Mind the gap: Tracking recommendations to improve program effectiveness

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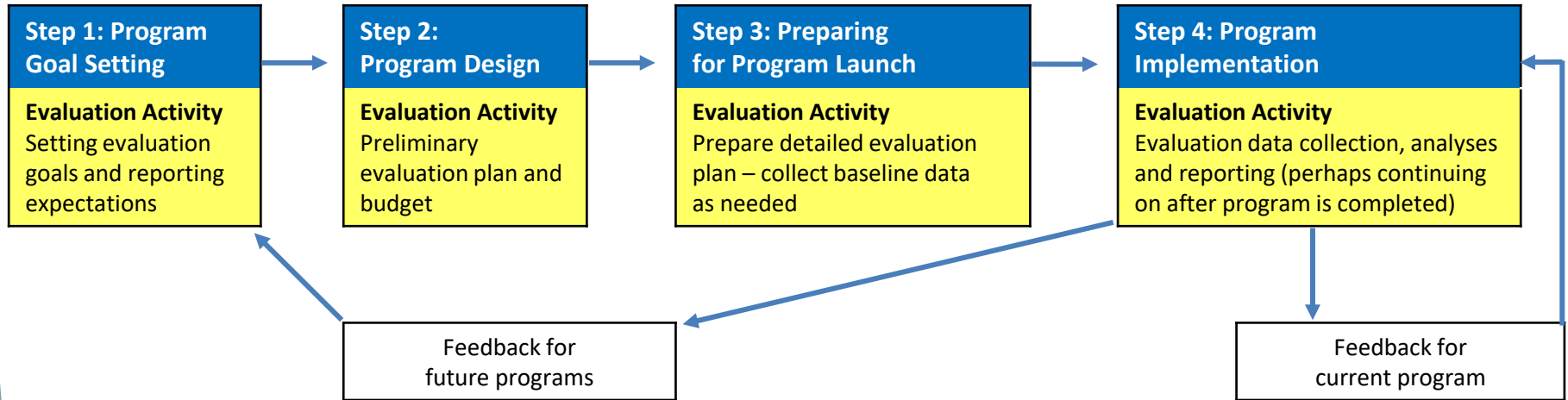   Community Development, MD USA

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Focus

Focus on *recommendations* that can lead to improved *program effectiveness*

Recommendations Are Essential to Program Design and Refinement

Program Implementation Cycle With High-Level Evaluation Activities

Step 1: Program Goal Setting

Evaluation Activity
Setting evaluation goals and reporting expectations

Step 2: Program Design

Evaluation Activity
Preliminary evaluation plan and budget

Step 3: Preparing for Program Launch

Evaluation Activity
Prepare detailed evaluation plan – collect baseline data as needed

Step 4: Program Implementation

Evaluation Activity
Evaluation data collection, analyses and reporting (perhaps continuing on after program is completed)

Feedback for future programs

Feedback for current program

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Few Rules of the Roads for Process Evaluations

Impact Evaluations Have:

- IPMVP Protocols;

