Market Progress Evaluation Report

Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, No. 4

prepared by

Quantec, LLC

report **#E02-105**

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Final Report

Energy Ideas Clearinghouse Market Progress Evaluation Report:

Marketing to Utilities

Prepared for:
Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance

Prepared by:
Quantec, LLC

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Executive Summary

EIC Background

The Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC or Clearinghouse) has served energy professionals in the Pacific Northwest since 1990 by providing fast, centralized access to comprehensive and objective information and technical assistance on energy-related topics. The EIC is currently managed by the Washington State University Cooperative Extension Energy Program (WSUEP), which conducts research, develops tools, and disseminates information that people need to make informed decisions about energy.

In 1997 the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (the Alliance) began funding the program in support of its market transformation efforts. The Alliance hoped that the Clearinghouse could target its informational services to decrease at least two market barriers that limit the adoption of energy-efficient practices:

- ⇐ Lack of awareness of how energy is used and the associated energy/non-energy benefits of energy-efficiency measures and technologies
- ⇐ Search and acquisition costs of energy efficiency information.

The Clearinghouse currently offers three primary services: a telephone hotline, a Web site, and a number of energy listservs.

Between 1999 and 2001, Quantec completed three Market Progress Evaluation Reports (MPERs) of the EIC. These previous MPERs included interviews with program staff, examination and analysis of the program database, telephone and online surveys with current users, telephone surveys with prior users and nonusers, a Web site benchmarking analysis, an analysis of Web site statistics (Web trends reports), and Web page focus groups.

The current MPER focuses on the core target audience of the EIC – utility employees, including BPA. The report summarizes the findings from a number of research projects, including:

- ⇐ a profile of utility clients from the EIC database
- ⇐ an energy-related information needs assessment
- ⇐ a review of the marketing plan
- ⇐ a review of Web site usability study

Profile of Utility Clients Using EIC's Hotline

In an effort to profile the utility clients of the EIC hotline, Quantec closely examined the 1999-2001 EIC Case Management Database (CMD). We examined the number of utility callers, the types of utilities that called, the sector and topic of the call, the mode of response delivery, staffing requirements, and referral source. The general findings include:

⇐ Since 1998, the EIC has experienced an increase in the number of inquiries, i.e., requests by phone, e-mail, letter, or fax for information, and individual clients. In 2001 the EIC received a total of 1,055 inquiries, a 38% increase from the 763 inquiries in 2000 (Table ES-1). The percentage of those inquiries that were from utilities generally stayed at about 20%-22% throughout the period.

Table ES-1
Volume of EIC Hotline Inquiries and Clients

Year	Inquiries[1]			Clients[2]		
	Total	Total Utilities	Percent Utility	Total	Total Utilities[3]	Percent Utility
1990	765	219	29%	546	143	26%
1991	1,690	366	22%	1,191	226	19%
1992	3,347	712	21%	2,385	462	19%
1993	2,217	459	21%	1,537	263	17%
1994	1,706	361	21%	1,260	182	14%
1995	971	245	25%	682	135	20%
1996	708	180	25%	488	104	21%
1997	440	129	29%	309	78	25%
1998	422	104	25%	297	51	17%
1999[5]	657	133	20%	473	78	16%
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2001	1,055	236	22%	777	134	17%
Total[4]	***14,741***	***3,288***	***22%***	***10,484***	***1,932***	***18%***

Notes:
1) Inquiries refers to the number of requests for information.
2) Clients refers to the number of unique callers who made one or more inquires.
3) Utilities includes BPA
4) Some clients contacted the EIC in multiple years, so the sum of the clients per year adds up to more than the actual number of unique clients.
5) Approximately 85 inquiries in 1999 concerning a cooperative project with the Consortium for Energy Efficiency on the procurement tool kit are not included in this table or in the analysis.
6) 2000 data includes 24 inquiries from Energy User News and Home Energy ads (reader response cards) and 24 EREC inquiries that were reviewed and responded to by EIC.

⇐ Utilities represent the largest single business segment of inquiries and have accounted for about 19%-29% of total EIC inquiries.

- ⇐ Although there are far more small utilities in the Pacific Northwest region, the majority of utility inquiries came from larger utilities (60%) compared to smaller utilities (8%).
- ⇐ There were few differences between the utilities and non-utilities in terms of the sector and type of information requested, the mode of response, and the staffing requirements.
- ⇐ Larger utilities, however, were more likely to request information about commercial or industrial applications (65%) compared to smaller/medium-sized utilities (49%), who were more likely to request information about residential applications. This difference, however, may be due to the caller within the utility, not the utility size.
- ⇐ There was far more repeat usage of the EIC among utilities (62% repeat users) compared to non-utilities (32%).

Hot Line Recommendations

Develop a brief staff user guide and consistent training for the case management database. In order to conduct this analysis, Quantec had to recode a number of data fields, including business type, general topic, and referral source (prompt). There were also a number of common data entry errors.

Collect more specific information about the referral. In terms of marketing analysis, the EIC should expand the referral categories into more detailed entries.

Collect department, not just job title, in order to target more potential users. While the job title of the caller is helpful, the same job can have diverse titles between companies, whereas departments are larger units and vary less.

Cross-tabulate the callers' company type by topic of the call. EIC should examine this more closely, looking at differences in information requested by company type. There are many uses of such data for marketing, technical staffing needs and program evaluation.

Target smaller utilities. There are far more small and medium sized utilities in the Pacific Northwest, although the majority of the utility inquiries were from larger utilities (60%) compared to smaller utilities (8%). This presents a tremendous marketing opportunity among the smaller utilities.

Utilize the repeat callers for marketing purposes. The high percentage of repeat callers among utilities (62%) highlights the value of the EIC to a subset of the Northwest utilities' staff. The EIC could enlist a number of "champions" to spread the word about the value they find in using the EIC.

Energy-Related Information Needs Assessment

In December 2001 and January 2002, Quantec conducted an information needs assessment of utility staff in the Northwest. The research was conducted in two steps:

1. ***Telephone Interviews with Key Informants***. With the Alliance's assistance, Quantec identified and contacted a number of key informants that were familiar with both the management structure and primary information needs of utility staff. Quantec contacted the approved liaisons between each of the Alliance's partner utilities in order to implement a "snowball" or "spider" sampling approach to identify other key informants – department managers, energy services staff, human resources, etc. – about their information needs and current information/data collection strategies. (The final instrument is included as Appendix A).
2. ***Online Surveys with Utility Staff***. Quantec conducted an online survey with utility and BPA staff. The survey request was sent out via email from the key informants (utility managers) or Quantec, and it contained a link to an on-line survey at the Alliance Web site. (The final instrument is included in Appendix B).

The majority of the respondents to the survey had a need for energy efficiency information. This figure may have been biased upward because our sample consisted primarily of those in energy services/conservation, and thus they most likely forwarded the survey or referred us to others in their departments.

The respondents were most interested in energy efficient technologies (67%) and general energy efficiency information (67%). Information on product assessments (43%) and utility conservation programs (41%) were also important. Information on energy jobs (2%) was barely of any importance for these respondents with a need for energy efficiency information.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) provide energy-related information to customers. Most common were residential (71% of those that provide information to customers) or commercial customers (65%).

The respondents to the survey also indicated that their preferred source of energy efficiency information was from colleagues/peers (65%). Respondents also depended on both online resources, such as general search engines (48%) and listservs/e-mails (37%), as well as offline resources such as newspapers, magazines, and trade journals (47%).

More than half of the respondents (54%) first learned about the EIC by word of mouth – far higher than any other source. Respondents that learned of the EIC through word of mouth (76%), an EIC booth/presentation/mailing

(83%), or the Alliance (100%) were far more likely to use the services than those that discovered the EIC through an ad (25%).

Figure ES-1
Respondents Informational Needs
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information
(n=104)

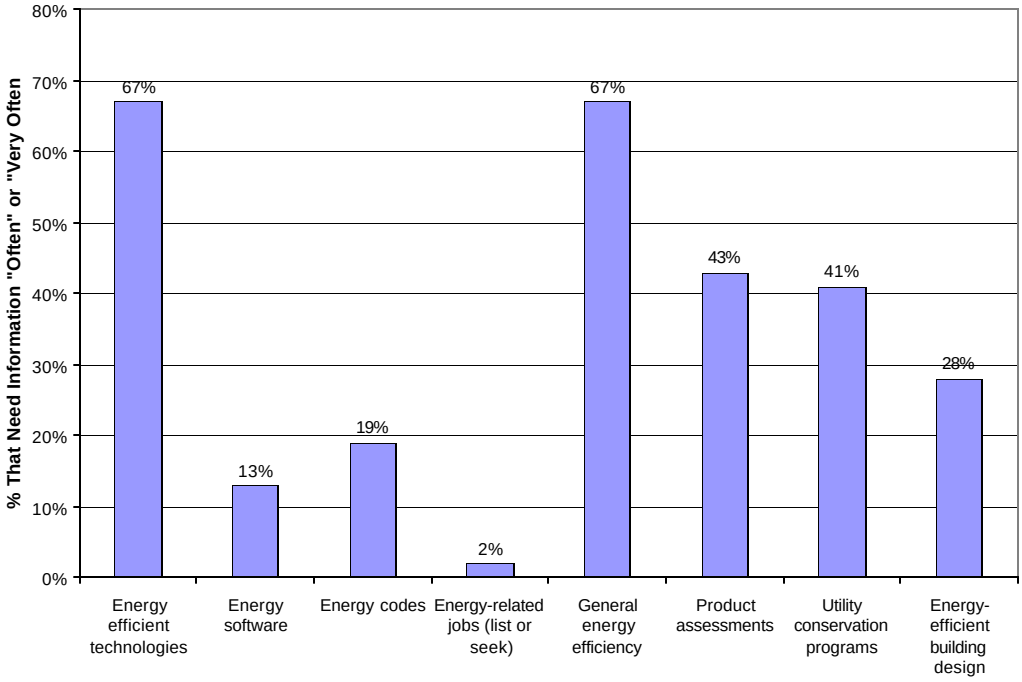

Table ES-2
First Learn About the EIC
Base: Respondents Who Are Aware of EIC Services

Learn About EIC	Number of Respondents	Used EIC Services	Aware, Not Used EIC Services
Word of Mouth	54 (54%)	41 (59%)	13 (42%)
EIC booth or presentation at conference	9 (9%)	8 (12%)	1 (3%)
Ad in journal/ magazine/ newsletter	8 (8%)	2 (3%)	6 (19%)
Came up on Web search/Found link on another Web page	9 (9%)	5 (7%)	4 (13%)
NW Alliance	4 (4%)	4 (6%)	0 (0%)
EIC Mailing	3 (3%)	2 (3%)	1 (3%)
Other	7 (21%)	6 (9%)	1 (3%)
No Answer/Don't know	6 (6%)	1 (1%)	5 (16%)
Total*	***100 (100%)***	***69 (100%)***	***31 (100%)***

* Only 100 of the 112 surveyed were aware of the EIC

EIC hotline users remain extremely satisfied with the service. Respondents were extremely satisfied with the EIC services, agreeing that the EIC provides excellent customer service (69%), provides high-quality useful responses to questions (69%), develops high quality fact sheets (73%), and has the expertise to answer any energy-related question (75%).

Although respondents were extremely satisfied with the EIC services, few (26%) stated that it was the first place they go for energy-related information. This paradoxical finding could be a result of the fact that respondents forget that the EIC exists, a conclusion reached in a previous MPER. The EIC, therefore, may still have greater potential use among utility clients.

Having been free for so many years, it would be difficult to move the EIC to a "fee for service" arrangement. Seventy-six percent of the respondents agreed that one of the main reasons they use the EIC is because the services are free, and 72% said they wouldn't use the EIC if an annual fee was charged, unless their company paid for it.

The respondents were interested in meeting their energy information needs as quickly as possible and preferred an electronic medium over the telephone. For example, the respondents were most interested in searching the Web for information (43%) or e-mailing a question to an information source and obtaining an answer back in one to two days (28%). They were less interested in calling a hotline and waiting for an answer.

Marketing Plan

A professional marketing consultant developed a marketing plan that outlined strategies for the EIC to increase regional utility awareness and use of its resources. The marketing plan presents a detailed overview of the EIC's general market placement, target markets, current users, and competitors.[1]

The goal is to create a strong organizational image for the EIC, one that will reflect a sharpened *mission statement*, a focused definition of its *market position*, and clearly defined *marketing objectives* both for the EIC as a whole and for each of the targeted markets. This Marketing Plan offers proposals for each of these elements; the new, sharpened messages that make up the EIC's organizational image will be developed by an EIC-led team, consisting of both internal staff and external consultants.

The EIC's market position is that "The EIC is the Northwest's most responsive and convenient energy information service, with expert knowledge and comprehensive research resources provided without fee to assist

[1] The marketing consultant's report is included in Appendix G.

Northwest business, industry, government and utilities in addressing all their energy-information needs."

The proposed marketing objectives for the targeted utility market are:

- ⇐ To heighten regional utilities' awareness and increase their use of the EIC
- ⇐ To clearly define the needs of the various segments of this market so that the EIC can improve and tailor its services to each
- ⇐ To establish a process and criteria for developing new marketing communications that are in line with the new messages

The first approach for the utility market campaign will be to target the opinion leaders through various personal and non-personal channels of communication. A second approach will be to focus on the EIC's relationship with the regional utilities (and with appropriate utility industry associations).

A number of message elements that may potentially motivate and resonate with the utility market include the following:

- ⇐ Services are provided without fee
- ⇐ The EIC has the expertise to answer any energy-related question
- ⇐ EIC consultants provide high quality, useful responses to energy-related questions
- ⇐ High quality factsheets are available on many energy efficiency topics
- ⇐ The EIC provides excellent customer service
- ⇐ The EIC focuses on the needs of energy professionals

Ultimately, the discrete messages will be combined to construct an umbrella message (above all other messages) that defines the EIC and clarifies its mission.

Direct marketing will serve a dual purpose. Initially, it will be used to introduce the EIC's new messages/image to its key markets. Later, it will serve a reminder role, keeping the EIC's name and messages prominent. The Web site is itself an advertisement for the EIC in that it is the core strategic vehicle for most of the EIC's interactions with its users. It therefore needs to clearly and simply communicate the EIC's key messages through its copy, overall look, and organization.

Public relations tactics include making presentations to interested utilities and related associations, participation in energy industry events (including conventions and trade shows), creating specialized listservs, and continuing to produce factsheets on topics relevant to utilities and their customers.

