



EVALUATION REPORT

2021-2024 CDM FRAMEWORK STRATEGIC ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
PY2023

Date: 12 July 2024

Prepared for: The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO)

Prepared by: EcoMetric Consulting, LLC and DNV Energy Insights USA Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
E.1 Program Description	1
E.2 Evaluation Objectives	1
E.3 Evaluation Approach Summary	1
E.4 Summary of Results	2
E.5 Key Findings and Recommendations	3
1 Introduction.....	5
1.1 Program Description	5
1.2 Evaluation Objectives	5
2 Methodology	7
2.1 Evaluation Approach	7
2.1.1 Research Questions.....	7
2.1.2 Data Collection	8
3 Process Evaluation Results.....	9
3.1 Participant Survey Results	9
3.1.1 Program Experience	9
3.1.2 Motivations.....	10
3.1.3 Opportunities For Future Growth	10
3.2 IESO AND PROGRAM DELIVERY VENDOR STAFF IDI results	11
3.2.1 Program Participation	11
3.2.2 Barriers to participation	11
3.2.3 Tracking savings.....	11
3.2.4 Transition to sem.....	12
4 Key Findings and Recommendations	13
Appendix A: Data Collection Instruments.....	15
A.1 IESO and Program delivery Lead Program Staff Interview Guide.....	15
A.1.1 Instrument Overview	15
A.1.2 Instrument Overview	19

TABLES

Table 1: PY2023 SEM Sample Frame	7
Table 2: Research Objectives Mapped to Questions in this Instrument.....	15
Table 3: Research Objectives Mapped to Questions in this Instrument.....	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) retained EcoMetric Consulting, LLC (EcoMetric) and subcontractor DNV Energy Insights USA Inc. (DNV), collectively referred to as the EcoMetric team, to evaluate the Strategic Energy Management (SEM) program in the 2021-2024 Conservation and Demand Management (CDM) Framework. This report details the methodologies, results, and recommendations from the process evaluation of the SEM program for program year 2023 (PY2023).

E.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The SEM program is designed to help commercial and industrial organizations improve their overall energy performance by implementing an integrated system of organizational practices, policies, and processes to achieve persistent energy savings. To support this goal, the SEM program provides participants with knowledge, expertise, and training in energy management to help them increase profitability through reduced energy costs and productivity, build organizational skills, and help their organization achieve their carbon reduction and environmental goals.

E.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of EcoMetric's process evaluation of the SEM Program were to:

- ▶ Monitor the overall effectiveness and comprehensiveness of key program elements.
- ▶ Analyze and make recommendations to improve the program.
- ▶ Determine customer motivations and experience.
- ▶ Identify improvements to program delivery procedures and protocols.

As the program is in the early stage of program delivery, current SEM projects are still underway and not yet ready for evaluation. EcoMetric will conduct the first impact evaluation and cost effectiveness analysis for the SEM program as part of the PY2024 evaluation in the 2025 calendar year.

E.3 EVALUATION APPROACH SUMMARY

The EcoMetric team based process evaluation findings on program material reviews and primary data collected from interviews with a wide range of program actors including IESO staff, program delivery vendors, and program participants.

E.4 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The following subsections summarize the results of the EcoMetric team's interviews with IESO staff, program delivery vendors, and program participants.

Participant Survey Results

Program Experience

Most of the SEM participating organizations that completed an interview heard about the program through the IESO. Most of the respondents felt the initial information they received was sufficient to understand the program, while the other respondents needed more information before they could begin participation. The respondents who had previously participated in the Energy Manager Program (EM) expressed that they would participate in EM again should the program become available.

All participants felt the application process was easy, and the respondents who had started projects reported that tracking was easy as well. Respondents who used IESO resources gave primarily positive feedback; however, they noted that because the resources are not sector-specific, the organizations had to invest time in educating the program delivery vendor staff about their operations.

Overall, respondents feel the program is meeting respondent organization needs.

