

Market Research & Evaluation Request for Proposals: RFP #51666



Retail Products Portfolio Market Progress Evaluation Report #1

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1 Introduction

The Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA) is an alliance of more than 140 utilities and energy efficiency organizations working on behalf of more than 13 million energy consumers. NEEA is dedicated to accelerating both electric and natural gas energy efficiency, leveraging its regional partnerships to advance the adoption of energy-efficient products, services and practices.

Since 1997, NEEA and its partners have saved enough energy to power more than 900,000 homes each year. As the second-largest resource in the Northwest, energy efficiency can offset most of our new demand for energy, saving money and keeping the Northwest a healthy and vibrant place to live. www.neea.org

2 Background

NEEA's Retail Products Portfolio (RPP) Program provides mid-stream incentives to retailers for sales of qualifying efficient products, such as refrigerators and clothes washers, to influence retail assortment and product promotion and obtain access to sales data. Together, these activities are expected to support future ENERGY STAR® specifications, guide revisions to federal standards, inform test procedures, and eventually affect product manufacturing.

NEEA's RPP Program operates as part of a larger, national program, the [ENERGY STAR Retail Products Platform \(ESRPP\)](#), that is focused on building scale through increasing the number of funders (referred to as "program sponsors") and supporting national coordination. In this RFP, "RPP" is used when referring to NEEA's RPP Program efforts within its own territory – Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Idaho (the "Northwest"). "ESRPP" is used when referring to the national program effort.

NEEA's programs progress through a series of stage gates from when they are initially developed, piloted, then launched at full scale. Once a program is fully scaled, NEEA engages third-party evaluation contractors to conduct annual Market Progress Evaluation Reports (MPERs). MPERs inform program strategy and enable programs to measure progress toward the outcomes documented in their logic models by tracking market progress indicators (MPIs). MPER scopes are tailored to meet an individual program's needs at the time the research is conducted.

NEEA's RPP program was fully scaled in 2019, and this RFP is for the program's first MPER. NEEA seeks to engage a qualified evaluation contractor to assess the current state of RPP's market transformation efforts and provide strategic guidance, particularly as it relates to NEEA's involvement in the national ESRPP program.

3 Research Objectives

NEEA has four primary objectives for this research, outlined below.

3.1 Document the status of key Market Progress Indicators (MPIs)

The selected contractor will examine the status of market progress indicators (MPIs) associated with the short- and short/medium-term outcomes documented in NEEA's RPP logic model. NEEA's logic models document the barriers a program is designed to overcome, its activities and associated outputs, and outcomes – what a program is

expected to achieve. Outcomes are separated into three groups: those we expect to achieve in the short-term (1-3 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5-10 years). MPIs are the metrics NEEA uses to measure progress toward achieving each outcome. NEEA's RPP logic model and table summarizing the associated MPIs and recommended data sources are provided in Appendix 2. MPIs under investigation in this project are marked with an asterisk.

This analysis should focus on the status of each short- and short/medium-term MPI for NEEA's work in the Northwest. Because this is the first MPER for RPP, no longitudinal research is needed for the MPIs. Rather, the selected contractor will document the status of each MPI in 2020. Bidders should propose an approach for documenting each MPI that can be replicated on an annual basis so that future MPERs can continue to document the MPIs using identical or very similar methodology.

3.2 Document shifts in market share for incented products and explore factors that may have contributed to these shifts

RPP Program activities have been occurring in some form since 2015. As a result, NEEA has full category sales data for the current mix of participating retailers (Best Buy, Home Depot, Lowes, and Nationwide Marketing Group) starting in April 2017 and tracks monthly ENERGY STAR market share for currently incented product configurations.

The selected contractor will assess barriers that could be contributing to stagnant market share or downward shifts in market share for applicable product configurations, as documented by NEEA's analysis. Barriers could include but are not limited to:

- Technological trends/advancements
- Shifts in market share for un-incented products
- Changes in Federal standards for incented products
- ENERGY STAR specifications
- Energy performance test method requirements
- Economic, environmental or societal factors, such as COVID-19

The list of products under investigation is:

- Refrigerators
- Freezers
- Top-load clothes washers
- Clothes dryers
- Room air conditioners

NEEA will use the selected contractor's assessments to update product strategies and/or baselines if deemed appropriate by Program staff.