- Uniform Methods Project Protocols; and

- NTG Batteries

Process Evaluation Protocols

- Developed for New York;
- Used in Arkansas and Missouri;
- Clearly identify the differences between strategic and tactical recommendations;
- **Strategic recommendations** lead to lasting **long-term** improvements; and
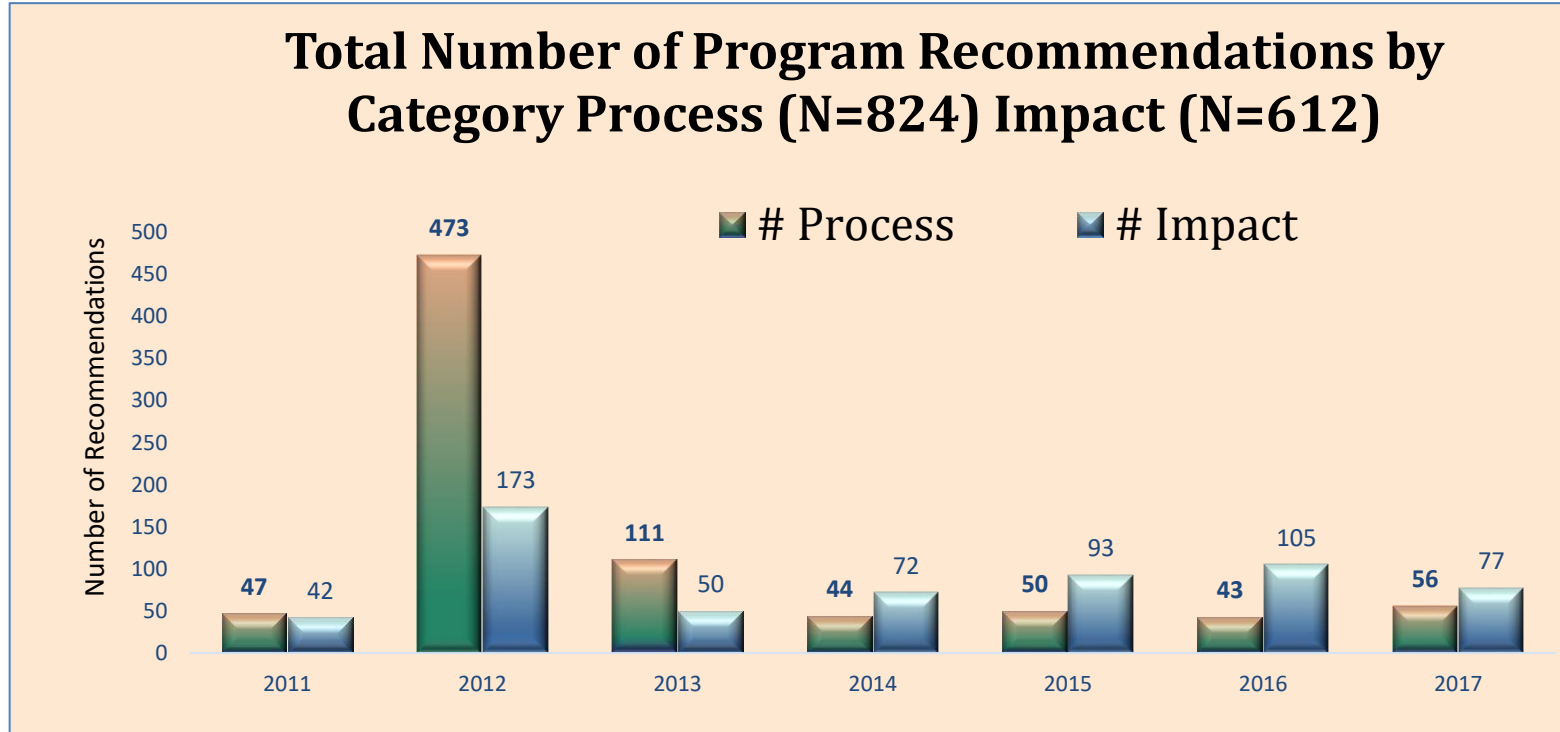- **Tactical recommendations** focus on **short-term** changes.