As a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the EIC's messages, a series of focus groups and individual meetings were conducted from mid-May to mid-June 2002 with 22 employees from small and medium utilities. Participants in the focus groups preferred clear and focused messaging that highlighted the reliable, unbiased information that the EIC provides. The messages that receive the widest support were "customer focused," "provide answers," "objective," and "timely."

Focus group participants also confirmed the impression of the web usability study participants that organizations with a state (e.g., Washington, etc.) included as part of their name identification were overwhelmingly seen as primarily providing services aimed at energy policies for people in the named state. Therefore, from a brand marketing perspective, it is preferable to have a neutral, credible organization name so that the maximum audience possible perceives that they are welcome to use the services. Close identification with WSUEP could cause potential EIC users from outside Washington state to turn to a resource perceived as being more responsive to their needs.

Web Site Usability Study

A usability study for the EIC Web site was conducted on May 13, 14, and 16, 2002, at a research facility. The study design, moderation, analysis, and recommendations were created and conducted by an Interface Engineer and Usability Specialist from ZAAZ, a firm specializing in Web sites.[2]

The Goals of the EIC Usability Study were to:

- ⇐ Validate what is working well
- ⇐ Do an overall evaluation of the site and uncover areas for improvement
- ⇐ Focus on search functionality as the primary method of accessing site content
- ⇐ Benchmark current site usability as a baseline metric for future improvements and evaluations

Sixteen participants were recruited from the Seattle area representing the commercial, industrial, and utility sectors; the intent was to have each group evenly divided between 'ever' and 'never' users of the Web site. Participants were selected because, as a group, they had the experience and knowledge typical of those who would likely use the site. ZAAZ aimed for a mix of sectors, genders, organization size, occupation type, internet experience level, prior use of the existing EIC Web site, and need for energy-related information.

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[2] The Web site usability study is included in Appendix H.

Participants were recruited for a usability session of 90 minutes, one-on-one with the study administrator. The tasks included a brief background interview, a "card sort" exercise, an interview about first impressions of the EIC home page, and how the user expected the navigation links to behave, and several searches for different types of information using a live EIC Web site connection.

Impediments to usability were found throughout the EIC Web site in the main information architecture, nomenclature, navigational scheme, page layouts, graphical user interface elements, and linking strategy.

Study participants indicated that they perceived the EIC Web site's content to be of high value. However, due to poor site usability, they are not able to experience that content value and turned away dissatisfied. Given the number and nature of usability issues found, a complete redesign was recommended.

Other "high level" recommendations include:

- ⇐ Revamp all main content on the site. Group information in ways that are meaningful to the target audience. Consider grouping information by sector.
- ⇐ Add a site search to the home page and establish site search as a main function in the site information architecture.
- ⇐ Revise 'Energy Solutions' keyword search and 'Explore by Topic' functionality so that users always receive some positive result or reinforcement.
- ⇐ Revamp and update 'Explore by Topic' categorical structure and nomenclature.
- ⇐ Follow user interface standards for Web site design. Specifically, how to construct a navigational structure, taxonomy, page layout, and graphical user interfaces that meet industry standards and user expectation. Use industry expert manuals that are peer reviewed.
- ⇐ Create a new professional/updated look and feel to reflect the high quality information and services the EIC offers.

The high-level recommendations are based on issues critical to the user experience and success of the site. Addressing the high level recommendations will give the EIC Web site a strong foundation. Regular updates to site content and checking usability will keep the user experience fresh and meeting users' needs.

Summary of EIC Issues at MPER Baseline

Three consistent themes are found among all this research:

- ⇐ ***The EIC has extremely satisfied users***. This MPER, like the previous ones, finds that the EIC hotline users remain overwhelmingly satisfied with the services.
- ⇐ ***The volume of information and services offered is so broad that it may confuse users***. The usability study found that the focus of the EIC and its services was not immediately transparent, contributing to the "clutter" of the Web page.
- ⇐ ***The relationship between the Alliance and Washington State University is important and must be presented carefully***. As identified in the online survey, marketing report, and focus groups, it is critical to consistently communicate the EIC's relationship with the Alliance and the WSU Energy Program as "funded by" and "managed by," respectively, as this partnership adds an important sense of credibility to the EIC. Furthermore, using only a WSU logo gave respondents the impression that services may be intended only for those in Washington state.

The EIC has previously implemented a number of marketing strategies. The impact of these activities was generally effective, as the number of inquiries in the Case Management Database increased by 16% in 2000 and 38% in 2001, while use of the Web page continues to grow by approximately 100% a year.

Still, as discussed in this report, there is room for improvement. Users of the Web page are finding the page cluttered and difficult to use; repeat users are not always returning to the EIC; and the EIC has the potential to reach many more users.

There are a number of issues that the EIC will need to focus on as it implements it's new marketing plan, including:

Tracking EIC Web Page Users. The EIC should attempt to learn more about Web site users. Having important descriptors of the Web site users and what they want to know would make an informative user profile for the EIC and the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, its funder. This is important in the efforts to meet customers' evolving information needs and to facilitate follow-up on whether or how the information was used to impact energy efficiency practices.

Addressing Data Quality Issues. A way to ensure that the data are entered correctly and consistently across all staff is to develop a brief user guide for the database, and to implement data input mechanisms – such as pull-down menus – for as many database fields as possible. In addition, a set of quality assurance standards and checks should be developed and used routinely.

Collecting Additional Information for the Case Management Database. The EIC should consider a careful review of the items contained in the case management database, improving certain fields.

Data Tracking Issues. As the EIC seeks to implement a targeted marketing plan aimed at specific customer segments, it must also pay careful attention to tracking program goals, activities, inputs and outputs, and results. These are important elements of a continuous quality improvement system that will get the most out of operations management efforts. The EIC must not only monitor program operations, but also apply a "critical eye" to its own data and routinely examine multiple program usage patterns and measures of marketing efficacy.

I. Introduction

Since 1990, the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC or Clearinghouse) has served energy professionals in the Pacific Northwest by providing fast, centralized access to comprehensive and objective information and technical assistance on energy-related topics.

The Clearinghouse was originally funded by Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville), which saw the need for a centralized source of energy-related information as it entered the commercial and industrial demand-side management arena.

In 1997, the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (the Alliance) began funding the program in support of its market transformation efforts. The Alliance hoped that the Clearinghouse could target its informational services to decrease at least two market barriers that limit the adoption of energy-efficient practices:

- ⇐ Lack of awareness of how energy is used and the associated energy/non-energy benefits
- ⇐ Search and acquisition costs of energy efficiency information

The EIC is currently managed by the Washington State University Cooperative Extension Energy Program (WSUEP), which conducts research, develops tools, and disseminates information that people need to make informed decisions about energy.

The Clearinghouse currently offers three primary services: a telephone hotline, a Web site, and a number of energy listservs.

Customers served by utilities in the Pacific Northwest can call (toll free), e-mail, or fax questions concerning energy use into the Clearinghouse hotline. Topics include (but are not limited to) motor systems, HVAC, industrial electrotechnologies, life cycle cost analysis, computer simulation, energy policy, agricultural energy issues, and cogeneration. Responses to questions, usually within eight hours, can take a number of forms, including:

- ⇐ a literature search
- ⇐ publication or fact sheet
- ⇐ product or pricing information
- ⇐ engineering assistance or analysis
- ⇐ referrals to other energy programs, services, or resources

In our first Market Progress Evaluation Report (MPER), completed in September 1999, Quantec completed a comprehensive analysis of the EIC, including:

- ⇐ interviews with program staff
- ⇐ an examination and analysis of the program database
- ⇐ surveys with 150 current users, 100 prior users, and 100 nonusers of the Clearinghouse
- ⇐ a Web site benchmarking analysis
- ⇐ an analysis of Web site 'hit' statistics (Web trends reports)
- ⇐ three Web page focus groups

In the second MPER, completed in May 2000, Quantec examined the EIC tiered service structure (or the "inverted pyramid approach") to information dissemination. As part of the evaluation Quantec conducted a number of tasks, including:

- ⇐ interviews with program staff
- ⇐ an examination and analysis of the program database
- ⇐ surveys with 150 current users and 101 nonusers of the Clearinghouse services
- ⇐ an analysis of Web site 'hit' statistics (Web trends reports)
- ⇐ an online survey for Web site users

The third MPER, completed in May 2001, examined a number of additional topics concerning the Clearinghouse, including:

- ⇐ updated statistics about services, use, staffing, and funding for the Clearinghouse
- ⇐ a benchmarking study that compared the Clearinghouse Web site (EnergyIdeas.org) to other energy Web sites, plus interviews conducted with other energy Web Masters
- ⇐ a survey of listserv participants to examine the use and interest in the various energy listservs
- ⇐ further analysis of the Web site online survey, noting changes since the 2000 re-launch of the Web site

This MPER focuses on the background research needed to develop a marketing plan aimed at the EIC's core target audience – electric utility company employees, including the Bonneville Power Administration. The report summarizes the findings from 'baseline' research designed to support development of a marketing plan, including:

⇐ ***Profile of Utility Clients, including BPA, from the EIC Database***. Quantec examined the EIC database to identify what type of utility employees have contacted the EIC for energy information. In addition, Quantec identified the sector designation of those requests (commercial, industrial, or residential), the general topic, the more specific end use, the level of technical assistance needed, and the delivery format (phone, email, fax, or standard mail) of the information provided by the EIC. (Chapter II)

⇐ ***Energy-Related Information Needs Assessment***. Quantec interviewed key utility informants to learn about their information needs and current information/data collection strategies. Following this, Quantec conducted an online survey with utility staff who were either current users, past users, or non-users of the EIC to more closely assess their energy information needs. (Chapter III)

⇐ ***Review of Marketing Plan***. A marketing consultant prepared a Marketing Plan that presents strategies designed to help the EIC succeed in its goals to increase regional utility awareness and use of its resources. (Chapter IV)

⇐ ***Review of Web Site Usability Study***. A Web consulting firm conducted a usability study of the EnergyIdeas.org Web site to validate what is working well, uncover areas for improvement, examine search functionality, and benchmark current site usability. (Chapter V)

II. Profile of Utility Clients Using EIC's Hotline

In designing a marketing plan that targets the utility industry, it is important to understand how or if utility staff access the EIC's information and by which methods (i.e., via phone, fax, e-mail, letters, and Web site). What types of information do they request? How do they use the information? How did they learn about the EIC?

In an effort to profile the utility clients of the EIC, Quantec closely analyzed the 1999-2001 EIC Case Management Database (CMD), largely comprised of 'hotline' users.[3]

Volume of Inquiries

Hotline inquiries peaked in 1992, following a large marketing effort by Bonneville. Bonneville continued with small marketing campaigns to utilities and other specific audiences following this, but lack of additional marketing funds led to a continual decline in hotline inquiries through 1998.

Since Alliance funding began in 1998, however, the EIC has experienced an increase in the number of inquiries (i.e., requests for information by phone, e-mail, letter, or fax) and individual clients. In 2001 the EIC received a total of 1,055 inquiries [note: clients may make multiple inquiries], a 38% increase from the 763 inquiries in 2000 (Table II-1). The percentage of those inquiries that were from utilities increased in the mid-1990s to a high of 29% (1997), but generally stayed at about 20%-22% throughout the period. The percentage of unique utility clients fluctuated from a low of 14% (1994 and 2000) to a high of 26% (1990), with an average of 18% over the lifetime of the EIC.

[3] The EIC does not currently track the industry category of people who access their Web page (www.energyideas.org). To fully profile utility inquiries, it would be necessary to identify these users as well as the types of information they accessed on the EIC Web site. In 2001 alone there were 24,000 total visitors to the site. Knowing who they were and what they wanted to know would make an informative user profile for the EIC and the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, its funder.

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5) Approximately 85 inquiries in 1999 concerning a cooperative project with the Consortium for Energy Efficiency on the procurement tool kit are not included in this table or in the analysis.
6) 2000 data includes 24 inquiries from Energy User News and Home Energy ads (reader response cards) and 24 EREC inquiries that were reviewed and responded to by EIC.

Examining the three years from 1999 through 2001 – an average of 20.7% of the inquiries came from utilities, the largest single identified user sector (Table II-2). Other important sectors included government (15% of the inquiries), consultants (architects/engineering firms/ESCOs, 15%), individuals (not calling from work, 11%), and education (10%).

Table II-2
Type of Company Using Hotline Services

Company Type	1999-2001	
	No. Inquiries	Percent
Utility	513	21%
Government (city/state/county)	381	15%
Consulting (Arch/Eng/ESCO)	374	15%
Individual	267	11%
Education	237	10%
Commercial Business	159	6%
NEEA	94	4%
Other	88	4%
Industrial/Manufacturing	70	3%
Builder/Developer	69	3%
Government (Federal)	53	2%
Media	42	2%
Agriculture	30	1%
Professional Association	27	1%
Lodging (Apt/Hotel/Condo)	19	<1%
Hospital/Health Care	14	<1%
Missing	38	1.5%
Total	***2,475***	***100%***

More than half (60%) of the 513 utility clients in the three-year period worked at large utilities with over 30,000 customers, while only 8% worked at smaller utilities (Table II-3). In addition, there was a fairly equal split between utilities with Northwest service territories east of the Cascades (42%) and west of the Cascades (47%). Note that 14 utility inquiries (3%) were entered into the 1999-2001 Case Management Database despite coming from outside of the Northwest service area.

Table II-3
EIC Utility Clients, 1999-2001

Utility Size	Utility Clients	
	No. Inquiries	Percent
Small (< 10,000 customers)	39	8%
Medium (10,000-30,000 customers)	131	26%
Large (> 30,000 customers)	307	60%
Outside Northwest	14	3%
Not Available	22	4%
Total	***513***	***100%***

Table II-4
EIC Utility Clients' Service Territory (1999-2001)

Utility Service Territory (within Pacific NW Region)	EIC Utility Clients	
	No. Inquiries	Percent
Eastern	216	42%
Western	239	47%
East and West*	43	8%
Outside Pacific Northwest	14	3%
Not Available	1	0%
Total	***513***	***100%***

* Includes BPA and PacifiCorp

Utility Client Callers

As shown in Table II-5, there were many different job titles among the utility client callers; job titles vary between companies for the same work. It would have been desirable to divide jobs by department, but in many cases the information simply was not available. The field allocated in the database was blank for 227 (44%) of the utility inquiries. In order to provide more valuable data the EIC should have a standardized method of collecting the departmental affiliation of the utility caller.

