Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Work Plans

There are two documents to help guide the evaluations:

- First, the Illinois Evaluation Framework, which is primarily a policy document stating evaluation policy and standards in key areas. At first, as it comes together, this will not be a single document but a series of agreements with some documentation for each area.

- Second, an Evaluation Work Plan template.

In reviewing the proposals, all bidders acknowledged the need to conform to the Illinois Evaluation Framework as it is developed, although one noted that it had not budgeted anything for this effort. However, the Illinois Evaluation Framework will not be difficult for the winning evaluation firms to follow since it will be a statement of general standards and expectations and all bidders have proposed essentially similar evaluations which for the most part already encompass mainline evaluation standards and expectations.

In the area of Work Plans, different bidders had somewhat different concepts of what a preliminary Work Plan would look like as suggested by the plans put forward in their proposals for the evaluation of each type of DSM program. In order to develop a proposal, each evaluation team provided discussion of how each program would be evaluated. Some of the proposals are carefully detailed, although none of them has currently proposed a highly developed Work Plan with careful specification of Task/Time/Method.[1] The Evaluation Plan is typically the first major deliverable once an evaluation contractor has been retained.

The draft Evaluation Work Plan template provides a general guide to the development of Work Plans. In the end, there should be a plan for each program to be evaluated. In some cases, a Work Plan may not be for a single program, but for cross-cutting issues. Here, we are focusing on Work Plans for individual programs. The issue of how to structure Work Plans cannot be divorced from the broader issue of how to approach evaluation planning.

We propose that the Work Plan template provide for phased development of actual Work Plans. It would be pointless, for example, to simply focus on Work Plan development for the next several months in order to develop a highly detailed plan for the full project duration. Reality, or what statisticians like to call "time and chance" happens and finely detailed plans tend to become undermined by events.[2]

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[1] Contractors' proposals are generally compliant with what the RFPs ask for in their approach to evaluation planning, although there are significant variations across proposals.

[2] "...[T]ime and chance happens to them all." Ecclesiastes 9/11, attributed to King Solomon.

Both RFPs ask for a single evaluation plan covering all three years and addressing a wide range of issues. However, both describe the plan *as a living document* and *telegraph some flexibility as to revisions*. Within this overall concept, there will be a Work Plan for each program, and some cross-cutting Work Plans. Some of these Work Plans will have different degrees of urgency. Neither RFP appears to pin down the timing of the Evaluation Plans. Both RFPs call for contractors to begin work at the end of November, so it would probably be at least until January, and probably later, before the contractors could do this. In the Evaluation Framework schedule, we project this activity with duration of four months from the start of the process. The process starts when the evaluation contractors are on board and ready to begin work.

We recommend that instead of a single initial Work Plan covering the entire three years, evaluation planning be approached in a staged manner with certain key decisions made up front about how each program evaluation will be approached over the entire contract period. Detail planning would be only through the end of the first program year and the evaluation reports based on the first program year evaluation. The reasons for this recommendation: (1) the programs and the policy environment are still evolving too much to pin down the evaluation details for the entire contract period; (2) trying to develop a detailed workplan for the entire contract period will eat up too much time before work can begin on urgent tasks.

Evaluation Work Plan Template (for each program)

1) **Approach** -- What is the general evaluation approach for the program (general discussion of evaluation approach, including research objectives, researchable questions, methodological framework, and high-level schedule)?

2) **Impact evaluation** -- How will first year gross energy savings and gross demand reduction values be determined? If a deeming process is proposed for the first year, how will the process be carried out and when will results be available?

3) **Free Riders/Drivers & Net-to-Gross** -- How will NTG be assessed for this program for the first program year? How will data gathering for NTG be scheduled for the first program year, and when will results be available?

4) **Baseline** -- What kind of market baseline will be established for this program? What approach will be used? When will a market baseline be completed?

5) **Metrics** -- What are the metrics to be collected for the program?

6) **Tracking System** -- When will the program vendor's tracking system be reviewed? When will a report on the program vendor's tracking system for the program be ready?

7) **Budget** -- what is the planned evaluation budget for each year? Demonstrate that the total across programs is within the 3% annual spending cap. How does the evaluation budget for this program fit as part of the total evaluation budget, and what criteria are used to allocate evaluation budget among program evaluations?

8) **Jobs** -- How will the evaluation track job creation associated with the program? What is the count of jobs created directly by hiring people to work on the program and the evaluation? What is the count on persons from out-of-state who are assigned to a base in Illinois? Which jobs (and percentage of personnel expenditure) will be filled from staff and new hires in-state and which out-of-state? What classification system should be used? When will a report on jobs be available? Note that this is not proposed as a sophisticated or broad based economic impact study.

9) **Program Theory** -- What is the program theory for this program? When will a program theory and logic model be available?

10) **QA/QC** -- How is quality control and/or quality assurance implemented for this program? When will a report program QA/QC be available?

11) **Process Evaluation** -- What will be the approach to process evaluation for this program? What will be the elements of the process evaluation? When will the process evaluation be completed?

12) **Reporting** -- How will monthly or quarterly reporting of work in progress, goals and results, barriers encountered, changes in program and/or evaluation direction be reported? Monthly and/or quarterly evaluation reporting should be uniform across programs.

13) **Year One Details** for each program (Note that the details could be in a separate section of the Evaluation Work Plan, or be collected in a separate document).
    a. Specific tasks and sub-tasks
    b. Detailed schedules
    c. Detailed discussion of sampling, data collection, data cleaning, and analysis methods
    d. Project and management milestones
    e. Identification of staff resources
    f. Detailed cost breakdowns
    g. Dates of deliverables