Motivation

Respondents listed several reasons why they implemented energy reduction behaviors or energy efficiency measures. Saving money was the primary reason followed by meeting corporate emission reduction goals and maintaining a good public image.

Opportunities for Future Growth

A lack of open communication and information sharing during cohort sessions stifled the engagement experience for some participants. Invigorating them represents an opportunity to increase participation.

Most of the respondents reported that their organization has additional energy efficiency projects planned outside of SEM and generally expressed interest in projects outside of the electricity reduction scope, such as non-efficiency-based carbon reduction projects.

IESO and Program Delivery Vendor Staff IDI Results

Program Participation

Program and delivery vendor staff chose a sectoral approach and created cohorts based on who applied. So far, the program has education, automobile manufacturing, building portfolio, commercial retail, and healthcare cohorts. Staff conduct targeted outreach, based on initial interest, to fill and launch sectoral cohorts. The goal is to have 15 participants in each cohort, but if a certain industry or sector takes longer to meet this goal, program staff plans to pivot and potentially cross different industries.

It is too soon to tell if incentive amounts have been successful. That said, there's no evidence that participants are choosing other IESO programs over SEM.

Barriers to Participation

The program delivery vendor noted that the IESO participant agreements are more inconvenient than those of similar programs in different jurisdictions. Additionally, many organizations have greenhouse gas reduction goals and not energy efficiency goals. Therefore, there is a lesser focus on decreasing their electricity consumption (as opposed to their gas consumption).

Tracking Savings

Program staff reported that there were not any concerns about meeting energy-saving targets; the program is currently on pace with the number of participants, and the IESO team is confident the savings will match.

Transition to SEM

To date, the program staff has not identified any issues with the delivery of the SEM program. In the past year, the communications regarding the transition from EM to SEM have been primarily in the form of information sessions and via direct outreach. Now, the delivery vendor has expanded to social media marketing and also targeted associations and groups with potential target audiences. The delivery vendor also leveraged the Energy Manager Support Services (EMSS) distribution lists and their own network of previous EM organizations.

E.5 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section presents the key findings and recommendations for the PY2023 Process Evaluation.

Finding 1: Participants value sector-based cohort groups. They could be even more powerful. Some cohorts have had many passive participants. Participants who are less experienced with energy efficiency may be reluctant to share questions with more experienced participants. Additionally, participants may be reluctant to share proprietary information with cohorts comprised of companies from the same industry.

Recommendation 1a: Cohorts were created based on sectors. While sector-based cohorts are effective, consider factors beyond sector when assembling cohorts such as the level of experience and knowledge about energy efficiency. Consider allowing cohort self-selection or other mechanisms that will encourage engagement in the program.

Recommendation 1b: Cohort facilitators are strongly encouraged to engage all participants in calls (e.g., turn on cameras, create games, polls, assign homework, etc.) to participate. Also consider starting cohorts with an in-person session.

Recommendation 1c: Participants value coaching and note that coaching could be more effective if coaches had specific sector knowledge or were able to give specific recommendations based on a participant's stage in energy reduction journey. Coaching can be improved by encouraging coaches to facilitate peer to peer learning and tailor materials based on industry knowledge they pick up from their cohort. Additionally, coaches should ensure cohorts are aware of training programs and consider bringing in guest speakers with technical or sector specific expertise.

Recommendation 1d: Create program materials that are specific and relevant to participants in different stages of their energy efficiency journeys.

Finding 2: Participants greatly value their communication with the program delivery vendor and the opportunity for in-person networking events. There is a desire for increased communication with staff from the IESO, such as having check-ins at major milestones and additional in-person program opportunities.

Recommendation 2a: When possible, include IESO staff in cohort check-ins or coaching sessions.

Recommendation 2b: Conduct a pilot test that offers hybrid coaching sessions or cohort check-ins with the option to attend either in-person or virtually.

Finding 3: Most cohort participants were aware of the now sunset Energy Manager (EM) program. All participants who were aware of the EM program indicated that they were either somewhat or very likely to participate in the EM program if it were reinstated.