Table II-5
Job Title among the EIC's Utility Clients (n=513)

Title	No. Inquiries	Title	No. Inquiries
Administrative Assistant	2	Energy Services Representative	10
Advertising Coordinator	1	Energy Specialist	17
Analyst	2	Engineer	19
Applications Engineer	4	Engineer in Training	5
Business Energy Research Specialist	11	Engineer, Utility	3
CARES Program	6	General Manager	5
CCC Marketing	1	Home Energy Consultant	1
Commercial Accts. Field Rep	1	Industrial Account Executive	1
Commercial Industrial Program Lead	2	Industrial Accts. Mgr.	1
Commissioner	7	Industrial Engineer	6
Communications Designer	1	Industrial Process Engineer	4
Communications Director	1	Information Officer	1
Communications Manager	1	Intern	1
Communications Specialist	3	Land Use Representative	1
Conservation	3	Lighting Specialist	1
Conservation Coordinator	1	Major Accounts Delivery Services Rep	1
Conservation Director	3	Manager	5
Conservation Engineer, E-4	1	Manager of Customer Support	3
Conservation Manager	17	Marketing and Sales Supervisor	1
Conservation Officer	11	Marketing Specialist	7

Title	No. Inquiries	Title	No. Inquiries
Conservation Specialist/staff	3	Mechanical Engineer	2
Conservation Supervisor	2	Member Services Supervisor	1
Customer Service Advisor	1	P.E.	1
Customer Service Engineer	2	P.E., Energy Consulting-Power Quality	1
Delivery Service Person	2	Power Supply Manager	1
Delivery Service Rep.	2	Products & Services Mgr	1
Delivery Service Representative	4	Program Implementer	1
Director	3	Program Manager	1
Director Customer Service and Sales	1	Project Manager	5
Director of Asset Development	1	Project Expediter	3
Director of Marketing and Member Service	2	Program Manager, Commercial/Industrial	1
Director Of Operations	1	Public Education Specialist	1
Director, Marketing	1	Public Involvement Specialist	1
Economic Development Coor.	1	Rates & Regulations	1
Economist	3	Regional Water Policy Analyst	1
Electrical Engineer	3	Residential Energy Conser.	1
Energy Advisor	1	Residential DSM Program Mngr.	1
Energy Code Inspector	1	Senior Energy Advisor	1
Energy Conservation Spec.	1	Senior Energy Analyst	1
Energy Consultant	4	Senior Energy Auditor	3
Energy Counselor	1	Senior Engineer	1
Energy Management Rep.	2	Special Projects	1
Energy Management Services	1	Sr. Energy Analyst	1
Energy Manager	1	Strategic Planning	1
Energy Service Coordinator	3	Sustainability Project Coordinator	3
Energy Services Engineer	12	Trustee	2
Energy Services Manager	1	Utility Services Advisor	16
		Missing	227

Sector of Hotline Request

More than half of the inquiries from 1999 through 2001 were about commercial business energy applications (Table II-6). This figure did not vary substantially between the party making the request (utilities and other inquirers), although utilities were somewhat less likely to request information about institutional (e.g., hospital, school) applications (11%) compared to non-utilities (20%).

Table II-6
Business Sector of Hotline Request[4]

Business Sector (1999-2001)	Total		Non-Utilities		Utilities	
	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent
Agriculture	52	2%	38	2%	14	3%
Commercial	1,209	49%	957	49%	252	49%
Industrial	200	8%	144	7%	56	11%
Institutional	445	18%	388	20%	57	11%
Residential	560	23%	426	22%	134	26%
Total	***2,466***	***100%***	***1,953***	***100%***	***513***	***100%***

The business sector for the hotline request also varied somewhat by utility size. As shown in Table II-7, larger utilities were more likely to call about commercial or industrial applications, while smaller- and medium-sized utilities were more likely to call about residential applications. For example, 65% of the large utility inquiries were about commercial/industrial applications, compared to only 49% of the small/medium utility inquiries, while only 24% of the large utility inquiries were about residential applications, compared to 34% of the small/medium utility inquiries. Not having the department of the caller, however, prohibits us from knowing if this difference is a result of the size of the utility or simply the person within the utility that contacted the EIC.

Table II-7
Business Sector of Hotline Request by Utility Size and Region (1999-2001)

Business Sector	Total Utilities	Utility Size		Northwest Service Territory		
		Small or Medium	Large	East	West	East and West
Agriculture	14 (3%)	6 (4%)	7 (2%)	8 (4%)	6 (3%)	0 (0%)
Commercial	252 (49%)	71 (42%)	160 (52%)	99 (46%)	126 (53%)	18 (42%)
Industrial	56 (11%)	12 (7%)	39 (13%)	21 (10%)	23 (10%)	10 (23%)
Institutional	57 (11%)	24 (14%)	27 (9%)	21 (10%)	26 (11%)	7 (16%)
Residential	134 (26%)	57 (34%)	74 (24%)	67 (31%)	58 (24%)	8 (19%)
Total*	***513 (100%)***	***170 (100%)***	***307 (100%)***	***216 (100%)***	***239 (100%)***	***43 (100%)***

* Sum of utility size or service territory may not equal the total utilities due to missing values

General Topic of Inquiry

As shown in Table II-8, hotline inquiries covered a wide range of topics. The most common request, however, was simply for information about the EIC

[4] Sector reflects the subject of the inquiry, not the sector of the caller.

(15% of inquiries). There were also many requests for information about energy use (11%), lighting (10%), and HVAC (10%). There were no substantial differences between the utility and non-utility requests. However, EIC should examine this topic more closely, by looking at differences in requests for energy-related information by requestors' company type. (In essence this would a cross-tabulation of Table II-2 with Table II-8.) For marketing purposes, it might be helpful to separately track the company type of callers requesting general information about the EIC and its services.

Table II-8
EIC Hotline Inquiries by Topic (1999-2001)

General Topic	Total		Non-utilities		Utilities	
	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent
EIC	374	15%	292	15%	82	16%
Energy Use*	283	11%	223	11%	60	12%
Lighting	248	10%	192	10%	56	11%
HVAC	244	10%	209	11%	35	7%
Codes/Standard/ Laws	182	7%	161	8%	21	4%
Renewable Resources	177	7%	155	8%	22	4%
Building Envelopes	109	4%	87	4%	22	4%
Other	89	4%	69	4%	20	4%
Motors	83	3%	57	3%	26	5%
Appliances	79	3%	58	3%	21	4%
Utility Programs/Rates/ Info	77	3%	50	3%	27	5%
Economics	71	3%	61	3%	10	2%
Water Heating	65	3%	34	2%	31	6%
Education	58	2%	45	2%	13	3%
Power Production	44	2%	40	2%	4	1%
Building Design	35	1%	32	2%	3	1%
Environment	32	1%	28	1%	4	1%
Organizations/Programs	29	1%	28	1%	1	0%
Electrical Systems	28	1%	21	1%	7	1%
Management/ Admin	27	1%	19	1%	8	2%
Computer Software	26	1%	18	1%	8	2%
Refrigeration	17	1%	7	0%	10	2%
Industrial Processes	16	1%	10	1%	6	1%
Power/Independent	16	1%	13	1%	3	1%
Weather Data	15	1%	12	1%	3	1%
Pumping Systems	11	0%	7	0%	4	1%
Water Conservation	11	0%	8	0%	3	1%
Compressed Air	10	0%	9	0%	1	0%
Transportation	10	0%	8	0%	2	0%
Unknown	9	0%	9	0%	0	0%
Total	***2,475***	***100%***	***1,962***	***100%***	***513***	***100%***

* Energy Use includes: auditing, accounting, fuel switching, peak load management, and plug load.

Mode of Delivery

As shown in Table II-9, the majority of the replies to EIC hotline inquiries were made via postal mail (38%), telephone (38%), or e-mail (32%). As would be expected, e-mail has been playing an increasing role in responding to inquiries during the three-year period (Figure II-1). There were no substantial differences between mode of response delivery to utility and non-utility inquiries.

There were some substantial differences, however, when you look at the mode of delivery of responses by the topic of inquiry. Many of the water heating inquiries, for example, come from individual residential callers, and thus are screened on the telephone and referred to other sources of information (often directly to their utility company). Topics like the EIC, utility programs, and motors, on the other hand, tended to have far higher inquiries answered via postal (56%, 56%, and 58%, respectively) versus the overall average of inquiries answered via postal mail (39%) (Table II-10). There were a number of reasons for this pattern, including:

- ⇐ Those inquiring about the EIC were often sent an EIC brochure.
- ⇐ Those inquiring about utility programs were likely sent information from conference proceedings about other utility programs, including evaluation reports.
- ⇐ Technical inquiries, for topics such as motors and refrigeration, often require a customized response by a specialist, including a literature search.

Table II-9
Mode of Delivery of Response to Inquiries (1999-2001)

Method of Reply Delivery	Total		Non-Utilities		Utilities	
	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent
Postal Mail	952	38%	753	38%	199	39%
Fax	182	7%	129	7%	53	10%
E-mail	784	32%	624	32%	160	31%
Telephone	936	38%	752	38%	184	36%
Total*	***2,475***	***100%***	***1,962***	***100%***	***513***	***100%***

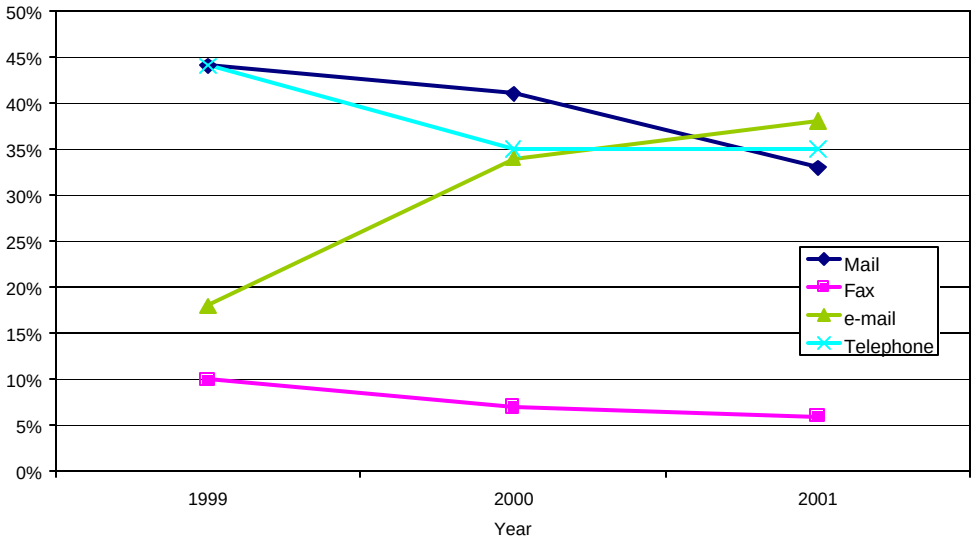
* Some clients received more than one method of reply

Table II-10
General Topic by Mode of Delivery for Utility Inquiries (1999-2001)

General Topic & No. Inquiries	Mode of Delivery* Used (Row Percent)			
	Postal Mail	Fax	E-mail	Telephone
Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (n=82)	56%	2%	26%	11%
Energy Use (n=60)	42%	17%	32%	32%
Lighting (n=56)	43%	13%	46%	29%
HVAC (n=35)	26%	11%	29%	51%
Water Heating (n=31)	13%	6%	35%	65%
Utility Programs/Rates/Info (n=27)	56%	7%	26%	26%
Motors (n=26)	58%	27%	19%	46%
Building Envelopes (n=22)	14%	9%	5%	77%
Renewable Resources (n=22)	45%	5%	36%	41%
Appliances (n=21)	29%	14%	33%	33%
Codes/Standard/Laws (n=21)	10%	5%	43%	62%
Education (n=13)	31%	8%	46%	23%
Economics (n=10)	10%	30%	20%	60%
Refrigeration (n=10)	70%	0%	20%	20%
Total	***39%***	***10%***	***31%***	***36%***

* Some clients' responses were missing and others may have required more than one method of reply, so row totals may not sum to 100%.

Figure II-1
Mode of Delivery of Response to Inquiries (1999-2001)



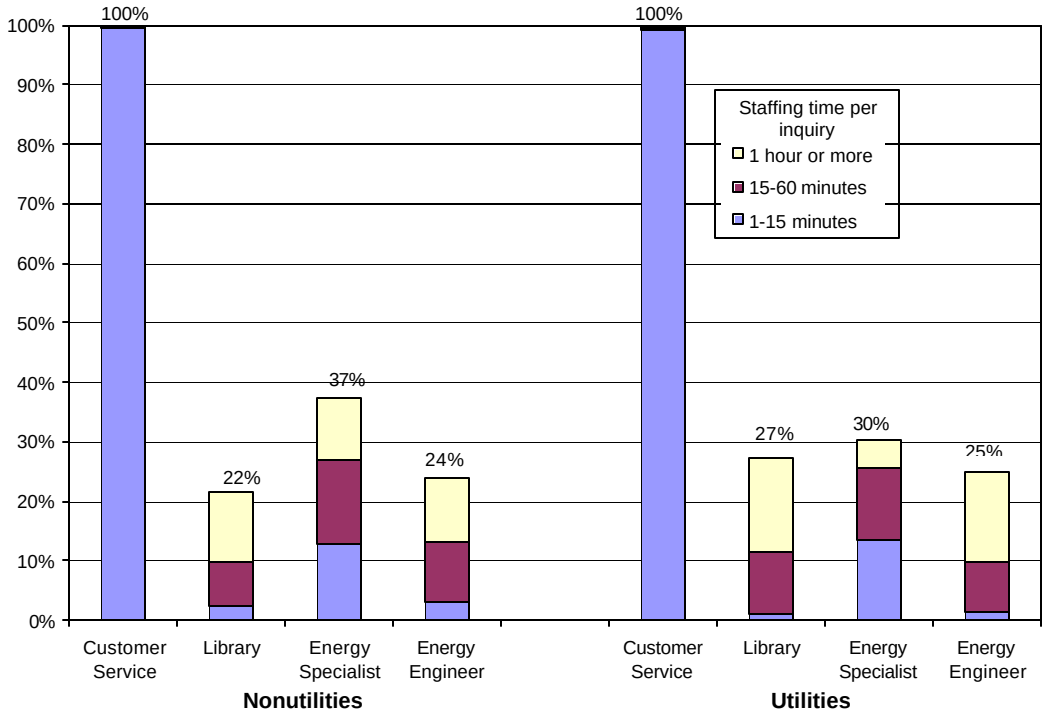
Staffing Requirements for Hotline Inquiries

As discussed in earlier Market Progress Evaluation Reports, the EIC seeks to streamline the task of information delivery so that the majority of clients have

their questions answered via low-cost electronic information, such as the Web page or listserv. Clients with more customized needs can then contact the customer service representatives, who attempt to answer the query through either a fact sheet or search of the Energy Solutions Database (if the client has not already done so). Then, only the most technical and unique questions would be forwarded to the library or the engineers, the "deeper" tiers of the system.

