 2010 FINAL
OPC/TA INTERVIEW GUIDE – PHASE 1**

Name	Date
Title	
Phone	E-mail

INTRODUCTION [Note: The narrative is for guidance and often will not be delivered verbatim.]

Today I want to talk with you about various aspects of the New Construction Program. I’m a member of the process evaluation team; our job is to examine how well NCP is operating and to provide constructive feedback and recommendations. In this capacity we are interviewing Program staff, OPCs, TAs, and other key contacts about their experience with NCP. NCP’s expanding activities to meet the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standards (EEPS) Fast Track goals are of special interest in this evaluation.

This interview is confidential. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. First, how would you describe your position and responsibilities with NCP? At what point(s) in the program process do you become involved? How long have you worked with NCP? About what percent of your work week is devoted to NCP?
2. Do you work for any other programs at NYSERDA? If so: Which ones? Have you encountered any benefits, or any challenges, due to working with multiple programs? **(Add if needed:** First, the benefits? Now the challenges?)

PROGRAM GOALS

Now I want to ask you about the program’s current goals. Please feel free to give us your in-depth thinking on these questions.

3. One recurring theme that emerged from our initial talks with NCP was that the program has agreed “to do more with less,” because of the change to Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standards or EEPS funding. Have you heard about this goal for NCP? If so, how has that goal affected how you work with NCP? **(PROBE if not mentioned:** Are they trying to get more energy savings per project?) What might be done, if anything, to make your efforts more effective in meeting this goal?
4. Under EEPS Fast Track funding, NCP also wants to more effectively serve smaller projects. Has this goal affected how you work with NCP? If so: How? What might be done, if anything, to make your efforts more effective in meeting this goal?
5. As NCP transitions from PON 1222 to the new PON 1501, what are the key challenges it faces? How can these challenges best be met?

PROGRAM COORDINATION AND CAPACITY

Now I’d like to ask you more about program coordination and the program's capacity to meet demand.

6. What parties do you work with to deliver the NCP (e.g., NYSERDA staff, the OPCs, the TAs, others)? What is the role of each party?

7. How effective is coordination among these parties? What improvements to coordination, if any, do you suggest?
8. How adequate are the resources to meet program demands? If less than adequate: what further resources does the program need?

PROGRAM MARKETING

My next questions are about program marketing.

9. **(If associated with NCP over time)** How has the market for NCP services changed over time? In your opinion, what factors have driven these changes?
10. Who are the target audiences for NCP? Are any audiences more important than others? How effectively is program marketing reaching each of these target audiences?
11. What types of outreach and marketing does NCP use to reach its target audiences? Which of these types are most effective in attracting projects, especially at the optimal point in the project's design? Why?
12. How well are outreach and marketing activities coordinated? Would you suggest any improvements to current outreach and marketing activities? One OPC did not seem very confident about their marketing efforts.

PROGRAM DELIVERY AND PARTICIPATION

Now let's talk more about program delivery and participation. Please let me know if any of these questions don't apply to your work with NCP.

13. Through your work are you involved in the application process for NCP? If so: How well do you feel the application process works? (**PROBE:** Can you tell me more about the application's effectiveness?) What influences participants to choose one NCP path over another? What improvements, if any, are needed for the application process?
14. What are the key differences in NCP program delivery for non-Con Ed and Con Ed projects? How would you assess the adequacy of coverage in both areas?
15. Have you worked on projects that have gone through the Pre-Qualified Path? If so: How well do you think this path works? What, if anything, could improve the Pre-Qualified path?
16. Have you worked with projects in the Custom Measure path? If so: How well do you think this path works? What, if anything, could be improved?
17. Next, have you worked with projects in the Whole Building Design path (excluding green building services)? (**PROBE: Steps: scoping meetings, scope of work, TA study, review/approval, Final, follow up**) If so: How well does this path work? What, if anything, could be improved? Which steps do you think are the most important for fostering maximum savings for each project? What experience do you have with measures dropping out of consideration or not being installed?
18. Finally, have you worked with projects in the whole Green Buildings path (whole building with green building services)? (**PROBE: Use of design charrettes/ scoping meetings; how are**

- steps/process different; working with green building consultants)** If so: How well does this path work? How important are Green Building services to the success of NCP? Why? What, if anything, could be improved? Which steps are the most important for fostering maximum savings for each project? What experience do you have with measures dropping out of consideration or not being installed?
19. How well does NCP provide benchmarking and commissioning services? Can these processes be improved? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for benchmarking and commissioning services?
 20. Overall, given all we've talked about, how would you assess the effectiveness of NCP's current program delivery approach? What works particularly well about program delivery? What areas, if any, need to be changed and why?

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The next few questions are about NYSERDA's management of NCP.