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Practical Applications

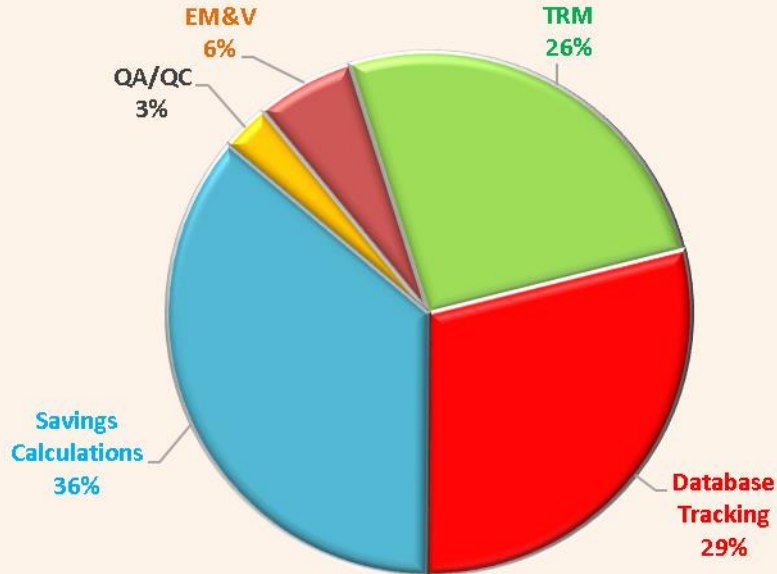Total Number of Recommendations Reported Annually from 2011-2017 (N=1,436)
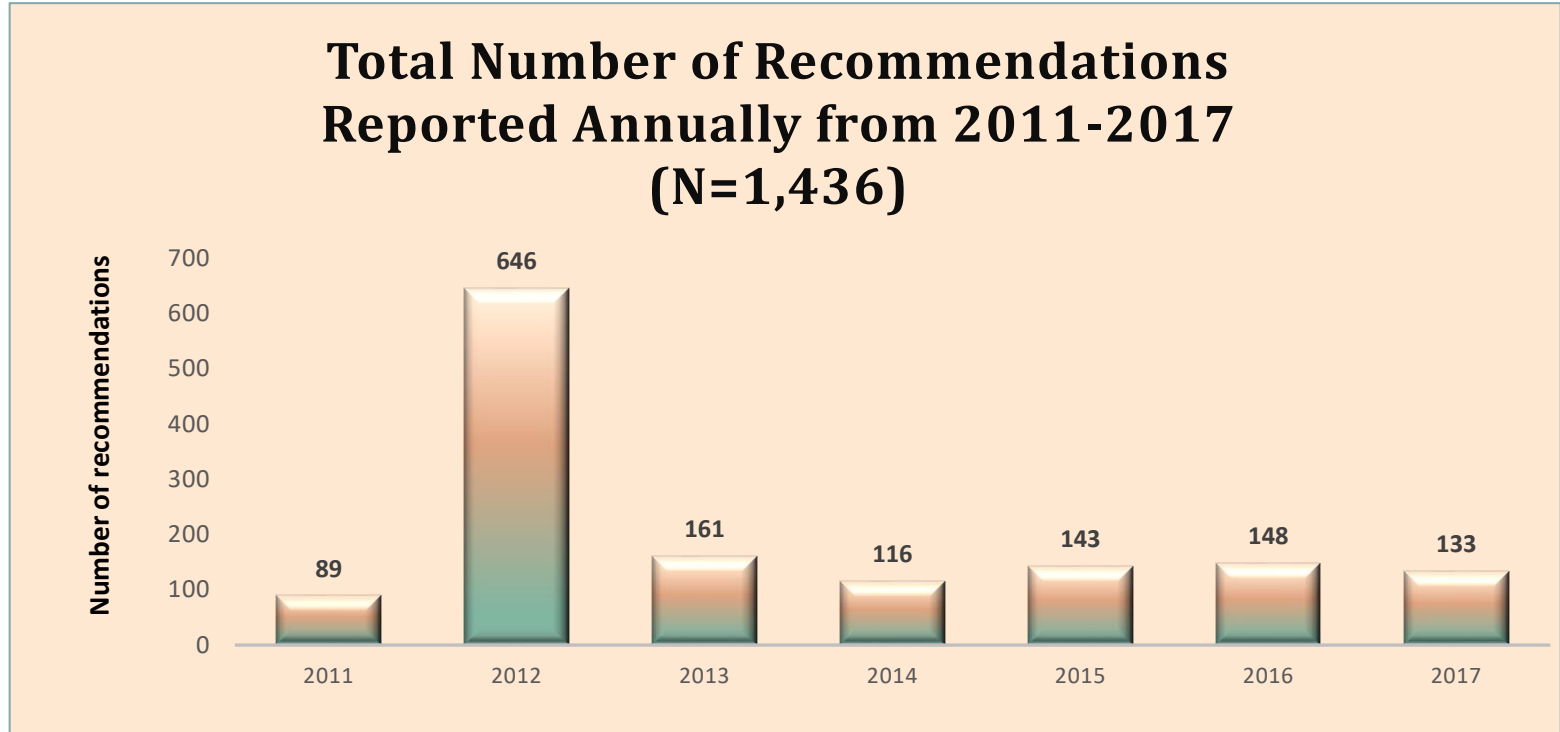
Practical Applications