Recommendation 3: The IESO should consider investigating the possibility of re-instating the EM program.

1.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The SEM program is designed to help commercial and industrial organizations improve their overall energy performance by implementing an integrated system of organizational practices, policies, and processes to achieve persistent energy savings. To support this goal, the SEM program provides participants with knowledge, expertise, and training in energy management to help them increase profitability through reduced energy costs and productivity, build organizational skills, and help their organization achieve their carbon reduction and environmental goals.

There are three main components that the SEM program offers participants to support their energy efficiency goals:

- ▶ **Cohort Learning.** The SEM program offers two-year cohorts designed to facilitate peer learning opportunities through webinars and other collaborative events focused on energy management and efficiency practices. The program also offers one-on-one coaching and online energy management resources to participants. There have been three cohorts out in the field so far for the SEM program. The IESO is developing industry-specific cohorts for the automotive, multi-site, hospitals, schools, and mining sectors.
- ▶ **Energy savings incentives.** Participants can also receive incentives of \$0.02/kWh of electricity savings for implementing eligible measures across two performance years.
- ▶ **Performance milestone incentives.** Additional incentives for energy management tools such as meters and testing kits, up to a value of \$5,000, are available to participants who reach key program milestones.

1.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the EcoMetric team's process evaluation of the SEM Program were to:

- ▶ Monitor the comprehensiveness of key program elements.
- ▶ Analyze and make recommendations to improve the program.
- ▶ Determine customer motivations and experience.
- ▶ Identify improvements to program delivery procedures and protocols.

As the program is in the early program delivery stage, current SEM projects are still underway and not yet ready for evaluation. EcoMetric will conduct the first impact evaluation and cost effectiveness analysis for the SEM program as part of the PY2024 evaluation in the 2025 calendar year.

This report contains the process evaluation results for SEM in PY2023.

This section of the report outlines the methodologies used in the PY2023 evaluation of SEM. Interview instruments are included in Appendix A.

2.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

In the PY2023 evaluation, the EcoMetric team conducted a compact process evaluation by conducting a program material review and collecting primary data from interviews with the IESO program staff, program delivery vendor staff, and up to six active program cohort participants. Interviews were completed with participants from all active cohorts. For the literature review, the EcoMetric team reviewed online materials (including webpages detailing information about the program) as well as other program materials provided by the IESO program staff and program delivery vendor staff (e.g., the SEM participant workbook). In-depth interviews (IDIs) for all primary data collected were conducted via phone or video calls by the EcoMetric team. Table 1 shows the total number of IDIs conducted.

Table 1: PY2023 SEM Sample Frame

Component	Population	Completed
IESO Program Staff	1	1
Program delivery Staff	1	1
Cohort Participants	43	6

2.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following a discussion of the evaluation and the SEM program with the IESO team, the EcoMetric team developed these PY2023 research questions:

- ▶ How well is tracking IESO SEM savings going? Are the current energy savings goals and key metrics for the program being met?
- ▶ Are there any residual challenges relating to the transition from EM to SEM? The following will be inquire: 1) any issues with the program transition communications, 2) transition impact on participation, 3) complications, if any, around SEM tracking and data protocols/processes, and 4) incentive and application processes if the new program begins to operate.
- ▶ What are the customer motivations and barriers to participating in the SEM program?
- ▶ Where are the opportunities to improve the transition to or delivery of SEM? How can the IESO increase the participation of industrial customers in SEM?

2.1.2 DATA COLLECTION

2.1.2.1 IESO and Program Delivery Vendor Staff

The EcoMetric team conducted one interview with the IESO SEM program lead. Additionally, the EcoMetric team conducted one separate interview with the senior program manager of the program delivery team. Both interviews focused on topics relating to the research questions – including SEM design, the SEM incentive structure, programmatic activities, marketing and outreach, the application process, tracking and reporting procedures, QA/QC practices, and challenges and barriers for participants to enroll in SEM.