21. How well does the contracting process work for NCP participants? For TA providers? For OPCs? **For each entity:** Are you aware of any contracting issues that need to be resolved? How would you suggest resolving them?
22. What data are most important [to you] for understanding how the NCP is performing? [What data do you use?] How are these data tracked? How effective is program tracking? What improvements, if any, would you suggest for program tracking and reporting?
23. How well does the payment process work for NCP contractors and participants? Are you aware of any payment issues that need to be resolved?
24. Typically, how many NCP projects are you working on at any one point in time? Are there any problems with the flow or volume of projects? If so, to what would you attribute these problems? How might these problems be resolved?
25. Do you think the NCP participation rate is matching program expectations? Why or why not?
26. Are there any other program management issues that you would like to mention? If so, what suggestions do you have for resolving these issues?

TARGET AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Now I have a few questions about the feedback you get from your target audiences.

27. How do you track feedback from participants about their experience with NCP? What insights do you have about topics like their primary reasons to participate, barriers to participation, satisfaction with the program, program challenges and benefits, etc?
28. How adequate is the current level of customer feedback and tracking? How might feedback and tracking be improved?
29. What are the characteristics of customers who begin NCP but "drop out?" Do these customers have anything in common?

30. What do you know about firms or owners that don't participate in NCP?
31. What questions should we be sure to ask participants?
32. What questions should we ask those that drop out of the program?

CONCLUSION

Finally, I'd like to have you summarize a few things for me about NCP.

33. How well do you think NCP is able to meet its goal of *accelerating the inclusion of energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and green building features in the design construction and operation of commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings*? What program changes would enable NCP to better meet this goal?
34. What would you say are the greatest strengths of the program?
35. What would you say are the most important areas that need improvement?
36. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to make sure we consider in this process evaluation of NCP?

THANKS SO MUCH!

**NYSERDA NEW CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION INTERVIEW GUIDE –
5-21-10**

Name	Firm Name
Phone	Email Address
Project Name/Number	
OPC	TA
Date Interviewed	Interviewer

INTRODUCTION (Note: The narrative is for guidance and often will not be delivered verbatim.)

Hello, this is _____ I'm calling to talk with you about your experience with the New Construction Program (NCP) at NYSERDA (**If needed:** That's the New York Energy Research and Development Authority. The New Construction Program offers assistance and incentives for making new commercial buildings more energy efficient.).

I am part of a team of evaluators **under contract with NYSERDA**. Our job is to assess how well the New Construction Program is serving businesses like yours. Your advice is essential to measuring the program's success and to improving it.

The program's records show you as a(n) (owner, designer, architect, engineer, developer) for the _____ project. Is that correct? [**If not, correct information, including getting a referral to the right person to talk with.**]

INTRO Q1 (Circle status shown in database before interviewing)

Part of our interview today will focus on (this/that) project. To double check– our records indicate that the (fill in project descriptor) project is at this point in the NCP process?

1. Dropped out of program at the _____ stage (**If a partial participant: Ask questions about the program to the point where the project dropped out; then skip to Q46**).
2. The initial project meetings are complete, such as a design charrette or scoping meeting, but you are waiting for analysis results and/or an incentive offer
3. An incentive offer has been accepted but construction has not yet begun
4. The project is under construction
5. The project has completed the NCP inspection process
6. The project has completed commissioning
7. The project is complete but you are waiting for the final incentive payment
8. The project is finished and the incentive Has been paid

This interview is confidential and will take about 30 minutes. Is now a good time to talk or can we make an appointment at a convenient time?

NOTES:

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND

1. What is your title and your current position/responsibilities with _____(firm)?
2. How would you describe what your firm or business does?
3. About how long have you been aware of the New Construction Program at NYSERDA?

4. Is the (describe focal project) the only project where you've participated in NCP or have you been involved with more than one project participating in NCP?
 - 1 Participated in NCP just with this project
 - 2 Participated in NCP more than once
 - 3 Don't know

GENERAL AWARENESS

(If participated in more than one project, ask respondent to factor in experience across projects where appropriate.)

5. What would you say is the purpose of NYSERDA's New Construction Program (NCP)?
6. How did you first find out about NCP? (Do not read; circle all mentioned)
 - 1 Contractor or vendor --(Add type if possible) _____
 - 2 A&E firm
 - 3 Professional publication, meeting, or contact
 - 4 NYSERDA mailing, brochure, video, or other marketing materials
 - 5 NYSERDA Website
 - 6 Phone call to NYSERDA
 - 7 NYSERDA OPC or TA provider
 - 8 NYSERDA staff person
 - 9 NYSERDA sponsored event (e.g., a salon, conference)
 - 10 Participated in another NYSERDA program
 - 11 Other _____
 - 12 DK/NA
7. When you first found out about NCP, did any particular aspects of it especially catch your interest and motivate you to participate? (**PROBE:** Who influenced the decision; what was the motivation behind the decision to participate?)
8. Did you have any concerns about participating in NCP that made you "think twice" about participating?
9. Is it your understanding that NCP serves just new buildings, just substantial renovations of existing buildings, or both?
 - 1 New buildings only
 - 2 Substantial renovations only
 - 3 Both
 - 4 DK/NA