The use of the Web page and listservs will be discussed in Section III, but, as demonstrated in Figure II-1, most of the inquiries were handled by customer service staff; only 37% of the non-utility inquiries and 30% of the utility inquiries needed to be handled by energy specialists. Even fewer inquiries were handled by the library (22% of non-utilities, 27% of utilities) or engineers (24% of non-utilities, 25% of utilities). Once again, there were few overall differences between the utilities and non-utilities. There were, however, some differences in the amount of time spent by the three types of specialty information providers.

Figure II-2
Staffing Requirements for 1999-2001 Hotline Inquiries



How Referred to EIC?

A substantial number of inquiries (38%) in the EIC hotline database came from repeat callers (Table II-11). However, repeat callers varied significantly between utilities (62%) and non-utilities (32%). This seems to indicate a "loyal" following among some utilities.

In terms of marketing analysis, the EIC should expand these caller categories into more detailed entries. For example, the current categories are quite general, such as "media" and "Internet resource" and don't allow us to fully interpret what marketing tactics are preferred or working within subgroups.

Table II-11
Source of EIC Referral (1999-2001)

Source	Total		Non-Utilities		Utilities	
	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent	No. Inquiries	Percent
Repeat User ('self-refer')	947	38%	628	32%	319	62%
Internet Resource	296	12%	254	13%	42	8%
WSU (CE/Web/Staff)	267	11%	239	12%	28	5%
Media	178	7%	149	8%	29	6%
Utility*	174	7%	144	7%	30	6%
Government (DOE/EREC/EREN)	131	5%	127	6%	4	1%
Other	98	4%	92	5%	6	1%
NEEA (General or Venture)	74	3%	71	4%	3	1%
Conference/Exposition	71	3%	50	3%	21	4%
Clearinghouse (general/marketing)	61	2%	44	2%	17	3%
Building contractor/official	42	2%	40	2%	2	0%
Consulting Firm	20	1%	20	1%	0	0%
Library	14	1%	14	1%	0	0%
Individual	13	1%	13	1%	0	0%
Research/Ed (Univ or lab)	12	0%	12	1%	0	0%
Commercial Business	9	0%	8	0%	1	0%
Product Vendor	7	0%	6	0%	1	0%
Unknown	61	2%	51	3%	10	2%
Total	***2,475***	***100%***	***1,962***	***100%***	***513***	***100%***

* Utilities that reported the source of their referral as a "utility" may have been learned about the EIC from either a brochure on display in their office or by word of mouth.

Summary of Findings

In an effort to profile the utility clients of the EIC hotline, Quantec closely examined the EIC case management database. We examined the number of utility callers, the types of utilities that called, the sector and topic of the call,

the mode of response delivery, staffing requirements, and referral source. The general findings include the following:

- ⇐ Utilities represent the largest single business segment of inquiries.
- ⇐ The majority of utility inquiries came from larger versus smaller utilities (60% vs. 8%).
- ⇐ There were few differences between the utilities and non-utilities in terms of the sector and type of information requested, the mode of response, and the staffing requirements.
- ⇐ Larger utilities, however, were more likely to request information about commercial or industrial applications (65%) compared to smaller/medium-sized utilities (49%), who were more likely to request information about residential applications. This difference, however, may be due to the caller within the utility, not the utility size.
- ⇐ There was far more repeat usage of the EIC among utilities (62% repeat users) compared to non-utilities (32%).

Recommendations

Our research has also led to a number of conclusions and recommendations:

Develop a brief staff user guide and consistent training for the case management database. In order to conduct this analysis, Quantec had to recode a number of data fields, including business type, general topic, and referral source (prompt). There were also a number of common data entry errors. For example, some staff apparently entered job title – such as engineer – for the business type (i.e., this resulted in an engineer from a utility company being classified as an 'engineering firm' rather than a utility). Another way to ensure that the data are entered correctly is to develop field input mechanisms – such as pull-down menus – for as many database fields as possible. This restricts the data entry options to correct categories, to help minimize the tendency to leave fields blank, and to improve the efficiency of the data entry process.

Collect more specific information about the referral. In terms of marketing analysis, the EIC should expand the referral categories into more detailed entries. For example, the current categories are quite general, such as "media" and "Internet resource," and they don't allow a full interpretation regarding what marketing tactics are working best in various circumstances.

Collect Department and not just job title in order to target more potential users. While the job title of the caller is helpful, the same job can have diverse titles between companies, whereas departments are larger units and vary less.

Cross-tabulate the callers' company type by topic of the call. EIC should examine this more closely, looking at differences in information requested by company type. There are many uses of such data for marketing, technical staffing needs and program evaluation.

Utilize the repeat callers for marketing purposes. The high percentage of repeat callers among utilities (62%) highlights the value of the EIC to a subset of the Northwest utilities' staff. Perhaps the EIC could enlist a number of "champions" to spread the word about the value they find in using the EIC.

III. Energy-Related Information Needs Assessment

In December 2001 and January 2002, Quantec conducted an energy information needs assessment of utility staff in the Northwest. Utility customers (including BPA) are not only an important target audience for the EIC, they also represent the business end-users that most commonly call the EIC telephone hotline.

The research was conducted in two steps:

- ***Telephone Interviews with Key Informants***. With the Alliance's assistance, Quantec identified and contacted a number of key informants that were familiar with both the management structure and primary information needs of utility staff. Quantec contacted the approved liaisons between each of the Alliance's partner utilities in order to implement a "snowball" or "spider" sampling approach to identify other key informants – department managers, energy services staff, human resources, etc. – about their information needs and current information/data collection strategies. (The final instrument is included as Appendix A).
- ***Online Surveys with Utility Staff***. Quantec conducted an online survey with utility and BPA staff. The survey request was sent out via email from the key informants (utility managers) or Quantec, and it contained a link to an on-line survey at the Alliance Web site. (The final instrument is included in Appendix B).

The research was designed to answer a number of questions, including:

- How often do utility staff have energy efficiency information needs that require a search of external resources?
- What types of energy efficiency information do utility staff need from external resources?
- Where do they normally search for and find that information?
- What form do they prefer for information delivery? How does it change depending on their answers to the three preceding questions?
- What methods/media do they use to convey energy efficiency information to their customers?
- How do they, or their customers, normally make use of efficiency information?
- How can the EIC more thoroughly and effectively reach the various staff subsets within the overall utility target market?

Key Informant Interviews – Utilities

Methodology

The key informant interviews were designed to serve two primary purposes:

- ⇐ Identify potential users of the EIC among Northwest utilities
- ⇐ Invite interview participants and their coworkers to participate in the online survey

The interview instrument (Appendix A) was relatively brief and generally only took about five minutes to complete. Participants that were aware of the EIC were asked about their use of the EIC services, while those that were unaware were read a description of the EIC services. The instrument was pre-tested in late October 2001, and the majority of the interviews were conducted in mid-December 2001.

All participants were invited to participate in the online survey and were sent an e-mail invitation with the link to the online instrument (Appendix C). Participants were also asked to identify coworkers that might benefit from the EIC services, and they were asked to forward (or allow us to forward) an e-mail that contained a link to the online survey.

The initial sample, provided by the Alliance, included 181 contacts at 147 Northwest Utilities. As shown in Table III-1, 61% of the utilities were located in the Eastern portion of the Northwest (east of the Cascades), 38% west of the cascades, and 1% that operate in both areas. In addition, almost two-thirds of the sample (63%) were smaller utilities with less than 10,000 customers.

Table III-1
Alliance Utility Contacts by Utility Size and Service Territory

Utility Size	Service Territory			
	East	West	East/West	Total Utilities
Large (over 30,000 customers)	8 (5%)	10 (7%)	2 (1%)	20 (14%)
Medium (10,000-30,000 customers)	19 (13%)	16 (11%)	0 (0%)	35 (24%)
Small (less than 10,000 customers)	62 (42%)	30 (20%)	0 (0%)	92 (63%)
Total	***89 (61%)***	***56 (38%)***	***2 (1%)***	***147 (100%)***

Quantec then conducted key informant interviews with a total of 36 utilities. As shown in Table III-2, we attempted to get an approximately equal split between utilities that operated in the East and West, with an over-sample of the larger utilities in the region. For example, although only 14% of the utilities in the sample had more than 30,000 customers, 42% of the key informant interviews were conducted with these larger utilities.

Table III-2
Key Informant Interviews by Utility Size and Service Territory

Utility Size	Service Territory			
	East	West	East/West	Total Utilities
Large (Over 30,000 customers)	6 (17%)	7 (19%)	2 (6%)	15 (42%)
Medium (10,000-30,000 customers)	3 (8%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)	9 (25%)
Small (Less than 10,000 customers)	7 (19%)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)	12 (33%)
Total	***16 (44%)***	***18 (50%)***	***2 (6%)***	***36 (100%)***

Interview Findings

As discussed earlier, the primary purpose of the key informant interviews was to identify users and nonusers of the EIC and invite them to participate in the online survey. Participants were asked about their awareness and use of EIC. A total of 22 (61%) of the 36 respondents were aware of the EIC, and 18 respondents (50%) had used the services of the EIC (Table III-3). Of these, accessing the Web page (67%) was the most common form of EIC use (Table III-4).

Table III-3
Awareness and Use of the EIC among Key Informants

	Frequency	Percent
Aware of EIC	22	61%
Used the EIC Services	18	50%
Total key informants*	***36***	***100%***

* Note that respondents could be both aware of and users of EIC services so the sum of the individual percents exceeds 100%.

Table III-4
Specific Use of the EIC Services by Key Informants

	Frequency	Percent
Hotline	5	28%
Emailed question	2	11%
Accessed Web page	12	67%
Listservs	7	39%
Total key informants that used EIC*	***18***	***100%***

* Note that respondents could use more than one service so the sum of service-specific percents exceeds 100%.

The key informants – both users and nonusers of the EIC – were also asked how they could best use the EIC services. There were a number of interesting responses, including:

- ⇐ *Our engineers use EIC to "jumpstart" their literature search/research. Helpful for a big utility like Avista, critical for small utilities.*
- ⇐ *Could use energy information for his customers, wrote down Web page.*
- ⇐ *Needs the latest on new ideas, new information, likes to follow links.*
- ⇐ *Not sure, would have to look at it. He's not in conservation, but in government affairs, so not sure it's useful.*
- ⇐ *Information on lighting is particularly useful, energy conservation staff could all use it.*
- ⇐ *They have a number of people trying to service customers, could use EIC info to answer commercial energy efficiency questions.*
- ⇐ *Needs help keeping up with energy-efficient technologies. Wants to keep appraised of what's available.*
- ⇐ *Needs information on residential programs, seems to focus on Commercial &Industrial too heavily.*
- ⇐ *Always looking for information on energy efficiency for members, right now looking for information on power quality.*
- ⇐ *To find out about energy-efficient products or programs. There is a lot of "junk" out there, need good information.*
- ⇐ *Could use information on new technologies.*
- ⇐ *The information could be useful for program design, good for them and their customers.*
- ⇐ *Looking for unbiased source of info with links to articles.*

Online Survey – Utilities

Methodology

The key informant interviews led to a total of 34 additional contacts, for a total of 215 potential respondents at the 147 utilities (Table III-5). A number of the contacts, however, had missing or invalid e-mail addresses. Removing these names from the sample left 165 contacts representing 101 Northwest utilities.

In order to maximize the response rate, a number of e-mail reminders were sent to each respondent, including:

- ⇐ Personalized e-mails to each key informant and their referrals (December 18-21, 2001)
- ⇐ A general e-mail invitation to the remaining contacts that were not interviewed (December 21, 2001)
- ⇐ A general reminder/thank-you e-mail to everyone on the mailing list, including those that already completed the survey (January 3, 2002)
- ⇐ A follow-up e-mail for those that did not complete the survey (January 11, 2002)

Our persistence in contacting the mailing list led to completions by 60% of the valid respondents, representing 55% of the valid utilities.

Table III-5
Overall Sample Disposition for Online Survey

	Utilities	Respondents
Provided by NW Alliance	147	181
After Key Informant Interviews	147	215
Missing e-mail addresses	25	29
Bounced e-mail addresses	21	21
Total missing/invalid e-mail	*46*	*50*
Invited by Quantec to take survey	101	165
Additional Survey Completions*	12	23
Estimated Total Invitations	*113*	*188*
Completions**	63	112
Response Rate	55%	60%

* Respondents were asked to forward information to coworkers. The survey may have been forwarded to others that we do not know about – this number only includes respondents that Quantec did not include in the sample.

** There were nine respondents that did not identify their utility and are not included in this table. The utility response rate, therefore, is a conservative estimate.

As shown in Table III-6, the respondents represented utilities from both the Eastern and Western portions of the Pacific Northwest, as well as a mix of different sized utilities. As shown in Table III-7, the majority of the utilities served Oregon (33%) and Washington (46%), although Idaho (14%) and Montana (11%) were also well represented.

Table III-6
Completed Online Surveys by Utility Size and Service Territory

Utility Size	Utility Region			
	East	East and West	West	Total
Large	7 (11%)	2 (3%)	7 (11%)	***16 (25%)***
Medium	12 (19%)	0 (0%)	13 (21%)	***25 (40%)***
Small	14 (22%)	0 (0%)	8 (13%)	***22 (35%)***
Total	***33 (52%)***	***2 (3%)***	***28 (44%)***	***63 (100%)***

Table III-7
Completed Online Surveys by Utility State

State	State Utility Serves	State Where Respondent Works
Oregon	21 (33%)	30 (37%)
Washington	29 (46%)	54 (48%)
Idaho	9 (14%)	10 (9%)
Montana	7 (11%)	8 (7%)
Nevada	1 (2%)	1 (1%)
California	1 (2%)	1 (1%)
Missing	0 (0%)	8 (7%)
Total*	***63 (100%)***	***112 (100%)***

* Some utility companies serve more than one state. For example, PacifiCorp is represented in Oregon, Washington and Idaho and BPA is represented in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

The online survey had a total of 20 questions about the respondent's job title and responsibilities, awareness, use, and perceptions of the EIC, and energy information needs and resources. Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

Job Title and Responsibilities

As shown in Table III-8, nearly all the respondents worked in either energy services/conservation (60%) or customer service (22%) (respondents could enter more than one department).

