

Session Title: Does Free-ridership Really Matter? A Panel Discussion Sponsored by the International Energy Program Evaluation Conference

Panel Moderator:

Name: Carol White
Title: Director of Evaluation & Panning
Company Name: National Grid

Panelists:

Name	Title	Company Name
Jennifer Fagan	Principal Energy Consultant	Itron, Inc.
Nick Hall	Owner	TecMarket Works
Kenneth Keating, PhD		Bonneville Power Administration

Description:

Program evaluators are frequently asked to quantify energy efficiency program savings that can be attributed to program efforts. That typically means that we need to exclude savings by program participants who would have undertaken the energy efficiency effort even if there were no program – i.e., we need to net out the effects of “free-riders.” But do free-riders really matter? From a societal perspective or even from a total resource cost test perspective, does it really matter if a program participant received assistance through a program to achieve the desired result? Are program implementers making the most of available funding when they pay for something that would happen without them? Can information about free-ridership inform implementers about needed program changes? Can we even measure free-ridership in a way that provides us with confidence that we are neither over- nor understating program effects? What are the challenges involved in attempting to study this behavioral issue?

At this session, our panelists, Jennifer Fagan, Nick Hall, and Ken Keating will address these difficult issues. Jennifer’s experience with program design, implementation, and evaluation in Wisconsin will inform her views. Nick’s experience in looking at these issues in California and in Canada will inform his views. And Dr. Ken Keating will bring us his perspective from the Pacific Northwest.