3.3 Evaluate NEEA's involvement in the national ESRPP program

NEEA engages actively with the ESRPP program because the scale provided by the collaboration between program sponsors enables greater influence on retailers and provides access to sources of data that can support efforts to influence ENERGY STAR specifications and federal standards. The selected contractor will document NEEA's activities with and influence on the national ESRPP program and provide recommendations for increasing engagement from and collaboration with program sponsors. The selected contractor will:

- Document NEEA's role in developing the current structure of the national ESRPP program;
- Document the activities NEEA staff are engaged in to support the ESRPP program, including but not limited to facilitation of topic-specific task forces and work with program sponsors to demonstrate how to approach the program from a market transformation perspective;
- Explore program sponsors' perceptions of NEEA's role in the program, including satisfaction with NEEA's current activities and perceptions of NEEA's credibility and ability to facilitate program elements;
- Recommend opportunities to increase program sponsor engagement, including taking on leadership roles within the program.

3.4 Propose a path forward for scaling the national ESRPP program

ESRPP program sponsors currently represent about 18% of US households. The program's goal is to reach 25% to 30% of US households. Through these efforts, ESRPP contributors have informally identified barriers to participation for some potential program sponsors, including lack of support for market transformation programs among regulatory bodies, concerns about evaluability, and the high cost of the data management component of the program. The selected contractor will propose a strategic path to scaling the ESRPP program that addresses the following:

- Assessing whether reaching 25% to 30% of US households is an appropriate target for ESRPP's efforts to 1) influence retailers through incentives, and 2) advance ENERGY STAR qualifying criteria and federal standards, and improve test procedures. If 25% to 30% is not found to be an appropriate target for either efforts, propose a more appropriate target or more appropriate measure.
- Documenting the decision-making process that occurs when prospective program sponsors consider joining ESRPP, including the key actors involved in making those decisions (for example, leadership, program implementers, etc.). The selected contractor will address the following questions in their analysis:
 - o What factors do prospective program sponsors consider when deciding whether to join ESRPP?
 - o To what degree are prospective program sponsors comparing ESRPP to alternative program offerings?
 - o When are the different key actors brought to the table?
- Document the barriers to participating in ESRPP that potential program sponsors face and the reasons former program sponsors have left the program,
- Explore patterns in the types of barriers faced by potential program sponsors as a function of program sponsor characteristics (size, geography, regulatory environment, etc.), and,
- Recommend pathways to overcome barriers and prioritize pathways by potential increases in scale that could be achieved by addressing each barrier. One such path NEEA would like the selected contractor to explore is whether and how NEEA's market transformation approach could work hand-in-hand with more traditional resource acquisition programs. This includes documenting the degree to which current program sponsors understand and are integrating NEEA's market transformation approach into their RPP work.

4 Parameters/Considerations

4.1 Sample Population & Respondent Recruiting

NEEA encourages bidders to consider the best way to use contact groups in the proposed research approach – adding, excluding, or combining groups based on the bidder’s view of how to best achieve NEEA’s study objectives. NEEA recommends bidders consider including the following groups:

- NEEA program staff and their program contractors
- EPA program staff and their contractors
- Current ESRPP program sponsors
- Former ESRPP program sponsors
- Potential ESRPP program sponsors

The selected contractor will not conduct research with retailers. ESRPP program sponsors work collaboratively to conduct one set of interviews with retailers each year. The selected contractor will be able to participate in the scoping process for retailer interviews to be conducted in 2021, and will have access to de-identified notes from the 2021 retailer interviews as needed for analysis purposes.

NEEA can provide the selected contractor with the contact information for individuals representing the groups identified above. Bidders should include a detailed description of their proposed approach to accessing contact information and recruiting any other potential respondents. Proposal budgets and timelines should reflect the fact that some respondent groups may be hard to reach. Additionally, bidders should build in time for NEEA and/or its funders to review contact lists and recruitment language, if deemed appropriate by NEEA.

4.2 Sources of Information

NEEA will provide the selected contractor with the following sources of information and encourages bidders to address the use of other sources of information in their proposals. Some of the following sources contain confidential information and will be shared with the selected contractor once a non-disclosure agreement is signed.