Table III-8
Company Department

Department	Number of Responses*
Energy Services/Conservation	86 (60%)
Engineering	7 (5%)
Human Resources	2 (1%)
Customer Service	31 (22%)
Communications	5 (3%)
Management	4 (3%)
Other	9 (6%)
Total	***144 (100%)***

* Note that these sum to more than 112 because respondents were asked to check all that apply

Despite the large number that worked in energy services/conservation or customer service, there was a wide range of job titles among the 112 respondents (Table III-9). There were also a large number of primary job duties and responsibilities, as summarized in Appendix D.

Table III-9
Job Title

Customer/Member/Business Service	Energy	Misc.
Business Programs Section Manager	Assistant Energy Services Manager	Clerk
Commercial Accounts Representative	Dept Manager, Energy Management Svc.	Delivery Service Rep
Customer Service Manager (2)	Director of Energy Services	Delivery Services Leader
Customer Service Supervisor	Energy & Conservation Services Manager	Director of City Services
Customer Services Program Coordinator	Energy & Internet Services Supervisor	Electric and Telecommunication Director
Director of Customer Services	Energy Analyst (2)	General Manager (6)
Manager of Customer Support	Energy Conservation Manager	Integrated Systems Specialist
Manager, Customer Solutions	Energy Conservation Technician	Public works director/purchasing agent
Member Service (2)	Energy Consultant	Resource Manager
Member Services Advisor	Energy Counselor	Web Developer
Member Services Director (4)	Energy Education Spec	**Engineering**
Member Services Manager (5)	Energy Resources Analyst	Building Specialist
Member Services Supervisor	Energy Services Coordinator (2)	Electrical Engineer
Manager Products & Services	Energy Services Director (2)	Engineer (4)
Product Manager (2)	Energy Services Manager (5)	Engineering
Program Specialist	Energy Services Rep Commercial Sr	Engineering Supervisor, Energy Svc (4)
Conservation	Energy Services Specialist (3)	Industrial Process Engineer
Conservation Assistant	Energy Specialist (2)	Professional Mechanical Engineer (2)
Conservation Manager (2)	Intern - Power Supply and New Resources	Senior Energy Utilization Engineer
Energy Efficiency Coordinator	Manager C/I Energy Services	Sr. Energy Utilization Engineer (2)
Energy Efficiency Rep (3)	Power Resources Manager	System Engineer
	Public Utilities Specialist (2)	**Marketing**
	Residential Energy Advisor	Marketing Manager (2)
	Manager, Residential Energy Management	Marketing Specialist (2)
	Resource Power Planning Manager	

Awareness, Use, and Perceptions of the EIC

As shown in Table III-10, most of the respondents (96%) were aware of the EIC, and nearly two-thirds of the respondents (66%) reported that they had used the EIC services. Use and awareness of the EIC did not vary substantially based on utility size or utility region. For example, 65% of the small, 59% of the medium, and 70% of the large utility respondents reported that they had used the EIC services. Similarly, 65% of the respondents with service territories in the East and 67% with service territories in the West had used EIC services.

Quantec attempted to reach respondents that were not aware of the EIC, and over half of the key informants (61%) had never heard of the EIC. The online survey, however, required user follow-up to an e-mail invitation, and it is likely that those that were aware of the EIC felt more compelled to respond to the survey.

It is difficult, however, to estimate the non-response bias without conducting a telephone survey with utility employees that were not aware of the EIC. This would allow us to evaluate any significant differences in energy information needs between these two segments. Our current survey, however, still serves as an important and informative needs assessment from those that were aware of the EIC. In addition, 36 of the 112 respondents had not used the EIC services.

Table III-10
Awareness and Use of the EIC*

EIC Use and Awareness	Total Responses	Utility Size			Utility Region		
		Small	Medium	Large	East	West	East and West
Yes, and I have used it	69 (66%)	15 (65%)	19 (59%)	33 (70%)	28 (65%)	37 (67%)	2 (50%)
Yes, and I have NOT used it	31 (30%)	7 (30%)	12 (38%)	12 (26%)	13 (30%)	16 (29%)	2 (50%)
No, I have not heard of EIC	3 (3%)	1 (4%)	1 (3%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Not Sure	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Total*	***105 (100%)***	***23 (100%)***	***32 (100%)***	***47 (100%)***	***43 (100%)***	***55 (100%)***	***4 (100%)***

* Percentages based on the total within the column, not the table.
** Only 105 of the 112 respondents answered this question

Nearly half of the respondents (54%) first learned about the EIC by word of mouth – far higher than any other source (Table III-11).[5] The use of the EIC – those that were simply aware versus actually using the services – also varied

[5] Due to budget constraints the EIC only advertised in two publications in 2001-2002, leading to a drop in advertising awareness from previous years.

based on how respondents learned about the EIC. For example, respondents that learned of the EIC through word of mouth (76%), an EIC booth/presentation/mailing (89%), or the Alliance (100%) were far more likely to use the services than those that discovered the EIC through an ad (25%). A personal referral or direct contact by the EIC, therefore, serves as a more likely way to increase EIC use compared to paid advertisements.

Table III-11
First Learn About the EIC
Base: Respondents Who Are Aware of EIC Services

Learn About EIC	Number of Respondents	Used EIC Services	Aware, Not Used EIC Services
Word of Mouth	54 (54%)	41 (59%)	13 (42%)
EIC booth or presentation at conference	9 (9%)	8 (12%)	1 (3%)
Ad in journal/ magazine/ newsletter	8 (8%)	2 (3%)	6 (19%)
Came up on Web search/Found link on another Web page	9 (9%)	5 (7%)	4 (13%)
NW Energy Efficiency Alliance	4 (4%)	4 (6%)	0 (0%)
EIC Mailing	3 (3%)	2 (3%)	1 (3%)
Other	7 (21%)	6 (9%)	1 (3%)
No Answer/Don't know	6 (6%)	1 (1%)	5 (16%)
Total*	***100 (100%)***	***69 (100%)***	***31 (100%)***

* Only 100 of the 112 surveyed were aware of the EIC

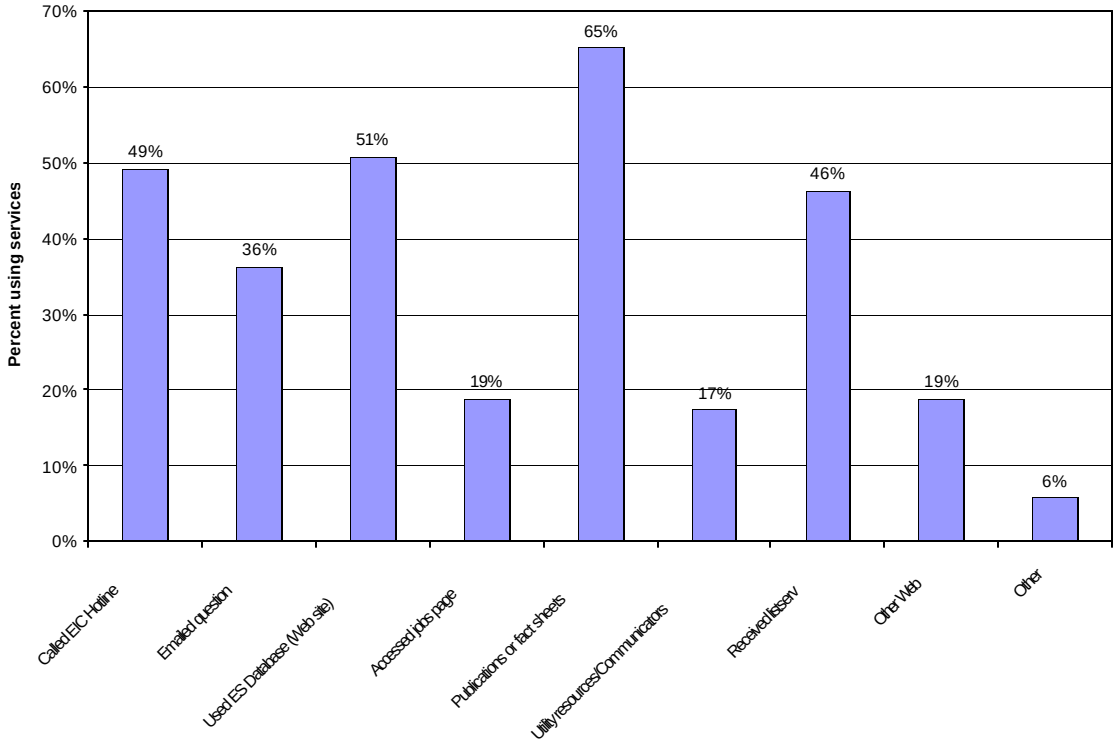
Table III-12
EIC Use by First Learn about the EIC*
Base: Respondents Who Are Aware of EIC Services

Answer	Used EIC Services	Aware, Not Used EIC Services	Total
Word of Mouth	41 (76%)	13 (24%)	54 (100%)
EIC booth/ presentation at conference	8 (89%)	1 (11%)	9 (100%)
Ad in journal/ magazine/ newsletter	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	8 (100%)
Came up on Web search/Web Link	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	9 (100%)
NW Energy Efficiency Alliance	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)
EIC Mailing	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	3(100%)
Other	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	7 (100%)

* Percentages based on the total within the row.

Figure III-1 shows the most common EIC services used. The most frequently used services were the publications/factsheets (65%), the Energy Solutions Database (51%), the EIC telephone Hotline (49%), and the EIC listservs (46%).

Figure III-1
EIC Services Used in the Past 12 Months
Base: Respondents Who Have Used EIC Services (N=69)[6]



In order to evaluate their perceptions regarding the EIC, respondents were also asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with certain statements (Table III-13). There were a number of interesting findings from this exercise, including:

- ⇐ Respondents generally believed the EIC services were targeted to energy service professionals (77% agreed) vs. the general public (37% agreed)
- ⇐ Respondents were extremely satisfied with the EIC services, agreeing that the EIC provides excellent customer service (69%), provides high-quality useful responses to question (69%), develops high quality fact sheets (73%), and has the expertise to answer any energy-related question (75%).
- ⇐ Although respondents were extremely satisfied with the EIC services, few respondents (26%) stated that it was the first place they go for energy-related information. This paradoxical finding could be

[6] The 69 respondents reported their use of each of the nine service options.

a result of the fact that respondents forget that the EIC exists, a conclusion reached in a previous MPER.

⇐ Word of mouth – the primary way respondents learned about the EIC – continues to be an important tool for increasing awareness, as 55% of the respondents had referred friends to the EIC.

⇐ Having been free for so many years, it would be difficult moving the EIC to a "fee for service" arrangement: 76% of the respondents agreed that one of the main reasons they use the EIC is because the services are free, and 72% said they wouldn't use the EIC if an annual fee was charged, unless their company paid for it. (We did not, however, investigate the specific interest in annual fee schedules).

Respondents who were not users of the EIC yet had a need for energy efficiency information were also asked the same series of questions about their "primary energy-related information resource(s)." The primary findings included (Table III-14):

⇐ The nonusers 'primary energy information resource' is perceived as focused on the needs of energy professionals (88%)

⇐ The nonusers would prefer to use free sources of information (69%) and would not use an information source that charged for usage (81%)

Also shown in Table III-14, the responses between the EIC users and nonusers were generally comparable, although there were a few interesting differences, including:

⇐ The nonusers believed their primary information source was more focused at both professionals ***and*** the general public than did the EIC users

⇐ EIC users had more confidence in the EIC producing high quality fact sheets (73% vs. 58%) and answer any energy-related question (75% vs. 62%) compared to the primary information source for nonusers.

EIC users also provided many additional comments about the EIC, most of them extremely favorable. The full set of responses is included in Appendix E, but a number are included here:

⇐ Responsive, professional, well founded responses

⇐ The EIC provides better technical support for industrial questions, at a much lower cost, than similar services provided by others, including E-Source

⇐ Quick response and useful info

⇐ Very professional. Conscientious staff. Friendly

⇐ Have always appreciated the good, prompt service and excellent information

Table III-13
Perceptions Regarding the EIC
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information and Have Used EIC Services

Statement	Average of Answers 5 = strongly agree; 1= strongly disagree	"Top Two" Box (% Agree or Strongly Agree)	N
One of the main reasons I use the EIC is because the services are free.	3.97	76%	68
EIC directs its services to energy professionals.	3.94	77%	66
I use the EIC because I know they have the expertise to answer any energy-related question	3.89	75%	65
EIC develops high quality fact sheets on energy efficiency topics.	3.88	73%	66
EIC consultants provide high quality, useful responses to energy-related questions.	3.87	69%	67
EIC provides excellent customer service.	3.85	69%	67
EIC Librarians provide high quality research services.	3.77	62%	66
There are so many sources of free information about energy that I don't think I'd use the EIC if an annual fee was charged, unless my company paid for it	3.75	72%	67
I use the EIC because of the convenience and quick response time	3.7	61%	67
I often refer my colleagues to the EIC to get their questions answered.	3.43	55%	67
EIC directs its services to the general public.	3.25	37%	65
I often refer my commercial customers to the EIC to get their questions answered.	3.1	37%	67
EIC is my preferred resource for energy-related job announcements.	3.03	22%	64
I often refer my industrial customers to the EIC to get their questions answered	2.99	27%	67
EIC is the first place I go for energy-related information.	2.91	26%	66
I often refer my residential customers to the EIC to get their questions answered.	2.81	19%	67

* Maximum number of respondents was 69; not all respondents answered every question

Table III-14
Perceptions Regarding the EIC vs. Other Sources of Information
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information

EIC User Statement	Nonuser Statement	EIC Users Top Two Box (% Agree or Strongly Agree)	Nonusers Top Two Box (% Agree or Strongly Agree)
EIC directs its services to energy professionals. (n=66)	The resource(s) focus on the needs of energy professionals. (n=26)	77%	88%
One of the main reasons I use the EIC is because the services are free. (n=68)	One of the main reasons for choosing an information resource is because the services are free. (n=26)	76%	69%
I use the EIC because I know they have the expertise to answer any energy-related question (n=65)	They have the expertise to answer any energy-related question. (n=26)	75%	62%
EIC develops high quality fact sheets on energy efficiency topics (n=66)	They can provide high quality fact sheets on energy efficiency topics. (n=26)	73%	58%
There are so many sources of free information about energy that I don't think I'd use the EIC if an annual fee was charged, unless my company paid for it (n=67)	There are so many sources of free information about energy that I don't think I'd use those that charged an annual user fee, unless my company paid for it. (n=26)	72%	81%
EIC provides excellent customer service. (n=67)	They provide excellent customer service. (n=26)	69%	62%
EIC Librarians provide high quality research services. (n=66)	They provide high quality energy information and/or research services. (n=26)	62%	62%
I use the EIC because of the convenience and quick response time. (n=67)	Services are convenient with quick response times. (n=26)	61%	58%
I often refer my colleagues to the EIC to get their questions answered. (n=67)	I often refer my colleagues to them to get their energy questions answered. (n=26)	55%	58%
EIC directs its services to the general public. (n=65)	The services are focused toward needs of the general public. (n=26)	37%	58%
I often refer my commercial customers to the EIC to get their questions answered. (n=67)	I often refer my commercial customers to them to get their energy questions answered. (n=26)	37%	31%
I often refer my industrial customers to the EIC to get their questions answered. (n=67)	I often refer my industrial customers to them to get their energy questions answered. (n=26)	27%	23%
EIC is the first place I go for energy-related information. (n=66)	The first place(s) I go for energy-related information (n=25)	26%	52%
EIC is my preferred resource for energy-related job announcements. (n=64)	They are my preferred resource for energy-related job announcements. (n=26)	22%	31%
I often refer my residential customers to the EIC to get their questions answered. (n=67)	I often refer my residential customers to them to get their energy questions answered. (n=26)	19%	27%

More than half of the respondents believed it was either advantageous (44%) or very advantageous (9%) for the EIC to have a "relationship" with an academic institution (Table III-15). However, when asked if the EIC is associated with an academic institution, only 34% were aware of the EIC relationship with WSU, while an additional 6% were aware of a relationship but could not identify with whom (Table III-16).

