D

Final Report

Evaluation of Energy Trust Programs in Southwest Washington

Funded By:

Prepared By:

Jane S. Peters, Ph.D.
Ryan Bliss
Nathaniel Albers

Research Into Action, Inc.

June 4, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results to date suggest that the three Energy Trust programs operating in NWN territory in SW WA from May 2011 to December 2011 are performing well. Contractors offered positive comments about the programs and reported that the programs helped them sell energy efficiency projects.

EXISTING BUILDINGS

The Existing Buildings program exceeded stretch goals. However, budget constraints, coupled with the requirement that incentives make up at least 60% of program costs in SW WA, may limit how much staff resources can be increased to expand the program's reach.

Developing a network of trade allies in SW WA may help the program expand while keeping staff resources within required limits. The Existing Buildings program has begun developing a network of trade allies in SW WA, and should continue working with trade allies to encourage them to promote the program. A particular argument for working more with SW WA trade allies is the fact that, although we found a solid base of support for energy efficiency programs and specifically Energy Trust, some contractors seem unaware of the opportunities the program provides in SW WA, such as study assistance.

> **Recommendation:** To the extent possible within budget limitations, the PMC should continue to expand recruitment and training efforts of commercial trade allies in SW WA to support program expansion in that area and provide additional training to Oregon-based trade allies on program services available in SW WA.

> **Recommendation:** If possible, Energy Trust should work with NWN and the WUTC to increase the budget for the Existing Buildings program SW WA, to increase staff resources for that program.

EXISTING SINGLE FAMILY

The Existing Single Family program exceeded stretch goals for 2011. The program still could tap additional gas savings in areas outside of Vancouver and Camas. However, penetrating areas with a lower density of gas households presents a challenge for contractors.

> **Recommendation:** Providing contractors with a list of ZIP Codes for NWN territory – and identifying the ZIP Codes with the highest density of gas households – may help them target customers more successfully.

Some contractor feedback supports the value of contractor training and ongoing communication. First, contractor uncertainty of the program's continuing status in SW WA could reflect a more general lack of program-related knowledge. Second, existing trade allies found program

requirements complicated and non-trade ally contractors were prevented by program paperwork from becoming a trade ally.

> **Recommendation:** To the degree possible given current budgetary and regulatory constraints, continue and increase efforts to recruit and train trade allies.

NWN offers incentives for high-efficiency furnaces independent of the Energy Trust incentives. Bundling such incentives with Energy Trust incentives could increase program participation, resulting in more energy savings. To take advantage of NWN incentives, however, customers must use a NWN certified contractor, of which only two are located in SW WA. The requirement of using a NWN certified contractor may limit customers' abilities to bundle Energy Trust and NWN incentives.

> **Recommendation:** Energy Trust should consider working with Washington-based trade allies to help them become NWN certified contractors, thereby providing opportunities to a greater number of NWN customers to bundle Energy Trust incentives with NWN incentives for high-efficiency furnaces.

NEW HOMES

The New Homes program exceeded stretch goals for 2011. However, there appears to be little connection between home builders and the New Homes program. While builders offered positive comments about the program, they appeared less aware of Energy Trust in general. Further, although they reported customer interest in energy efficiency in SW WA and said the programs helped them sell energy efficiency projects, all of the interviewed builders were already building to ENERGY STAR standards, and it is not clear that the program is getting them to build to a greater level of efficiency than they already were achieving.

> **Recommendation:** It may be in Energy Trust's interest to carry out a more detailed investigation of the New Homes program as it is conducted in SW WA.