- RPP program logic model and MPI table (Appendix 2)
- De-identified notes from 2021 retailer interviews
- Slides and notes from quarterly presentations given by participating retailers to ESRPP program sponsors
- Full-category sales data from participating retailers for NEEA’s territory
- Relevant data from NEEA’s 2017 Residential Building Stock Assessment (RBSA)
- ESRPP program guidelines and documents
- NEEA RPP Program documents
- NEEA strategy documents for products included in the RPP portfolio
- Documentation of relevant communication between NEEA staff and partners

4.3 COVID-19

NEEA assumes that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting both internal program operations and the broader retail products market. Further, NEEA assumes that the effects of COVID-19 on internal program operations and broader markets are not yet well understood. While NEEA does not expect the selected contractor to conduct

research specifically on the effects of COVID-19 on the retail products market or functioning of the RPP program, they are encouraged to share relevant information gleaned during the data collection process in the final report.

5 Deliverables

5.1 Kickoff Meeting and Work Plan

The selected contractor will plan and set the agenda for a kickoff meeting to discuss project administration and expectations, research plans, and rough timelines. Prior to the kickoff meeting, the selected contractor will submit a draft work plan to the NEEA Market Research and Evaluation (MRE) project manager. The work plan will describe data collection, analysis, and other proposed activities, deliverables, and timelines. Within one week of the date of the kickoff meeting, the selected contractor will submit a final work plan that incorporates any feedback received in writing and/or during the kickoff meeting.

5.2 Interview/Survey Instruments and Contact Lists

The selected contractor will submit all interview/survey instruments, including recruitment scripts, to the MRE project manager for review and final approval. To ensure that all research objectives are met, all instruments must include a table showing how each question corresponds with the research objectives. The MRE project manager must approve all final instruments before fieldwork begins. The selected contractor will also provide NEEA with a list of all individuals contacted, their contact information, and whether the individual participated in a research activity (if known), and any updates made to a NEEA-provided contact list.

5.3 Final Report & Raw Data

When the final stage of the research is nearing completion, the selected contractor will meet with the MRE project manager to discuss the report outline and presentation style. The selected contractor will then create a draft report that synthesizes findings for each of the research objectives. The draft report will be submitted to NEEA for review and comment. The selected contractor will then incorporate comments and submit the final report. NEEA may request more than one round of review on all or portions of the report depending on the degree to which the initial draft meets the program's needs. Upon completion of the project, the selected contractor will provide NEEA with de-identified raw data for all research activities (interview notes, survey data, etc.), unless the selected contractor and NEEA agree upon a different approach.

6 Budget and Timeframe

Proposals should be provided on a time and materials basis. Bidders should provide a competitive budget estimate that is sufficient to cover their proposed work. NEEA believes a reasonable budget for this work is \$130,000. However, budget should not be considered a limiting factor, and bidders are invited to submit optional tasks with associated costs provided separately. NEEA's MRE project manager will work with the selected contractor to negotiate the specifics of the proposed research activities to meet resource constraints. Proposal estimates should reflect that the selected contractor is responsible and accountable for the following:

- All logistics associated with executing the research tasks

- Preparing identified deliverables
- All subcontractors used on this project
- Contractors' allocation of resources to tasks
- Invoicing and expense reporting per contract terms
- Distribution of incentives for research participation

NEEA anticipates that research will begin in January 2021 and be completed by June 30, 2021.

7 Proposal Format

Bidders' proposals should include the following sections and should not exceed 15 pages (excluding appendices).

7.1 Executive Summary of Research Design

Describe your understanding of the RPP program objectives and the key areas of learning for this project. Include the key strategies and approach for the scope of the work, proposed costs, and the reasons NEEA should select your team.

7.2 Tasks and Deliverables

Provide a detailed description of the specific methodologies and approaches to be undertaken to complete the scope. Be sure to include project management activities. Identify all major phases and milestones for the project and the associated deliverables.

For each research activity, include the activity's objective, the target population, what will be done, and when it will be done. Include the analysis steps they plan to take for each research activity (qualitative coding and theme development, descriptive statistics disaggregated by market actor group, etc.).