Table III-15
How Advantageous is it for the EIC to Have a Relationship with an Academic Institution?
Base: Respondents Who Are Aware of the EIC

	No. Responses
Not at all	0 (0%)
Only slightly	12 (12%)
Makes no difference	28 (28%)
Advantageous	44 (44%)
Very advantageous	9 (9%)
NA	7 (7%)
Total	***100 (100%)***

Table III-16
Is the EIC Associated with an Academic Institution?
Base: Respondents Who Are Aware of the EIC

	No. Responses
"Yes" and identified WSU	34 (34%)
"Yes" but could not identify WSU	6 (6%)
"No" not associated	5 (5%)
Not sure/NA	55 (55%)
Total	***100 (100%)***

Respondents were also asked to identify six different logos and name the organization associated with each one. Only 20% of the respondents could correctly identify the EIC Web logo, and only 4% could identify the EIC print logo (Table III-17). The WSU and Alliance logos, on the other hand, were widely recognized, correctly identified by 60% and 59% of the respondents, respectively. The least recognized logo was that of Energy Central, correctly identified by only one respondent.

Table III-17
Awareness of Organizational Logos
Base: All Respondents

	EIC Web Logo	EIC Print Logo	WSU Logo	Alliance Logo	OIT Logo	Energy Central
"Yes" and identified correctly	22 (20%)	4 (4%)	67 (60%)	66 (59%)	10 (9%)	1 (1%)
Incorrect/No Answer	90 (80%)	108 (96%)	45 (40%)	46 (61%)	102 (91%)	111 (99%)
Total	***112 (100%)***	***112 (100%)***	***112 (100%)***	***112 (100%)***	***112 (100%)***	***112 (100%)***

Energy Information Needs and Resources

The respondents to the online survey overwhelmingly (93%) reported that they had a need for energy efficiency information (Table III-18). Two circumstances may have contributed to this finding:

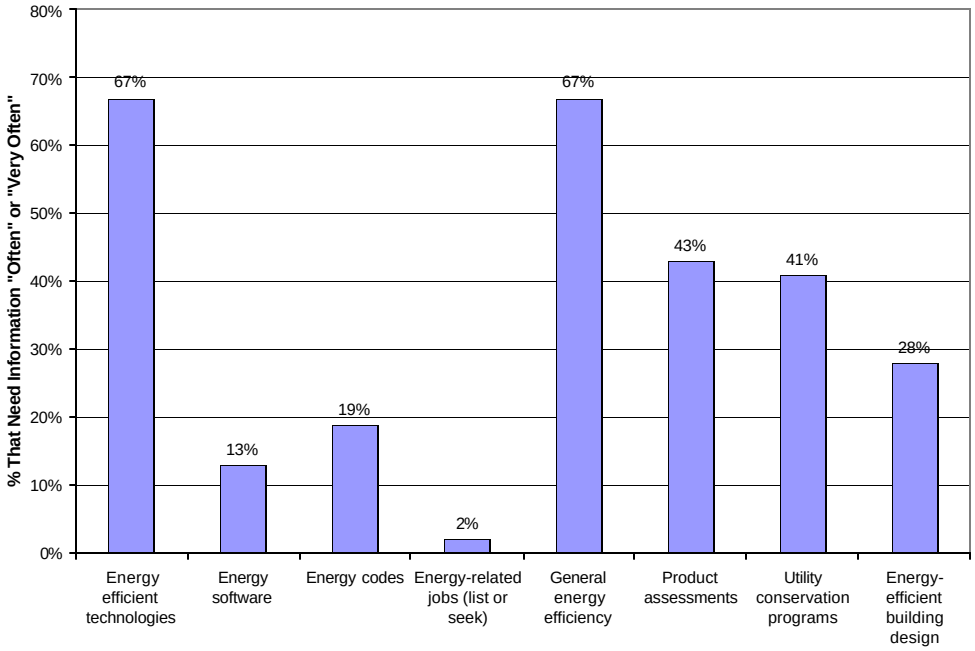
- ⇐ The sample consisted primarily of those in energy services/ conservation, and thus they forwarded the survey or referred us to others in their departments
- ⇐ The EIC is still perceived primarily as a source of energy efficiency information, not general energy information, and thus the key informants did not forward to other potential utility users (despite being asked to do so)

Table III-18
Do You Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information?

	No. Responses
Yes	104 (93%)
No	8 (7%)
Total	***112 (100%)***

In terms of the type of type of energy efficiency information needed, the respondents were most interested in energy efficient technologies (67%) and general energy efficiency information (67%) (Figure III-2). Information on product assessments (43%) and utility conservation programs (41%) were also important. Information on energy jobs (2%) was far less important for these respondents with a need for energy efficiency information.

Figure III-2
Respondents Informational Needs
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information (n=104)[7]



Other comments on types of energy information needs:

- ⇐ EE products at retail
- ⇐ Cost comparison savings
- ⇐ Case Studies
- ⇐ Training events calendar
- ⇐ High bill assessment
- ⇐ Misc. stuff, odd ball things
- ⇐ Specific industrial technology
- ⇐ Technology applications
- ⇐ Energy Efficient lighting

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) provide energy-related information to customers (Tables III-19 and III-20); most common were residential customers (71% of those that provide information to customers) or commercial customers (65%). Fewer respondents (34%) focused on industrial customers.

Given the importance of a utility company's role in providing information to its customers, most information was needed for external use only or a combination of internal and external use. For example, energy-efficient

[7] The 104 respondents reported their use of each type of informational need.

technologies (84%), general energy efficiency (74%), product assessments (70%), and energy-efficient building design (69%) were all used for both internal and external use. Information on jobs (63%), energy software (59%), and utility conservation programs (57%), however, were needed for internal use by more than half of the respondents with these needs.

Table III-19
Do You Provide Energy-Related Information to Customers?
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information

	Number of Respondents
Yes	77 (64%)
No	27 (36%)
Total	***104 (100%)***

Table III-20
How Often you Provide Energy Efficiency Information to Residential, Commercial, or Industrial Customers?
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency and Provide Energy Efficiency Information to Customers

	Average (5 = very often, 1 = never)	Top 2 Box (% "Often" or "Very Often")	N
Residential	4.03	71%	77
Commercial	3.71	65%	77
Industrial	3.01	34%	77

Table III-21
Internal or External Use of Informational Needs
Base: Respondents with a Need for Specific Types of Energy Efficiency Information

Information Type	N	Internal Use	External Use	Internal and External Use	Total
Energy codes	76	25%	22%	53%	100%
Energy efficient technologies	84	8%	8%	84%	100%
Energy software	77	59%	9%	32%	100%
Energy-efficient building design	79	16%	15%	69%	100%
Energy-related jobs (list or seek)	50	63%	8%	29%	100%
General energy efficiency	84	11%	15%	74%	100%
Product assessments	82	13%	17%	70%	100%
Utility conservation programs	80	57%	4%	40%	100%

The survey respondents also indicated that their preferred source of energy efficiency information was from colleagues/peers (65%) (Table III-22). Respondents also depended on both online resources, such as general search engines (48%) and listservs/e-mails (37%), as well as offline resources such as newspapers, magazines, and trade journals (47%). In addition, 54 respondents identified 119 Web sites that they visit for energy information (Appendix F).

Table III-22
Sources of Energy Efficiency Information
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information

On-line	Average (5 = very often; 1 = never)	Top 2 Box (% using "Often" or "Very Often")	N*
Colleagues/peers – casual conversation and/or formal consultation	3.79	65%	92
General search engines *(e.g., Google, Yahoo, Altavista)*	3.45	48%	82
Newspaper/magazine/trade journal – doing independent reading	3.35	47%	91
Listservs, e-mail announcements, newsletters, links to other web sites	3.23	37%	82
Other off-line**	3.00	0%	3
Library (university, public, corporate) – personally working with a librarian	2.02	2%	89

* Maximum number of respondents was 104; not all respondents answered every question

** Other 'off-line' resources mentioned:

- Conference proceedings
- Internal Library
- Energy Management Texts

In terms of the source of the energy efficiency information, nearly half of the survey participants (48%) preferred to get their energy information from sources not affiliated with particular products (Table III-23). Only 12% of the respondents were comfortable using product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as sources for energy efficiency information.

Table III-23
Feelings Regarding Product-Specific Vendors
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information

	No. Respondents
I am comfortable using product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as sources for energy efficiency information	12 (12%)
I use product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as an energy efficiency information source but understand a conflict of interest may exist	33(32%)
I prefer getting energy efficiency information from sources not affiliated with particular products	50 (48%)
NA	9 (9%)
Total	***104 (100%)***

The respondents, not surprisingly, were interested in meeting their energy information needs as quickly as possible and preferred an electronic medium to the telephone (Table III-24). For example, the respondents were most interested in searching the Web for information (43%) or e-mailing a question to an information source and obtaining an answer back in one to two days (28%). They were less interested in calling a hotline and waiting to two days for an answer (16%) or calling a hotline and waiting up to a week for a packet of materials (4%).

Table III-24
How Do You Prefer to Get Research-Type Questions Answered?
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information

	Number of Respondents
Search on the Web and find an answer on my own	45 (43%)
E-mail a question to an information source and get an answer back in 1-2 days	29 (28%)
Call a hotline, discuss my question with someone and get a verbal answer back in 1-2 days	17 (16%)
Call a hotline, discuss my question with someone and get a packet of materials in the mail within a week	4 (4%)
NA	9 (9%)
Total	***104 (100%)***

Although the survey participants preferred to have their energy information needs met electronically, many of them indicated that they often pass this information on to their customers either over the phone (84%) or in person (68%) (Table III-25). Only 38% of the respondents, in fact, reported that they often use e-mail to provide energy efficiency information to their customers.

Table III-25
How Do You Provide Energy Efficiency Information to Your Customers?
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information and Provide Energy Efficiency Information to Customers

	Average (5 = very often, 1 = never)	Top 2 Box (% using "Often" or "Very Often")	N
Provide them information over phone	4.22	84%	76
Provide information in person	3.91	68%	76
E-mail them information	3.21	38%	77
Send them information by postal mail	3.56	51%	77
Refer them to specific Web site(s) for information	3.22	33%	76
Refer them to the EIC	2.34	11%	76

Summary of Findings

The majority of the respondents to the survey had a need for energy efficiency information. This figure may have been biased upward because our sample consisted primarily of those in energy services/conservation, and thus they most likely forwarded the survey or referred us to others in their departments.

The respondents were most interested in energy-efficient technologies (67%) and general energy efficiency information (67%). Information on product assessments (43%) and utility conservation programs (41%) were also important. Information on energy jobs (2%) was barely of any importance for these respondents with a need for energy efficiency information.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) provide energy-related information to customers. Most common were residential customers (71% of those that provide information to customers) or commercial customers (65%). Given the importance of a utility company's role in providing information to its customers, most information was needed for external use only or a combination of internal and external use.

The respondents to the survey also indicated that their preferred source of energy efficiency information was from colleagues/peers *(65%)*. Respondents also depended on both online resources, such as general search engines (48%) and listservs/e-mails (37%), as well as offline resources such as newspapers, magazines, and trade journals (47%). In addition, nearly half of the survey participants (48%) preferred to get their energy information from sources not affiliated with particular products and only 12% of the respondents were comfortable using product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as sources for energy efficiency information.

Nearly half of the respondents (54%) first learned about the EIC by word of mouth – far higher than any other source. Survey respondents' shift from simple 'awareness' of the EIC to 'user' varied based on how respondents learned about the EIC. For example, respondents that learned of the EIC through word of mouth (76%), an EIC booth/presentation/mailing (83%), or the Alliance (100%) were far more likely to use the services than those that discovered the EIC through an ad (25%).

This suggests that a personal referral or direct contact by the EIC serve as the more effective way to increase EIC use compared to paid advertisements. In terms of marketing potential, the EIC might want to create a contest or incentive for those who refer others who become users of the EIC services.

EIC hotline users remain extremely satisfied with the service. Respondents were extremely satisfied with the EIC services, agreeing that the EIC provides excellent customer service (69%), provides high-quality useful responses to

question (69%), develops high quality fact sheets (73%), and has the expertise to answer any energy-related question (75%). In addition, EIC users had more confidence in the EIC producing high quality fact sheets (73% vs. 58%) and answer any energy-related question (75% vs. 62%) compared to the primary information sources preferred by non-EIC users.

Although respondents were extremely satisfied with the EIC services, few respondents (26%) stated that it was the first place they go for energy-related information. This paradoxical finding could be a result of the fact that respondents forget that the EIC exists, a conclusion reached in a previous MPER. The EIC, therefore, may still have greater potential use among utility clients.

Having been free for so many years it would be difficult to move the EIC to a "fee for service" arrangement. Seventy-six percent of the respondents agreed that one of the main reasons they use the EIC is because the services are free, and 72% said they wouldn't use the EIC if an annual fee was charged, unless their company paid for it.

The respondents were interested in meeting their energy information needs as quickly as possible and preferred an electronic medium over the telephone. For example, the respondents were most interested in searching the Web for information (43%) or e-mailing a question to an information source and obtaining an answer back in one to two days (28%). They were less interested in calling a hotline and waiting one to two days for an answer (16%) or calling a hotline and waiting up to a week for a packet of materials (4%). Although the survey participants preferred to have their energy information needs met electronically, many of them indicated that they often pass this information on to their customers either over the phone (84%) or in person (68%).