10. Which of these NCP services and incentives have you heard about? (Read list, circle yes or no)
- 1 Financial incentives based on building energy performance 1 Yes 2 No
 - 2 Basic technical assistance services and incentives for energy analysis 1 Yes 2 No
 - 3 Green Buildings services and incentives to assess green building opportunities and support meeting green building standards 1 Yes 2 No
 - 4 Design team incentives, which help with the cost of the project architect and/or engineer for Whole Building Design or Green Building Approach Projects 1 Yes 2 No
 - 5 Incentives for building commissioning -- a detailed assessment of building systems and their performance to make sure they are operating correctly 1 Yes 2 No
 - 6 "Bonus" incentives for specific energy efficiency and demand response measures [and LEED applicant soft costs] 1 Yes 2 No

11. When you first found out about NCP, how clear did you find the program steps and requirements? Would you say it was. . . .

- 1 Very clear
- 2 Somewhat clear
- 3 Neither clear nor unclear
- 4 Somewhat unclear
- 5 Very unclear
- 6 DK/NA

12. Why did you choose _____(rating)? (**PROBE: If not clear:** Have program requirements gotten clearer over time? How did that happen?)

13. Overall, how clear were the services the NCP offers projects like yours (**if needed**, such as the incentives available and opportunities for technical assistance)?

- 1 Very clear
- 2 Somewhat clear
- 3 Neither clear nor unclear
- 4 Somewhat unclear
- 5 Very unclear
- 6 DK/NA

14. Why did you choose _____(rating)?

SERVICE DELIVERY

Now I want to talk with you more specifically about the _____ project.

(**Note: If available from other sources, fill in/double check as needed.**)

15. What (is/was) your role with _____ (project)?

16. Please let me double-check with you about some characteristics of the _____(project):
- a. Size: square feet and floors _____
 - b. Building type/primary occupancy and use _____
 - c. Leased or owner occupied _____
 - d. Approximate cost per square foot _____
17. At what point in the design process was the decision was made to participate in NCP?
- 1 Conceptual design
 - 2 Schematic design
 - 3 Design development
 - 4 Construction drawings
 - 5 Other _____
18. How easy did you find the application process for NCP?
- 1 Very easy
 - 2 Somewhat easy
 - 3 Neither easy nor hard
 - 4 Somewhat hard
 - 5 Very hard
 - 6 DK/NA
19. Why do you say _____?
20. **If OPC assigned:** It looks like you worked with an Outreach Project Consultant or OPC during your participation in NCP, is that correct (Put in name/firm from records _____)? **If yes,** how did the OPC assist with your project?
21. **If yes.** How satisfied were you with the services of the OPC? Would you say. . .
- 1 Very dissatisfied
 - 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
 - 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - 4 Somewhat satisfied
 - 5 Very satisfied
 - 6 DK/NA
22. Why did you choose _____(rating)?
23. Do you have any suggestions for improving the services of OPCs?
24. **If TA assigned:** It looks like you also worked with a Technical Assistance (TA) contractor, is that correct? Is (Insert firm/name _____) assigned to your project? **If yes for TA:** How satisfied have you been with the services of the TA? Would you say you are
- 1 Very dissatisfied
 - 2 Somewhat dissatisfied

- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat satisfied
- 5 Very satisfied
- 6 DK/NA

25. Why did you choose _____ (rating)?

26. Would you suggest any changes for improving TA services?

27. **If applicable:** Our records show you participated in a design charrette as part of this project, is that correct? **If yes:** How helpful was the design charrette for your project?

- 1 Very helpful
- 2 Somewhat helpful
- 3 Neither helpful nor unhelpful
- 4 Somewhat unhelpful
- 5 Very unhelpful
- 6 DK/NA

28. Why did you choose _____ (rating)?

- a. **PROBE if not mentioned:** Were there any benefits from the design charrette that were not related to saving energy?

29. Do you have any suggestions for improving the value of the design charrette to design teams and owners?

30. **If applicable:** I also see that you attended a scoping meeting for this project? **If yes,** how helpful was the scoping meeting? Would you say it was

- 1 Very helpful
- 2 Somewhat helpful
- 4 Neither helpful nor unhelpful
- 5 Somewhat unhelpful
- 6 Very unhelpful
- 7 DK/NA

31. Why did you choose _____(rating)?

- a. **PROBE if not mentioned:** Were there any benefits from the scoping meeting that were not related to saving energy?