7.3 Project Timeline & Cost Estimate

Provide the proposed timeline for all major phases and milestones of the project broken out by proposed task and associated deliverables. Include the cost estimate for each task. A breakout of any direct costs and an hourly rate sheet should be included in the proposal appendix section.

7.4 Proposal Appendix

The proposal appendix should include:

- Hourly rate sheet for all project team members with estimated hours by task
- Company background and qualifications
- Project team bios, team structure, past team efforts on similar work, years of experience, and other relevant qualifications
- Documentation reflecting your organization's good financial standing, such as a Dun & Bradstreet report (required for new vendors)

8 Proposal Submission

Bidder shall submit (1) electronic copy of the proposal by the end of business day listed in the RFP schedule below.

8.1 RFP Schedule

October 13, 2020	RFP released
October 22, 2020	Intent to Respond forms due
October 22, 2020	Bidder questions for clarification submitted
October 28, 2020	Answers to questions returned to bidders
November 10, 2020	Written proposals due
November 20, 2020	Anticipated award date
December 11, 2020	Anticipated project kickoff

8.2 Correspondence

All correspondence shall be directed via email to:

Meghan Bean, Senior Project Manager, Market Research and Evaluation
mbean@neea.org

8.3 Intent to Respond

All Intent to Respond forms (see Appendix A) must be received no later than no later than by the end of business day listed in the RFP Schedule. NEEA will only provide RFP updates to, consider questions from, and review the proposals of bidders who submit an Intent to Respond form.

9 Selection and Insurance Requirements

9.1 Scoring Considerations

Bidding firms will be rated among others in terms of the overall responsiveness to the RFP including, but not limited to:

- 1) Demonstrated understanding of project objectives, nuances, and potential roadblocks to meeting objectives
- 2) The thoughtfulness and appropriateness of the proposed design
- 3) Thoughtfulness and appropriateness of respondent recruitment approach and ability to address potential issues
- 4) Reasonableness of work plan – timing, tasks and deliverables
- 5) How well deliverable descriptions meet the stated needs and intended use
- 6) Overall value for expenditure
- 7) Evidence of innovation in overall design, recruitment, and deliverables
- 8) Evidence of flexibility throughout the project lifecycle
- 9) Ability to communicate complex ideas/concepts clearly and succinctly
- 10) The balance of the complexity of design with the succinctness of communication of the design
- 11) Ability to synthesize findings from multiple data/information source to make clear, actionable recommendations for program strategy
- 12) Familiarity with retailer decision-making

In addition, the following factors will play a key role in the selection process:

- 1) The experience and qualifications of the individuals specifically proposed to execute and manage the project.
- 2) The experience of the firm or team of firms making the proposal.
- 3) The capability to execute the plan, including past experience and aptitude for collaboration.

Proposals will be evaluated by the MRE project manager and other NEEA staff that have the perspective needed to make this important decision. NEEA is under no obligation to provide work to any vendors responding to this solicitation, nor is there any obligation or intent implied to reimburse any party for the cost of preparing a proposal in response to this RFP.

9.2 Preferred Insurance

Firms interested in working with NEEA should be aware of the following insurance requirements for all NEEA vendors.

Vendors must maintain adequate and reasonable insurance covering their performance under any offered contract, including, but not limited to Commercial General Liability insurance of at least \$1,000,000/occurrence, Business Automobile Liability insurance, and any workers' compensation and unemployment insurance required by law. Professional Liability and Cyber Liability insurance may also be required. NEEA may request a copy of such insurance policies prior to awarding work.

See sample terms and conditions for additional information about minimum insurance requirements: <https://neea.org/img/documents/sample-neea-contract-terms-and-conditions.pdf>.

Appendix A – Intent to Respond Form

RFP #: 51666

Project Title: Retail Products Portfolio Market Progress Evaluation Report #1
NEEA Point of Contact: Meghan Bean, mbean@neea.org

PLEASE PRINT:

Company	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Contact Name	
Contact Title	
Phone #	
E-mail	

The company named above intends to submit a proposal in response to NEEA's request for proposal listed above. Deadline for submitting the "Intent to Respond" form is end of business day of date listed in the RFP schedule.