IV. Marketing Plan

A professional marketing consultant developed a marketing plan that outlined strategies for the EIC to increase regional utility awareness and use of its resources. The marketing plan presents a detailed overview of the EIC's general market placement, target markets, current users, and competitors.[8]

Overview of Marketing Consultant's Report

Before the EIC can decide where it needs to go and how it should get there, it needs to understand where it is. Therefore, the first half of the marketing plan provides a situation analysis that offers background on:

- ⇐ ***EIC services*** – which are the most comprehensive in the energy industry
- ⇐ ***EIC users*** – as represented by EIC's own tracking of hotline requests, Web site hits, and listserv subscribers, as well as by selected users' own responses to a variety of surveys
- ⇐ ***EIC's competitors*** – of which there are very few

The situation analysis also includes a brief overview of the EIC's strengths and weaknesses relative to its goal of meeting the target market's energy efficiency information needs.

The second half of the plan presents a general marketing strategy for renewing and sharpening the EIC's key messages and corresponding image to better communicate to all its target markets. In addition, a focused marketing strategy is outlined for creating a specialized campaign to address the Northwest regional utility market's energy informational and technical support needs.

The Regional Utility Marketing Campaign

The marketing consultant recommended that the new general messages and image – and the specific targeted applications of these – build a better understanding of who the EIC is, what the EIC can do for the user, and what that means for the user and community.

The goal is to create a strong organizational image for the EIC, one that will reflect a sharpened *mission statement*, a focused definition of its *market position*, and clearly defined *marketing objectives* both for the EIC as a whole and for each of the targeted markets. This Marketing Plan offers proposals for

[8] The marketing consultant's report is included in Appendix G.

each of these elements; the new, sharpened messages that make up the EIC's organizational image will be developed by an EIC-led team, consisting of both internal staff and external consultants.

The proposed, sharpened mission statement targets the EIC's key markets and conveys its greatest strength: the sheer volume and accessibility of the resources at a client's disposal.

The EIC's market position is that "The EIC is the Northwest's most responsive and convenient energy information service, with expert knowledge and comprehensive research resources provided without fee to assist Northwest business, industry, government and utilities in addressing all their energy-information needs."

The proposed marketing objectives for the targeted utility market are:

- ⇐ To heighten regional utilities' awareness and increase their use of the EIC
- ⇐ To clearly define the needs of the various segments of this market so that the EIC can improve and tailor its services to each
- ⇐ To establish a process and criteria for developing new marketing communications that are in line with the new messages

The utility marketing campaign should use the final versions of statements/definitions for these elements to create both the "umbrella" and targeted marketing messages that will inform all future EIC communications.

Reaching the Market

The consultant suggested that the first approach for the utility market campaign be to target the opinion leaders through various personal and non-personal channels of communication. The goal will be to determine how to most effectively maximize the penetration in each of the market segments. The mix of promotional approaches will vary in response to the needs of each segment. For example, market research indicates the larger utilities already have a high level of awareness of the EIC and its services, so less effort will have to be expended to introduce the EIC to these utilities, both public and private, than would be required for the smaller utilities.

A second approach should be to focus on the EIC's relationship with the regional utilities (and with appropriate utility industry associations). A good relationship with the utilities will prove beneficial for the EIC not only through increased visibility with the utilities but with the utilities' own customers. This is the type of exposure that will extend the EIC's ability to positively impact the energy decision making and energy efficiency practices of Northwest business, industry, government, and utilities.

Strategies for Increasing EIC's Market Presence

Strategies are presented for developing key messages and applying these to communication tactics such as direct marketing, Web site representation/ communication, public relations, and utility information exchanges/alliances.

A number of message elements that may potentially motivate and resonate with the utility market include the following:

- ⇐ Services are provided without fee
- ⇐ The EIC has the expertise to answer any energy-related question
- ⇐ EIC consultants provide high quality, useful responses to energy-related questions
- ⇐ High quality factsheets are available on many energy efficiency topics
- ⇐ The EIC provides excellent customer service
- ⇐ The EIC focuses on the needs of energy professionals

Ultimately, the discrete messages will be combined to construct an umbrella message (above all other messages) that defines the EIC and clarifies its mission.

Direct marketing will serve a dual purpose. Initially, it will be used to introduce the EIC's new messages/image to its key markets. Later, it will serve a reminder role, keeping the EIC's name and messages prominent. The Web site is itself an advertisement for the EIC in that it is the core strategic vehicle for most of the EIC's interactions with its users. It therefore needs to clearly and simply communicate the EIC's key messages through its copy, overall look, and organization. It must offer a professional image as well as a functional usability, and it should prominently feature the EIC's most valuable offerings, including the technical hotline service and the Energy Solutions Database.

Public relations tactics include making presentations to interested utilities and related associations, participation in energy industry events (including conventions and trade shows), creating specialized listservs, and continuing to produce factsheets on topics relevant to utilities and their customers.

All information exchanges, from the hotline to listservs to factsheets, provide opportunities for marketing the EIC as a utility partner. Emphasis in utility interactions will be on the EIC's role as a utility ally, one capable of overcoming the obstacles of lack of resources – notably knowledge, time, and money – that might otherwise deter implementation of energy-efficient power solutions (products and practices) and use/integration of energy resources.

Focus Groups

As a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the EIC's messages, a series of focus groups and individual meetings were conducted from mid-May to Mid-June 2002 with 22 employees from small and medium utilities. Additional objectives of the focus groups were to develop the EIC's understanding of the utility audience and to identify factors (including perceptions of the EIC) that influence the research behavior of its utility users.

The focus group participants (most of whom were familiar with the EIC prior to joining the study) gave the EIC the highest credibility rating, followed closely by its funding organization, the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, and its operating organization, the Washington State University Cooperative Extension – Energy Program (WSUEP).

Focus group participants also confirmed the impression of the web usability study participants that organizations with a state (e.g., Washington, etc.) included as part of their name identification were overwhelmingly seen as primarily providing services aimed at energy policies for people in the named state. Therefore, from a brand marketing perspective, it is preferable to have a neutral, credible organization name so that the maximum audience possible perceives that they are welcome to use the services. Close identification with WSUEP could cause potential EIC users from outside Washington state to turn to a resource perceived as being more responsive to their needs.

The focus groups also found that small utilities have correspondingly small conservation programs and are eager to have the EIC's assistance in filling in gaps in their individual programs. The mid-sized to larger market segments made it clear that their principal interest was in being able to easily and reliably obtain unbiased energy information, particularly factsheets, product reviews, and case studies to use in decision making, providing recommendations and as a sales tool.

Participants in the focus groups preferred clear and focused messaging that highlighted the reliable, unbiased information that the EIC provides. The messages that receive the widest support were: "customer focused," "provide answers," "objective," and "timely."

Marketing Implementation Plan

The Marketing Consultant recommended that the EIC administer and manage its marketing messages and efforts. This would include creation of a team consisting of both internal staff and external consultants to create and develop the EIC utility marketing campaign components. Outside professional assistance for development efforts would be sought as needed so that final products are polished and have the desired effect. The team would report

directly to the WSU Energy Program's Principal Investigator and Communications Manager.

A briefing process has been implemented, per the consultant's recommendations, for any products, marketing communications, advertisements and/or mailings detailing the project objectives, background, strategy and target consumer to maintain consistency in the image and message delivered.

The initial priorities for the team will be:

- ⇐ Creation and development of marketing objectives, messages, and images for marketing collateral
- ⇐ Development of a strategy for events and presentations to introduce the EIC

Comments from Evaluation Perspective

The Regional Utility Marketing Plan provides an excellent overview of the EIC products and services, target audience, and strengths and weaknesses. The Plan also provides a comprehensive marketing strategy – including a marketing budget – for EIC to more effectively define its products and services and promote use among regional utilities.

The plan appeared to be generally well received by the EIC, although a few modifications were made. The most notable changes included:

1. Clarification that the marketing team will report to the WSU Energy Program's Principal Investigator and Communications Manager.
2. Eliminating a paragraph that "the WSUEP and Alliance branding guidelines need to be limited to their respective logo, logo placement, and communication of their respective relationships; these should not instruct EIC design direction."
3. Changing the target launch date for the new Web page to September 2002.

The Marketing Plan might have also attempted to further clarify the different needs of the larger versus the smaller utilities. For example, larger utilities typically have far more staff and resources for their energy services departments, while many of the smaller utilities only have one person. The smaller utilities, therefore, might even be more receptive to using the EIC. Small utilities, which are so prevalent, only make up 8% of the utility inquiries in the Case Management Database, further emphasizing the potential among this group.

In addition, the report emphasizes "word of mouth" as the most important means of promotion, consistent with the responses to the online survey.

As shown in the online survey, there remains a committed core of users that returns to the EIC again and again; the key to continued growth is to:

- ⇐ Remind previous users that have not used the service for more than a year that the EIC continues to improve its informational services. This might be accomplished through a targeted email or postcard to those in the database that haven't contacted the EIC for over a year.
- ⇐ Gain new users who will return to use the services. This could be accomplished through many of the ideas outlined in the Marketing Plan.

Finally, print ads are recommended, but may not be the most cost-effective means of gaining new users. Should the EIC plan on print ads, careful evaluation of responses to these ads should be tracked to evaluate their impact.

V. Web Site Usability Study

A usability study for the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC) Web site was conducted on May 13, 14, and 16, 2002, at a research facility. The study design, moderation, analysis, and recommendations were created and conducted by an Interface Engineer and Usability Specialist from ZAAZ, a firm specializing in web site design and functionality.[9]

Report Summary and Findings

ZAAZ, the Alliance, and the EIC staff created several goals for the usability study at a kick-off meeting. The goals served as guiding factors in determining the target audience to participate in the study, primary areas of the web site for investigation, study method, and data collection.

The Goals of the EIC Usability Study were to:

- ⇐ Validate what is working well
- ⇐ Do an overall evaluation of the site and uncover areas for improvement
- ⇐ Focus on search functionality as the primary method of accessing site content
- ⇐ Benchmark current site usability as a baseline metric for future improvements and evaluations

Sixteen participants were recruited from the Seattle area representing the commercial, industrial, and utility sectors; the intent was to have each group evenly divided between 'ever' and 'never' users of the web site. Participants were selected because, as a group, they had the experience and knowledge typical of those who would likely use the site. ZAAZ aimed for a mix of sectors, genders, organization size, occupation type, internet experience level, prior use of the existing EIC Web site, and need for energy related information.

Participants were recruited for a usability session of 1.5 hours, one-on-one with the study administrator. The tasks included:

- ⇐ a brief background interview
- ⇐ a "card sort" exercise (to group 50 cards, with phrases from the web site, into sections as if they were creating a Web site for their own use)

[9] The Web site usability study is included in Appendix H.

- ⇐ an interview about first impressions of the EIC home page, and how the user expected the navigation links to behave
- ⇐ several searches for different types of information using a live EIC Web site connection

Impediments to usability were found throughout the EIC Web site in the main information architecture, nomenclature, navigational scheme, page layouts, graphical user interface elements, and linking strategy. Participants failed most every task and were not satisfied with their site experience.

Study participants indicated that they perceived the EIC Web site's content to be of high value. However, due to poor site usability, they are not able to experience that content value and turned away dissatisfied. During task performance, participants were not able to find the information they were looking for and indicated they would leave the site – not likely to return.

Given the number and nature of usability issues found, a complete redesign was recommended.

Other "high level" recommendations include:

- ⇐ Revamp all main content on the site. Group information in ways that are meaningful to the target audience. Consider grouping information by sector.
- ⇐ Add a site search to the home page and establish site search as a main function in the site information architecture.
- ⇐ Revise 'Energy Solutions' keyword search and 'Explore By Topic' functionality so that users always receive some positive result or reinforcement.
- ⇐ Revamp and update 'Explore by Topic' categorical structure and nomenclature.
- ⇐ Follow user interface standards for Web site design. Specifically, how to construct a navigational structure, taxonomy, page layout, and graphical user interfaces that meet industry standards and user expectation. Use industry expert manuals that are peer reviewed.
- ⇐ Create a new professional/updated look and feel to reflect the high quality information and services the EIC offers.

Web site usability is the key to a good user experience. A currently excepted guideline for Web site use is there are only a few seconds to engage a user and guide them toward their goals. Web sites cannot afford poor usability.

The high-level recommendations are based on issues critical to the user experience and success of the site. Addressing the high level recommendations will give the EIC Web site a strong foundation. Regular

updates to site content and checking usability will keep the user experience fresh and meeting users' needs.

Comments from Evaluation Perspective

The usability study provides a comprehensive examination of the site layout, functionality, and content. The report has a number of strengths, including:

- ⇐ A nice combination of both "open ended" and more structured exercises to document user experience and opinions.
- ⇐ A good combination of "high level recommendations" and more detailed recommendations.
- ⇐ A helpful list of ideas to make immediate improvements to the site while redesigning the entire site.
- ⇐ Technical recommendations based on "expert opinion" of the consulting firm to supplement the feedback from the study participants.
- ⇐ Links to other resources the EIC can use to establish a "best practices" design.

The overall findings, however, appear to be somewhat contradictory regarding user satisfaction with the page. There is a short section that includes positive findings, and states that "many indicated that they would send EIC links to customers and pass them on to colleagues." On the other hand, the report states that "participants performed poorly on most tasks, and in many cases, chose to abandon the site." This may be explained, in part, by a lack of clarity about whether respondents were thinking about referring others to the EIC web site (home page), to links to specific articles, or to other web site references they found on the EIC site.

In addition, the report indicates that those in the energy industry performed worse on the tests, giving up when they could not find the information for which they were searching. Yet many of these same participants said they had previously visited the site, and a few indicated that they had positive experiences and found the site helpful. This too may be a function of who agreed to participate in the usability study, what respondents were telling the study participant recruiter, and the range of meaning attributable to 'visited the site.'

The recruitment process was designed to enroll an equal number of 'ever' and 'never' users of the EIC web site from each sector. However, that proved difficult to accomplish, and at the time of the usability test, the analyst determined that some recruitment classifications errors occurred between individuals in the commercial and industrial categories. In the end, four of the five utility participants had previously 'visited' the site, yet none of the

industrial customers had used the site. The observations made of the participants' reactions and experiences were so similar that there was no attempt to separate findings by sector.