2.1.2.2 Participants

The EcoMetric team conducted interviews with up to six SEM cohort participants. Cohort participants were randomly selected from the list of program contacts designated to be active in the program. These interviews gathered information on customer motivations to participate in the SEM program, how easy it was for them to navigate the application process, the usability of program resources, motivations behind energy reduction behaviors and investment, future project plans, and how well program activities are addressing their needs.

3.1 PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESULTS

3.1.1 PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Most of the SEM participating organizations that completed an interview heard about the program through IESO. One respondent mentioned meeting someone from IESO at the North American Water and Power Alliance (NOWAPA) conference. Another specified that they read about SEM in one of their industry newsletters. The one respondent who did not hear about SEM from IESO learned about the program through a conservation organization that advocates for participation in government and incentive programs. Most of the respondents felt the initial information they received was sufficient to understand the program. The minority of respondents needed more information before they could begin participation.

“There was a SEM onboarding document and dashboard. They [the program implementer] did a bunch of different onboarding discussions.”

Most respondents participated in the prior EM program. Three of the respondents had previously participated in the EM program, and an additional respondent was not sure if their organization had previously participated but thought it was likely. All of the respondents who had previously participated expressed that they would participate in EM again if the program became available.

All participants felt the application process was easy. Participants rated the ease of the process on a scale of 1 to 10. The lowest score was a 7 and the highest was a 10. This range compares favorably with other current and prior IESO programs. The respondents who had started projects reported tracking was very easy. The respondents who used the IESO resources had mostly positive feedback. However, the resources are not sector-specific, so the organizations had to educate the program delivery staff on their operations.

Overall, respondents felt the program is meeting their organization’s needs. One respondent commented it would be helpful for them to better understand how the baselines are generated. Another mentioned that funding in universities is a big issue, and they currently need more financial support than the program can provide. Two respondents from the education cohort expressed dissatisfaction with the level of transparency and information sharing within their cohorts.

3.1.2 MOTIVATIONS

Respondents listed several reasons when asked what their motivation was for implementing energy reduction behaviors or energy efficiency measures. All respondents mentioned saving money as a reason for implementing energy efficiency or energy-saving practices. Three respondents noted having corporate emission reduction goals, and one more said their organization is working on emission reduction targets.

“There are a few reasons – we have a strategic goal of net zero by 2040. Energy reduction must play a big part in that. We are also looking for utility cost savings as well as any sort of incentives that we can get.”

Two respondents also reported that public perception played a role, saying that their customers care about their current practices and feel they should lead by example. Respondents also mentioned that the third-party assistance that IESO provides indeed gives their projects more support, and that the IESO resources aid in completing energy upgrades.

3.1.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE GROWTH

A few barriers to engagement and opportunities for future growth were discussed as well. As mentioned above, two respondents noted that there was no open communication within their cohort, noting that collective action was a major selling point but that participants were not willing to share information. This was identified as a barrier to further engagement. Another barrier noted was the limited or constrained availability of workers to complete projects, though this was driven more by the Ontario labor market than a program effect. Throughout the interview, respondents expressed interest for in-person sessions that could foster deeper engagement and understanding.

“It would be nice to have in person meetings at least once or twice for support. I am not sure how far people are distance wise, but it would be nice to not be completely virtual.”

Most of the respondents reported that their organization has additional energy efficiency projects planned outside of SEM. One respondent noted that carbon reduction is a larger focus than energy efficiency for their organization, and several respondents indicated future projects will

be related to natural gas/liquid fuels, water systems, or decarbonization in general. Respondents expressed interest in projects outside of the electricity reduction scope.

3.2 IESO AND PROGRAM DELIVERY VENDOR STAFF IDI RESULTS

3.2.1 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Program and program delivery vendor staff chose a sectoral approach and created cohorts based on who applied. So far, the program has education, automobile manufacturing, building portfolio, commercial retail, and healthcare cohorts. About half of the participating organizations are industrial. The program is focused on a targeted outreach within the sectors of interest. The goal is to have 15 participants in each cohort, but if a certain industry or sector takes longer to meet this goal, program staff plans to pivot and potentially cross different industries. Program staff recognizes the need to form cohorts in a timely fashion. If needed, they will combine cohorts and then separate them out in the future where possible.

