**Point-of-Sale Data for Lighting and Beyond – A Game Changer is Here!**

*Lynn Westerlind, National Grid, Waltham, MA*

*Scott Dimetrosky, Apex Analytics, LLC, Boulder, CO*

**ABSTRACT**

The Consortium for Retail Energy Efficiency Data (CREED) is uniting program administrators to work collaboratively in the quest to get better sales data for program planning and evaluation purposes. The initial effort for CREED, called LightTracker, is designed to access full category point-of-sale lighting data with a goal of collecting a national data set representative of all major distribution channels. Understanding lighting sales is particularly important given the rapid changes in the lighting market, including the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA), as well as rapid drops in LED prices. CREED, the first collaborative effort of its kind, organizes bi-monthly member meetings to discuss what data are needed to support program efforts and how the data can be most effectively attained. CREED has also organized a multi-client purchase of a national dataset for full category lighting sales data for grocery, drug, dollar, club, and mass merchandiser channels.

**Introduction**

Most lighting energy efficiency programs operate by paying incentives to either retailers (typically referred to as a markdown approach) or manufacturers (typically referred to as a buydown approach). These two similar approaches are often referred to as upstream programs, because the incentives are paid “upstream” from the utility customer.

Because the purchasers of the discounted bulbs are not known, these programs are inherently difficult to evaluate. In particular, using a customer self-report approach for program attribution is nearly impossible because the program is often “invisible” to many customers (i.e., they are unaware that the discounts are often funded by program administrators rather than the retailer).

In addition, program planners and evaluators have typically only received information on program bulbs, and thus have no information about what is happening outside the program. There is no market intelligence, therefore, on the quantity of standard vs. energy efficient bulbs sold outside the program. This means there is no readily available approach to differentiating between a retailer that has historically not sold any energy efficiency bulb outside of a program and those that sell vast quantities (and maybe exclusively sell) energy efficiency bulbs outside the program. Understanding these differences could not only significantly help assess program attribution, but help planners better understand when to alter an incentive structure, exit a channel or market, or drop a measure entirely.

**Getting Access to Sales Data**

The most obvious solution to these questions is to attempt to acquire sales data. While there have been many efforts to collect sales data, nearly all of these have proven unsuccessful for a few reasons:

* Retailers and manufacturers consider their sales data highly confidential, and have been averse about sharing it with any party whatsoever; and
* Retailers and manufacturers lack the resources to respond to data requests and fulfillment.

These challenges have been aggravated by the fact that the energy efficiency industry has been splintered in its request for sales data: individual program administrators and evaluators request the data, but never in a single voice. In addition, program administrators have continued to provide incentives to retailers and manufacturers despite not having the data (in some cases for many years), so there is no perceived need on behalf of the participating retailers or manufacturers to provide these data.

**The Consortium for Retail Energy Efficiency Data**

The Consortium for Retail Energy Efficiency Data (CREED) was formed in 2012 specifically to solve this challenge. CREED serves as a consortium of program administrators, retailers, and manufacturers working together to collect the necessary data to better plan and evaluate energy efficiency programs. LightTracker is the first initiative of CREED, focusing on acquiring full-category lighting data, including incandescent, halogen, CFL, and LED bulb types, for all distribution channels and for the entire U.S. As a consortium, CREED speaks as one voice for the program administrators nationwide when requesting, collecting and reporting on the sales data needed by the energy efficiency community.

CREED members benefit from regularly held conference calls where the progress of new data acquisition is discussed, as well as new strategies for continued success. This is done with the intent to stimulate new and creative solutions, alliances, and effective actions. Members are encouraged to participate in the process to the extent they wish to contribute, but it is not mandatory. A summary document that contains an overview of the call is provided to all members.

CREED also attempts to get more widespread support for sharing POS data by encouraging new members to join, setting up conference sessions at industry events on CREED efforts, and interfacing with retailers that have not yet provided sales data to encourage them to do so.

Finally, CREED has organized a multi-client purchase of a national point-of-sale (POS) lighting dataset that contains POS data from grocery, drug, dollar, club, and mass merchandiser retailers from 2009 through 2013. This has lowered the price of the data and analysis for all members, allowed for better understanding of the lighting market, and established the foundation for which to include data from the large do-it-yourself retailers.