32. **If participated through TA report/incentive offer:** After the scoping meeting, the TA worked with the project team to assess potential energy saving approaches in your building. How satisfied were you with the process of conducting this technical assessment? Would you say. . .

- 1 Very dissatisfied
- 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat satisfied

- 5 Very satisfied
- 6 DK/NA

33. How satisfied were you with the final TA report?

- 1 Very dissatisfied
- 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat satisfied
- 5 Very satisfied
- 6 DK/NA

34. How satisfied were you with the incentive offer you received?

- 1 Very dissatisfied
- 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat satisfied
- 5 Very satisfied
- 6 DK/NA

35. Do you have any further comments to add about this part of your NCP experience -- that is, after the scoping meeting and through the incentive offer?

36. **If participated through inspection:** We'd like to know if participating in NCP affects any aspects of dealing with code officials. Compared to projects that are not participating in NCP, have you noticed any changes in your dealings with code officials, either during the design review or code inspection stages of this project?

37. How satisfied were you with the inspection process? Would you say you were . . .

- 1 Very dissatisfied
- 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat satisfied
- 5 Very satisfied
- 6 DK/NA

38. Why did you choose _____(rating)?

39. **If participated in commissioning:** How satisfied were you with the commissioning process?

Would you say you were . . .

- 1 Very dissatisfied
- 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat satisfied
- 5 Very satisfied
- 6 DK/NA

40. Why did you choose _____(rating)?

41. **If finished/paid:** Finally, how satisfied were you with the process between the time of (inspection and/or commissioning) of your building and when you received payment?? Would you say you were . . .
- 1 Very dissatisfied
 - 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
 - 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - 4 Somewhat satisfied
 - 5 Very satisfied
 - 6 DK/NA
42. Why did you choose _____(rating)?
43. **If participated in Green Building Option:** How satisfied were you with the Green Building Option offered through NYSERDA? Would you say you were . .
- 1 Very dissatisfied
 - 2 Somewhat dissatisfied
 - 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - 4 Somewhat satisfied
 - 5 Very satisfied
 - 6 DK/NA
44. Why did you choose _____(rating)?
45. Thinking over your experience with NCP on this project, what parts of the program have worked well?
46. Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?

BENEFITS/OUTCOMES

(If they have experience with more than one project, ask respondent to include all experiences with NCP as they answer these next questions.)

47. What would you say are the primary benefits from participating in NCP? What is the single most valuable benefit?
48. What, if anything, did you learn about designing or developing more energy efficient buildings from participating in NCP? (**PROBE:** How has your participation influenced your approach to building design?)
49. How do you think participating in NCP will influence your approach to new commercial building projects in the future?
50. **If involved with more than one project:** Given that you have participated in more than one NCP project, could you tell me about any differences in your experience with the program, either positive or negative?

51. **(If worked with TA on project)** Currently, after paying the first \$5,000 for technical assistance services, NCP shares the cost of technical assistance 50/50 with the custom. The customer does not need to pay their portion of the cost until 6 months after the technical assistance study is completed. How important was being able to delay your technical assistance payment in your decision to participate in NCP? Would you say it was:
- 1 Very important
 - 2 Somewhat important
 - 3 Not too important
 - 4 Not at all important
- b. Why do you say (fill in) _____

52. If you had to share the cost of the entire amount of the technical assistance study, and pay your portion once the study is completed, how would this set-up affect your ability to participate in the program? (**PROBE** for a full answer)

FINAL PROGRAM OBSERVATIONS

53. **If Partial Participant:** What were the reasons the project stopped participating in NCP at this point in the process? (**PROBE:** Was there anything the program could have done to prevent the project from dropping out?)
54. How would you describe the current new commercial building market in the areas of New York where you do business?
55. What trends do you see developing in that market that NCP should pay attention to?
56. Overall, what aspects of NCP do you think make it attractive to owners, developers, and design teams?
57. What aspects of NCP may discourage owners, developers, and design teams from participating in the program?
58. How likely would you be to recommend NCP to others? Would you say this is . . .
- 1 Very unlikely
 - 2 Somewhat unlikely
 - 3 Neither likely nor unlikely
 - 4 Somewhat likely
 - 5 Very Likely
 - 6 DK/NA
59. Why did you choose _____?
60. How likely would you be to participate in NCP again with another building? Would you say this is . . .
- 1 Very unlikely
 - 2 Somewhat unlikely

- 3 Neither likely nor unlikely
- 4 Somewhat likely
- 5 Very Likely
- 6 DK/NA

61. Why do you choose ____?

62. Can you suggest any ways that the NCP could more effectively reach potential participants? **If yes,** what do you suggest?

63. Finally, thinking over everything we've talked about today, what are the key recommendations you have for improving the value and effectiveness of the NCP?

THANK YOU!