It is too soon to tell if incentive amounts have been successful; however, the EcoMetric team received anecdotal feedback from participants who also participated in EM that the incentives were not as lucrative. Only the milestone invoices have been processed thus far.

“Anecdotally, for those who participated in EM, there has been some reaction (commentary) that it is not as lucrative as an incentive. It does not pay for their position. However, there has not been a loss of EM jobs.”

There is no evidence that participants are choosing other IESO programs over SEM and organizations can participate in multiple IESO programs. Of those who have applied to SEM, very few have been rejected (2 out of 83). The review process does not have many requirements so it is expected to observe a small number of rejections.

3.2.2 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

One barrier to participation noted by the program delivery vendor is that the IESO participant agreements are more onerous than similar programs in different jurisdictions. Another barrier noted was that many organizations have greenhouse gas reduction goals and not energy efficiency goals. Therefore, there is a lesser focus on decreasing their electricity consumption (as opposed to their gas consumption).

3.2.3 TRACKING SAVINGS

Program staff reported that there were not any concerns about meeting energy-saving targets; IESO is currently on pace with the number of participants, and the IESO team is confident the savings will match. Program staff is working with the program delivery vendor on methods for interim reporting of savings and will align those methods with final reporting. The program team will not know of any issues with tracked savings until they receive reports in July 2024??. Program staff noted that they are paying close attention to the number of participants. It is difficult to compare the savings between the retired EM program and SEM because the goals and incentives are different.

3.2.4 TRANSITION TO SEM

To date, the program staff has not identified any issues with the delivery of the SEM program. Program staff are paying close attention to scope creep to ensure that the program is in line with the expectations initially set out.

In the past year, the communications regarding the transition from EM to SEM have been primarily in the form of information sessions and direct outreach. The implementer has targeted associations and groups with potential target audiences and presented at their internal meetings. The program delivery vendor has also leveraged EMSS distribution lists and their own network of previous EM organizations. The program delivery vendor noted that SEM is not easy to sell; it requires someone knowledgeable about the program to explain how it is in the customer's best interest. The program delivery vendor has also expanded to social media marketing.

Finding 1: Participants value sector-based cohort groups. They could be even more powerful. Some cohorts have had many passive participants. Participants who are less experienced with energy efficiency may be reluctant to share questions with more experienced participants. Additionally, participants may be reluctant to share proprietary information with cohorts comprised of companies from the same industry.

Recommendation 1a: Cohorts were created based on sectors. While sector-based cohorts are effective, consider factors beyond sector when assembling cohorts such as the level of experience and knowledge about energy efficiency. Consider allowing cohort self-selection or other mechanisms that will encourage engagement in the program.

Recommendation 1b: Cohort facilitators are strongly encouraged to engage all participants in calls (e.g., turn on cameras, create games, polls, assign homework, etc.) to participate. Also consider starting cohorts with an in-person session.

Recommendation 1c: Participants value coaching and note that coaching could be more effective if coaches had specific sector knowledge or were able to give specific recommendations based on a participant's stage in energy reduction journey. Coaching can be improved by encouraging coaches to facilitate peer to peer learning and tailor materials based on industry knowledge they pick up from their cohort. Additionally, coaches should ensure cohorts are aware of training programs and consider bringing in guest speakers with technical or sector specific expertise.

Recommendation 1d: Create program materials that are specific and relevant to participants in different stages of their energy efficiency journeys.

Finding 2: Participants greatly value their communication with the program delivery vendor and the opportunity for in-person networking events. There is a desire for increased communication with staff from the IESO, such as having check-ins at major milestones and additional in-person program opportunities.

Recommendation 2a: When possible, include IESO staff in cohort check-ins or coaching sessions.

Recommendation 2b: Conduct a pilot test that offers hybrid coaching sessions or cohort check-ins with the option to attend either in-person or virtually.