List any Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certifications and the state of the certifications below:

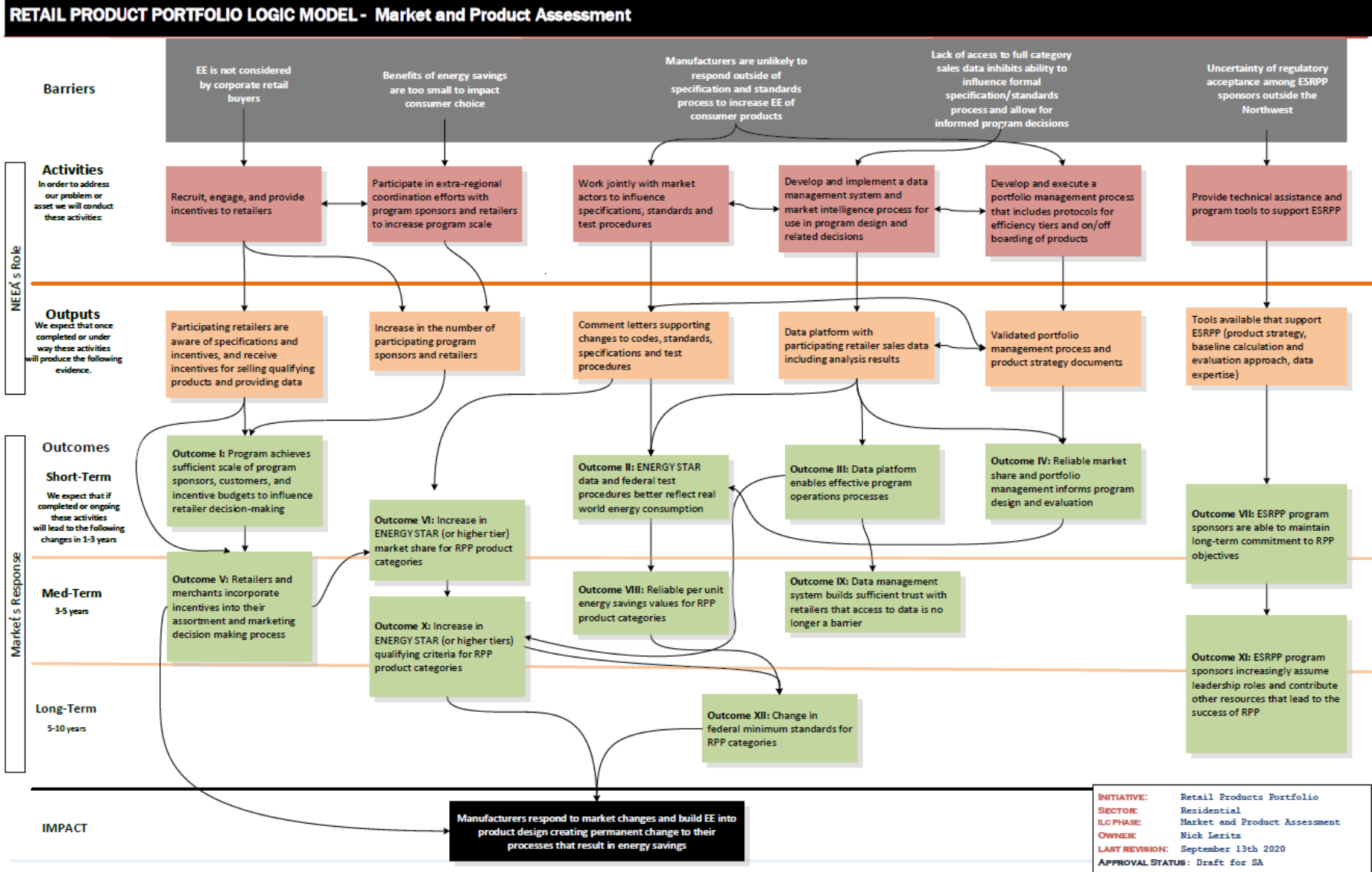
Signature of Authorized Representative _____