Total Number of Program Recommendations by Category Process (N=824) Impact (N=612)
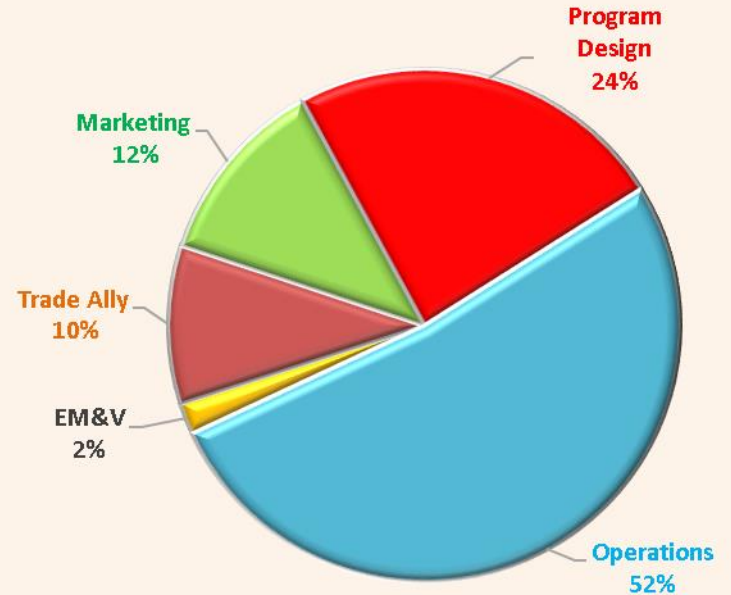
Tracking Recommendation Examples

Distribution of PY2015 Impact Evaluation Recommendations by Topic Area (N=93)

EM&V
6%

QA/QC
3%

TRM
26%

Savings Calculations
36%

Database Tracking
29%

Distribution of PY2015 Process Evaluation Recommendations by Topic Area (N=50)

Program Design
24%

Marketing
12%

Trade Ally
10%

EM&V
2%

Operations
52%

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Pros and Cons of Recommendations Tracking

IEM Annual Report Excerpt 2012

Industry best practices dictate that the process evaluations begin by assessing the disposition of the previous process evaluations recommendations. Unfortunately, all the evaluations fell short in this area. Therefore, this is a significant area for improvement for all evaluators to pursue in subsequent process evaluation activities going forward. (IEM Annual Report PY2012 EM&V Report, p. 67)

IEM Annual Report Excerpt 2015

The utilities have considered all of the previous recommendations and implemented more than half of them. The evaluators reported the status of the previous recommendations, in accordance with the Process Evaluation Protocol C. Overall, most of these recommendations (n=118) have been implemented (53%) while a few are still in progress (22%). (IEM Annual Report PY2015 EM&V Report, p. v)

IEM Annual Report, 2017

The reporting on the status of all of the previous recommendations was incomplete for four of the six reports in this evaluation year. (IEM Annual Report PY2017 EM&V p. 71*)*

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Recommendations Tracker for Maryland Programs

Program	Category	Total # of Recs	Total % of Recs
LIEEP	Communications	2	2%
	Customer Follow-up	1	1%
	Customer Satisfaction	2	2%
	Customer Targeting	1	1%
	Database Tracking	13	13%
	Energy Education	3	3%
	Energy Savings	0	0%
	Evaluation	15	15%
	Marketing & Outreach	8	8%
	Program Design	8	8%
	Program Operations	18	18%
	QA/QC	3	3%
	TRM	2	2%

Program	Category	Total # of Recs	Total % of Recs
MEEHA	Communications	2	2%
	Customer Follow-up	0	0%
	Customer Satisfaction	0	0%
	Customer Targeting	0	0%
	Database Tracking	5	5%
	Energy Education	0	0%
	Energy Savings	1	1%
	Evaluation	2	2%
	Marketing & Outreach	0	0%
	Program Design	5	5%
	Program Operations	1	1%

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Tracking Categories

Maryland's LIEEP's Recommendations Status

Type	Current Status					Total # of Recommendations	Total % of Recommendations
	Complete	**In Progress/ Delayed**	**Partially Complete**	**Rejected**	**Not Applicable**		
Impact	2	6	10	0	0	45	46%
Process	10	4	14	0	0	49	50%
Best Practices	0	2	1	0	0	4	4%
Total	**12**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**98**	**100%**

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Key Benefits from Tracking Recommendations

- *Provide* another way to identify effectiveness of program operations over time;
- *Pinpoint* areas for improvement in meaningful ways;
- *Increase* overall accountability and transparency during the evaluation period;
- *Integrate* recommendations into new program designs and;
- *Create* an important record to document program achievements.

Using a *recommendations tracker* ensures that these program recommendations fulfill the over-arching objective of program evaluation - to *provide guidance* for program operations and input for program design, as summarized in the NAPEE feedback loop.