Finding 3: Most cohort participants were aware of the now sunset Energy Manager (EM) program. All participants who were aware of the EM program indicated that they were either somewhat or very likely to participate in the EM program if it were reinstated.

Recommendation 3: The IESO should consider investigating the possibility of re-instating the EM program.

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

A.1 IESO AND PROGRAM DELIVERY LEAD PROGRAM STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

A.1.1 INSTRUMENT OVERVIEW

Objective: The Evaluation Team will interview IESO SEM program staff, as well as a third-party SEM program delivery lead. The purpose of these interviews is to obtain a more detailed understanding of how the SEM program is promoted and communicated to energy managers and their organizations and what challenges staff are facing in scaling the SEM program in the 2021-2024 Conservation and Demand Management (CDM) Framework.

Table 2 documents the research objectives and associated questions.

Anticipated timing (interview length): 45 minutes – 1 hour
Method of data collection: Phone interview

Table 2: Research Objectives Mapped to Questions in this Instrument

Research Objectives	Questions
How well is tracking SEM savings going? Are the current energy savings goals and key metrics for the program being met?	Q2 - Q5
Are there any residual challenges relating to the transition from EM to SEM? We will inquire about 1) any issues with the program transition communications, 2) transition impact on participation, 3) complications, if any, around SEM tracking and data protocols/processes, and 4) incentive and application processes if the new program began to operate.	Q8, Q10, Q12
What is the latest SEM program design? What are the programmatic activities and who is responsible for successful delivery? What are current marketing and outreach methods?	Q6, Q7, Q11, Q14
What are the customer motivations and barriers to participating in the SEM program?	Q9, Q15
Where are the opportunities to improve the transition or delivery of SEM? How can the IESO increase the participation of industrial customers in SEM?	Q13, Q16, Q17

A.1.1.1 Interview

[INTERVIEWER: Send an email introducing yourself, explaining the purpose of the interview, and scheduling a time for the interview.]

Email Introduction

[INTERVIEWER ADAPT EMAIL IF NEEDED]

Subject: SEM program discussion

Hi [INPUT CONTACT NAME],

As you may already be aware, we are starting the evaluation of the Strategic Energy Management (SEM) Program.

We would like to speak to you about your role in the SEM program and opportunities for continued program growth. We expect our discussion to take 45 minutes to an hour.

Please let us know when it would be a good time to talk. Below is my availability for the next two weeks:

[OFFER SEVERAL TIME SLOTS FOR THE INTERVIEW]

Respectfully Yours,

[INTERVIEWER NAME, TITLE, AND COMPANY SIGNATURE]

Interview

Today, we'll be discussing your role in the IESO SEM program and opportunities for continued program growth. Your comments are confidential. If I ask you about areas you don't know about, please feel free to tell me that and we will move on. Also, if you want to refer me to specific documents to answer any of my questions, that's great – I'm happy to look things up if I know where to get the information.

I would like to record this interview for my note-taking purposes. Do I have your permission?

Roles and Responsibilities [ASK ALL]

Q1. Can you briefly describe your role in the SEM program and provide your current job title?

Savings Goals and Key Metrics [Ask IESO staff only]

First, I would like to ask you about savings expectations and metrics.

Q2. We see that the forecasted energy savings are 53,618 MWh and the forecasted demand savings are 11.39 MW. Do you have any concerns towards meeting that goal?

Q3. How are those savings being tracked?

a. Have there been any challenges in tracking savings thus far? (Probes: data protocols/processes, reporting procedures)

Q4. To date, have savings for the SEM program been larger, the same, or smaller compared to the EM program?

Q5. Besides savings, what other key metrics are you tracking to indicate program success?

a. If any, what are your goals for those metrics?

b. If there are goals, are you on track to meet those goals? Why or why not?

Program Design [Ask All]

Next, I would like to ask you about program design related to SEM.