Print Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

Appendix B – NEEA RPP Logic Model and MPI Table



***MPIs marked with an asterisk are under investigation in this research.**

Outcome (Timing)	Outcome	Market Progress Indicators	Data Sources
I (S)*	ESRPP program achieves sufficient scale of program sponsors, customers, and incentive budgets to influence retailer decision-making	Portion of US households in ESRPP areas and the related total value of all program sponsor incentive budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Census Bureau data • ESRPP program documents
II (S)*	ENERGY STAR data and federal test procedures better reflect real world energy consumption	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of test procedure issues and opportunities for improvement identified 2. # of products for which ESRPP partners seek to influence test procedure 3. # of products where test procedures are improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE rulemaking documents (MPIs 1 & 3) • Longitudinal tracking of ESRPP engagement with ENERGY STAR revision processes (MPI 2)
III (S)*	Data platform enables effective program operations and processes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data access and accuracy are sufficient to support product-by-product analysis and participation in the ENERGY STAR specification process 2. Speed with which incentives are paid 3. Number of corrections or data errors 4. Program sponsor confidence in program operations process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal tracking of data quality indicators available through the data portal (MPIs 1-3) • Longitudinal tracking of RPP engagement with ENERGY STAR revision processes (MPI 1) • Qualitative evidence from ENERGY STAR stakeholder interviews (MPI 1) • Qualitative evidence from program sponsors interviews (MPI 4)
IV (S)*	Reliable market share and portfolio management informs program design and evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Efficient and transparent portfolio management process 2. Annual savings process and evaluation are efficient and verifiable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative evidence from program sponsor interviews (MPIs 1 & 2) • Qualitative evidence from RPP staff interviews (MPIs 1 & 2) • Evaluation results (MPI 2)
V (S/M)*	Retailers and merchants incorporate incentives into their assortment and marketing decision making process	Retailer consideration of ESRPP qualification in assortment and marketing decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative evidence from retailer interviews • Qualitative evidence from RPP staff communication • Quarterly presentations and information provided by retailers to ESRPP
VI (S/M)*	Increase in ENERGY STAR market share (or higher tier) for RPP product categories	Market share of RPP-qualified product tiers	Longitudinal tracking of market share
VII (S/M)*	ESRPP program sponsors are able to maintain long-term commitment to RPP objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Average tenure of ESRPP program sponsors 2. # program sponsors claiming savings for ESRPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESRPP program documents (MPI 1) • Regulatory filings (MPI 2)

Outcome (Timing)	Outcome	Market Progress Indicators	Data Sources
VIII (M)	Reliable per unit energy savings values for RPP product categories	Number of products categories (bins, tiers, configurations) with reliable energy savings values	Longitudinal tracking of measure planning documentation and methodologies
IX (M)	Data management system builds sufficient trust with retailers that data access is no longer a barrier	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timeliness and completion of retailer uploads 2. Retailer confidence in data warehousing 3. Data support evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal tracking of data quality indicators available through the data portal (MPI 1) • Qualitative evidence from retailer interviews (MPI 2) • ESRPP program documents (MPI 2) • Evaluation results (MPI 3)
X (M/L)	Increase in ENERGY STAR qualifying criteria (or higher tiers) for RPP product categories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of opportunities to influence qualifying criteria identified 2. # of products for which there is an increase in ENERGY STAR qualifying criteria (or higher tiers) for RPP product categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal tracking of RPP engagement with ENERGY STAR revision processes (MPI 1) • Qualitative evidence from ENERGY STAR stakeholder interviews (MPI 2)
XI (M/L)	ESRPP program sponsors increasingly assume leadership roles and contribute other resources that lead to the success of RPP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ESRPP program sponsors assume leadership roles in the program 2. Mechanisms for collaboration and information sharing in place 3. # of program sponsors that engage with specification and standards processes 4. Program sponsors contribute to cost sharing for research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESRPP program documents (MPIs 1, 2 & 4) • Qualitative evidence from ENERGY STAR stakeholder interviews (MPIs 1 & 2) • Longitudinal tracking of program sponsor engagement with specification and federal standard revision processes (MPI 3)
XII (L)	Change in federal minimum standards for RPP categories	ESRPP sponsors influence federal minimum standards for product categories in the portfolio	Longitudinal tracking of RPP engagement with federal standard revision processes