Q6. Last year, we learned you were exploring various options for a SEM cohort approach. Given the initial set of SEM applications that came in, what type of cohort options are being used? (Probes: first come/first serve, regional, by business type, other)

Q7. How has the SEM program encouraged organizations to create systems for continuous energy performance improvement?

Q8. The SEM incentive is \$0.02 / kWh with a cap of \$100,000 per year. Has this incentive amount been successful?

a. If no, are there any discussions about modifying this incentive offering?

Q9. We learned last year that participants may also participate in other programs for capital measures and larger savings measures. Have you noticed participants opting to participate in other programs instead of SEM?

a. If yes, why?

Residual Program Changes – Transition from EM to SEM [Ask All Unless Noted Otherwise]

My next set of questions relate to the transition from EM to SEM.

Q10. We learned last year that the implementer is largely responsible as a turnkey service provider for SEM. Is this still the case? (Probes: SEM application processing, SEM incentive fulfillment, SEM call center, SEM marketing/recruitment, and technical review of SEM savings)

- a. *[Ask IESO staff only]* What issues, if any, has the IESO experienced with the implementer's delivery of the SEM program?

Q11. We learned last year that program transition communications were primarily in the form of information sessions and direct outreach. Have there been changes in how the SEM program is marketing and communicated to potential participants?

- a. Are there any new methods of SEM marketing or promotion that you are planning soon?
- b. What concerns, if any, do you have about SEM promotion or communication with potential participants?

SEM Program Processes [Ask All]

My final set of questions relate to current SEM program processes.

Q12. At the time of last year's evaluation, approximately one dozen applications were received. How many applications have you received to date?

- a. Have there been any challenges with received applications? (Probes: errors, if any were rejected and why, if there have been delays in approving the applications)

Q13. How many participants are currently enrolled in the program?

- a. What concerns, if any, do you have with this initial participation in the SEM program?
- b. What barriers or challenges are there to further participation in SEM?
- c. Are current SEM participants previous EM participants?
- d. How many participants are industrial customers?

Q14. Has there been technical review of any SEM projects?

- a. If yes, please describe current QA/QC practices.
- b. Have there been any challenges in completing technical review?

Q15. Have any SEM participants received incentives?

a. If yes, have there been any challenges with incentive fulfillment?

Wrap-up [Ask All]

Q16. Besides what we have already discussed, do you see any opportunities to improve the transition or delivery of SEM?

Q17. What would you like to learn from the program evaluation?

IESO's SEM Program Cohort Participant Interview Guide

A.1.2 INSTRUMENT OVERVIEW

Objective: The Evaluation Team will interview up to six SEM program participants. The purpose of these interviews is to obtain an understanding of customer motivations to participate in the program, usability of program resources, future project plans, and how well program activities are addressing their needs.

Table 3 documents research objectives and associated questions.

Anticipated timing (interview length): 45 minutes – 1 hour

Method of data collection: Phone interview

Table 3: Research Objectives Mapped to Questions in this Instrument

Research Objectives	Questions
Are there any residual challenges relating to the transition from EM to SEM? We will inquire about 1) any issues with the program transition communications, 2) transition impact on participation, 3) complications, if any, around SEM tracking and data protocols/processes, and 4) incentive and application processes if the new program begins to operate.	Q2, Q3, Q7, Q9
How easy is it to navigate the application process? How usable are program resources? How well are program activities addressing needs?	Q6, Q8, Q10
What are the customer motivations and barriers to participating in the SEM program?	Q5, Q12
What are the motivations behind energy reduction behaviors and investments? What future project plans do participants have?	Q4, Q11
Where are the opportunities to improve the transition or delivery of SEM?	Q16

A.1.2.1 Interview

[INTERVIEWER: Send an email introducing yourself, explaining the purpose of the interview, and scheduling a time for the interview.]

Email Introduction

[INTERVIEWER ADAPT EMAIL IF NEEDED]

Subject: SEM program discussion

Hi [INPUT CONTACT NAME],

DNV is conducting research on behalf of the IESO to evaluate the Strategic Energy Management (SEM) Program.

We would like to speak to you about your participation in the SEM program and opportunities for continued program growth. We expect our discussion to take 45 minutes to an hour.

Please let us know when it would be a good time to talk. Below is my availability for the next two weeks:

[OFFER SEVERAL TIME SLOTS FOR THE INTERVIEW]

Respectfully Yours,

[INTERVIEWER NAME, TITLE, AND COMPANY SIGNATURE]

Interview

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: if respondent participated in EM/SEM IDI from last year, thank them for their continued participation in this evaluation effort] Today, we'll be discussing your participation in the IESO SEM program and opportunities for continued program growth. Your comments are confidential. If I ask you about areas, you don't know about, please feel free to tell me that and we will move on. Also, if you want to refer me to specific documents to answer any of my questions, that's great – I'm happy to look things up if I know where to get the information.

I would like to record this interview for my note-taking purposes. Do I have your permission?

Roles and Responsibilities

- Q1. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] Can you briefly describe your engagement with the SEM program and provide your current job title?

SEM Decision to Participate

First, I would like to ask you about your decision to participate in the SEM program and program communications.

Q2. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] How did you first hear about the SEM program? (Probes: IESO business development manager, LDC key account manager, word of mouth, the Save on Energy website, other program marketing)

a. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] In your opinion, was the initial information you received adequate to understand the SEM program? (Probe: if not, please explain)

Q3. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] Did you previously participate in the (now sunset) Energy Manager (EM) program?

a. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] If yes, how did your previous participation in the EM program impact your decision to participate in the SEM program?

Q4. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] Why does your organization implement energy reduction behaviors and invest in energy efficiency measures? (Probes: corporate sustainability goals, energy savings, bill savings, facility non-energy benefits [like improved comfort, increasing productivity])

Q5. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] What was the main motivation for your organization to participate in the SEM program? (Probes: corporate sustainability goals, energy savings, bill savings, facility non-energy benefits [like improved comfort, increasing productivity])

Program Processes

Next, I would like to ask you about program processes related to SEM.

Q6. [INTERVIEWER NOTE: review responses to EM/SEM participant IDI from last year and confirm details vs. asking questions if interviewing the same respondent] On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is

not easy at all, and 10 is extremely easy, how easy was it for you to navigate the application process?

a. Why did you give that rating?

Q7. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not easy at all, and 10 is extremely easy, how easy has it been for you to track, record, and share data about your projects with the program vendor?

a. If response is less than 7, what data challenges have you faced?

Q8. Have you used any program resources? (Probes: coaching, attending webinars/networking events)

a. If yes, how easy has it been for you to use these resources?

b. If no, why have you not used any program resources?

Q9. If applicable, on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all satisfied, and 10 is completely satisfied, how satisfied have you been with receipt of your incentives?

a. If response is less than 7, what challenges in receiving your incentives have you faced?

Q10. Overall, how well are program activities addressing your organization's needs?

Opportunities for Future Growth

My final set of questions relate to opportunities for future SEM program growth.

Q11. Outside of planned SEM program activities, does your organization have any future energy efficiency projects planned? (Probes: lighting, HVAC, building shell, process improvements, O&M improvements)

a. If yes, what?

Q12. Are there any barriers to your organization engaging more with the SEM program? (Probes: lack of organizational support, financial constraints, limited worker availability, difficulty in finding opportunities for improvement)

a. Is there anything else the SEM program could do to help your organization undertake even more actions?

Q13. [ASK IF FAMILIAR WITH PREVIOUS EM PROGRAM] If the EM program were to become available again, would your organization participate?

Q14. [ASK IF FAMILIAR WITH PREVIOUS EM PROGRAM] What changes, if any, would you like to see if the EM program were to become available again?

Wrap-up

Q15. Besides what we have already discussed, do you see any opportunities to improve the delivery of the SEM program?

Those are all the questions I have. Unless you have any questions for me or additional feedback, we are finished. Please feel free to reach out via email or phone if you think of anything we did not cover during our discussion today.