VI. Summary of EIC Issues at MPER Baseline

This report summarizes an extensive amount of research, including:

- ⇐ An examination of the EIC Case Management Database to profile utility clients
- ⇐ Telephone interviews with 36 utility key informants
- ⇐ An energy-related information needs assessment survey conducted online with 112 utility workers
- ⇐ A marketing plan prepared by a professional marketing consultant
- ⇐ Focus groups conducted by the marketing consultant with a total of 22 employees from Northwest utilities
- ⇐ A Web site usability study with 16 participants from the commercial, industrial, and utility sectors

Three consistent themes are found among all this research:

The EIC has satisfied users. This MPER, like the previous MPERs, finds that the EIC users remain very satisfied with the services. The survey of utility staff found that users were satisfied with the customer service, responses, and fact sheets. The focus groups found that "those familiar with the EIC had positive comments when asked their impression."

The volume of information and services offered is so broad that it may confuse users. The web site usability study found that the focus of the EIC and its services was not immediately transparent, contributed to by the "clutter" of the Web page. The marketing consultant identified the same problem, as did the participants in the focus groups. The EIC must develop and present a clear, consistent and focused message to clarify exactly what it is and who it is intended to serve. The EIC then needs to present this message – and all its services – in a clean, precise format to its target users.

The relationships with the Alliance and WSU are important, but must be presented carefully. As identified in the online survey, marketing report, and focus groups, it is critical to consistently communicate the EIC's relationship to the Alliance and the WSU Energy Program as "funded by" and "managed by", respectively, as this adds an important sense of credibility to the EIC. In addition, the relationship with WSU, if not presented carefully, could confuse potential users to the point of not using the service because they think it is only for those in Washington state.

The EIC has previously implemented a number of marketing strategies, including:

- ⇐ Direct marketing, such as targeted e-mail announcements, post cards, and press releases
- ⇐ Articles by EIC staff or mentioning the EIC
- ⇐ Presentations at conferences/events
- ⇐ Posting EIC information on Listservs
- ⇐ Reciprocal Web Linking/Coordination
- ⇐ Advertising

The impact of these activities was generally effective, given the number of inquiries logged into the Case Management Database increased by 16% in 2000 and 38% in 2001, while the number of 'user sesions' (visits) to the Web page continues to grow by approximately 100% a year.

Still, as discussed in this report, there is room for improvement. Users of the Web page are finding it cluttered and difficult to use; repeat EIC web site use is not as high as desired; and the EIC still has the potential to reach many more users.

The EIC is currently planning to implement the utility marketing plan and redesigning the Web page. While following a number of similar strategies to those in the past (e.g., attending conferences, making presentations, conducting direct mailings, etc.) the real change will be in presenting a clear and more focused message about what the EIC is and what it does. Key words – such as "reliable, unbiased information," "customer focused," "provide answers," "objective," and "timely" will be incorporated into the new marketing collateral.

Issues Requiring Attention

There are a number of issues that the EIC will need to focus on as it implements it's new marketing plan, including:

Tracking EIC Web Page Users. The EIC should attempt to learn more about its Web site users. In 2001 there were 24,000 total visitors ('hits') to the site, compared to 1,055 inquiries recorded in the Case Management Database. Having important descriptors of the Web site users and what they want to know would make an informative user profile for the EIC and the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, its funder. This is important in the efforts to meet evolving customers' information needs, and to facilitate follow-up on whether or how the information was used to impact energy efficiency practices.

Addressing Data Quality Issues. In order to conduct this analysis, Quantec had to recode a number of data fields from the EIC case management database, including business type, general topic, and referral source. There were also a number of common data entry errors. A way to ensure that the data are entered correctly and consistently across all staff is to develop a brief user guide for the database, and to implement data input mechanisms – such as pull-down menus – for as many database fields as possible. In addition, a set of quality assurance standards and checks should be developed and used routinely.

Collecting Additional Information for the Case Management Database. The EIC should consider a careful review of the items contained the case management database, improving certain fields. For example, the EIC should expand the 'referral' categories into more detailed, meaningful entries. The current categories are quite general, such as "media" and "Internet resource," these don't allow for a specific enough interpretation regarding what marketing tactics are working best in various circumstances. In addition, the EIC should collect workplace department information (in addition to job title), as the same job can have diverse titles between companies, whereas departments are larger units and vary less.

Data Tracking Issues. As the EIC seeks to implement a targeted marketing plan aimed at specific customer segments, it must also pay careful attention to tracking program goals, activities, inputs and outputs, and results. These are important elements of a continuous quality improvement system that will get the most out of operations management efforts. The EIC must not only monitor program operations, but also apply a "critical eye" to its own data and routinely examine multiple program usage patterns and measures of marketing efficacy.

For example, the EIC needs to make an effort to answer the following questions about their operations by tracking and analyzing measures that monitor their own data on an on-going basis.

- ⇐ How does the usage volume of EIC services change by information access method and user segment?
- ⇐ How are user profiles changing over time, including areas of inquiry?
- ⇐ How are operations evaluated according to the two previous points, and adjusted accordingly, including cost per service?
- ⇐ Is the workload and skill level of EIC staff keeping up with quality standards and customer volume (by access method) and information needs?
- ⇐ Are there systems and measures in place to assure that the information and data systems EIC generates, and maintains, are of

high quality so they can reliably serve the needs of the system's internal and external users?

⇐ Are the EIC resource materials/publications kept current so that they meet the needs of EIC users?

⇐ Is the EIC effectively maintaining an "inverted pyramid" approach to information delivery, so that the majority of information is delivered via lower-cost electronic media?

⇐ Is the EIC Web page designed, managed and regularly upgraded in a professional, easy to navigate manor, with format and content that meets the usability and information needs of target EIC users?

⇐ Is the EIC maintaining a high caliber of client service and positive reputation among target users within each segment of its information access services?

⇐ Is the EIC cost-effectively expanding marketing efforts to reach and maintain current target users and attract new user groups?

A careful analysis of trends in the answers to these, and related questions can be used to evaluate the value of current and future marketing campaigns, improve program resource management and service delivery, and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process.

The metrics underlying the issues outlined above should be carefully created, and monitored quarterly, with some only annually, by the EIC. The monitoring should be used as internal feedback on routine operations. The metrics and how they were used should be produced as part of standard reports for internal use, as needed, and for the Alliance. Consultation on the creation of systems to develop, maintain and use the necessary metrics and processes should come from professional sources external to the EIC.

Overview of Issues from Previous MPERS

As shown in Table VI-1 the EIC has successfully followed through on the majority of recommendations from previous MPERs. Only one of the recommendations above – addressing data quality issues in the Case Management Database – is outstanding.

Table VI-1
Summary of Recommendations and Actions from Previous MPERs

Alliance/Quantec Recommandation	EIC Actions
Standardize the program tracking database. While the program database is exceptional in terms of ease of use and comprehensiveness, it is lacking in standardization. Staff members have different interpretations for many of the fields.	The EIC could continue to improve the standardization of the tracking database by creating a brief user guide and limiting the entries (using forms) for specific fields.

Alliance/Quantec Recommandation	EIC Actions
Because of inconsistent interpretation, little analysis could be conducted on many fields, particularly if we try to look back a few years.	
Increase marketing through direct mailings, press releases, and the Internet.	The EIC has conducted direct mailings and press releases. The EIC also created an easier URL (energyideas.org) and attempted to "brand" this name through a number of marketing channels.
Remind Callers about the EIC Web Page. All callers should be reminded about the EIC Web page and encouraged to visit it.	Many callers are referred to the EIC Web page in an effort to answer most questions through low-cost means such as the Internet. Sometimes EIC staff will even assist callers on use of the Web page.
Attempt to Populate the Database Based on Queried Topics. It is important to periodically summarize queries into topic areas and to make efforts to adequately populate each area.	The EIC has examined the number of queries by topic.
Attempt to Evaluate User Satisfaction with the ESD. *While the number of cases may measure the quantity of responses to user inquiries, it does not capture the quality of these responses in the opinion of the user.*	In an effort to continually gage user satisfaction the EIC left the online survey active for an extended period of time.
Make it Easy to Submit Cases (Queries) from the Web Page. Users should be able to check "have EIC do a custom search" either from the Home page or after an ESD query. The option of submitting cases (queries) from the ESD is most important, of course, for instances where the user finds "no matches" for the query.	The EIC added this service with the relaunch in January 2003.
Update all Web Link Resources. While the inclusion of links to Web resources has made the ESD far more comprehensive and useful, a check revealed a number of either broken links or active links to publications that no longer carried the article of interest.	The EIC has made an effort to correct and repair broken links.
Consider Partnering with Other Web Pages. The EIC Web page contains a great deal of content that is valuable for users and reinforce the "stickiness" (return rate) of users. The EIC might want to consider partnering with other energy Web pages to exchange not only links, but content.	The EIC has discussed the use of its content with other energy Web sites.
Keep the Energy Links Page. The Energy Links page was rated as "somewhat" or "extremely" useful by 75% of the telephone survey respondents that accessed it, higher than any of the other Web pages.	The EIC added this page back following this recommendation.
Continue to Review and Update Reciprocal Links. While maintaining the links page, the EIC should also continue to investigate and set up reciprocal links (crosslinks) with other Web pages.	The EIC has attempted to do this as part of its marketing efforts.
Use Low Cost Marketing to Reach the Target Markets. The EIC should continue to use low cost marketing methods – such as press releases and "freebie" inserts in energy publications – as well	The EIC continues to rely primarily on lower-cost marketing efforts as opposed to more expensive advertising.

Alliance/Quantec Recommandation	EIC Actions
as reasonably priced advertising in targeted publications.	
Seek Additional Assistance for Projects. Additional staff time would allow management to delegate weekly tasks – such as updating the Web page – and periodical administrative tasks, such as entering e-mail addresses into a database, freeing up time to focus on strategic marketing and implementation tasks.	The EIC received additional funding from the NW Alliance for staff time.
***Model features/layout from the most professional sites*.** The EIC could strive to be the energy efficiency hub, modeling the page after the well founded and highly regarded for-profit Energy Central Web page.	The EIC relaunched the Web page in January 2003.
Promote Energy Newsbriefs and the other Listservs. The EIC should consider having a "sign up to receive our newsletters" box on the home page and should make sure that all callers to the hotline are signed up to receive an appropriate listserv.	The signup for the listservs has not been prominently displayed on the EIC Web page.

VII. Focus of Next MPER

As the EIC undertakes two major efforts – a revamped marketing campaign and a redesign of the Web site – it is also important to develop tracking and evaluation plans. There are two primary questions these plans need to address:

1. Were the recommended actions taken, implemented appropriately and in a timely way? If not, why (what barriers exist, how can they be overcome)?
2. What was the impact of these efforts on the EIC's operations and services, and on the core target user group?
   - Do the utilities see the new EIC marketing materials/messages as a clear and focused description of who the EIC is, what it does, and its intended primary audience?
   - Do the revised EIC marketing materials attract new and repeat users from the target market?
   - Was there an increase in (new and repeat) use of EIC services among the regional utilities in terms of inquiries and/or use of the Web page? If so, who and on what topics?
   - Were utility users more likely to make more use of the information they requested, and/or share it with customers, than in the past? Why?
   - Does the updated Web page improve usability for EIC's target customers?

To this end the next MPER intends to include:

⇐ A review of activities undertaken in response to findings in this baseline MPER, and related studies to clearly document what steps were taken, when, and how their implementation might differ from recommendations and why.

⇐ A careful re-examination of the Case Management Database to look for:

- quality control systems and impact on the contents of the database
- changes in inquiries (by subject and user type) with special emphasis on the regional utilities.

⇐ A follow-up of the Web site usability study to look for improvements among targeted users and identify other potential improvements.

⇐ System development/implementation to identify key details about web site users.

- ⇐ A re-survey of utility clients to see how they have responded to the changes in the EIC marketing materials/message, and to evaluate their EIC usage profile.
- ⇐ A special effort to interview utility employees who are not EIC users (Web and other services) to gain insight into why they do not use the service and whether those factors can be cost-effectively overcome.

Appendix A.
Key Informant Interview Instrument

INTRODUCTION: "Hello, my name is ___ and I am with Quantec Consulting. We are gathering information for the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance. [IF ELAINE CALLED CONTACT THEN READ: Elaine Miller of the Alliance was in touch with you recently about this project. As Elaine may have told you, WE ARE NOT SELLING ANYTHING.]

We are assisting the Alliance in assuring that their energy-efficiency information resource program, the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, meets the information needs of the utilities they are intended to serve. I would appreciate it if you would be willing to take a few minutes to answer some questions I have that will help us find the right people in your company to determine their information needs and preferences.

1. Are you familiar with the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse?

A. Yes
B. No

[IF NOT AWARE OF THE EIC EXPLAIN] -&- THEN GO TO Question 3

The Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC) is a regional service in the PNW that provides information on energy efficient technologies, practices, and programs. The EIC provides its services using a telephone hotline, Web site, fax and email access. Utilities and their customers are the priority clients. The EIC is operated by the WSU Cooperative Extension Energy Program and underwritten by the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance.

[IF AWARE OF THE EIC ASK]

2a.Have you used the services of the EIC?

____ Have not used services.
____ Have used services

2b.What parts of the service did you use?

[IF NOT MENTIONED PROBE FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING BY ASKING]

Have you…

A. called the hotline
B. e-mailed the EIC
C. faxed the EIC
D. used the web page (e.g., job listings, events calendar, library service, energy solutions)
E. received any of the listservs announcements
F. received any EIC publications

[IF ACCESSED WEB PAGE]

2c. When was the last time you accessed the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse Web page?

_____

2d. Why did you access the EIC Web page?

3. As I mentioned, we are assisting the Alliance and the EIC in assuring that their services are known to and meet the needs of utilities. Do you think that you or others in your department could benefit by using the energy efficiency information services of the EIC? How so?

   [IF NO, REVIEW SERVICES AGAIN] Why don't you think the services would be of use?
   [PROBE FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION NEEDS]

[IF THEY AND/OR OTHERS COULD USE INFORMATION]

4. We'd like to conduct a 5 - 10 minute on-line survey with you and your staff to better understand the types of information you need, the form of delivery you prefer, and how you use the information.

   If I send you a link to the survey in the next four weeks, would you be willing to participate and encourage your staff to participate? __ Yes __ No *[If NO, go to Question 5]*

   [IF WILLING]

   - What is your email address? _____
   - How many people work for you that you could complete the on-line survey? _____
   - Would you prefer that we send the email directly to your staff, or would you like to forward it?

   [IF RESPONDENT WILL FORWARD ASK THEM: "Would you please cc me when you send the email? My email is scottd@quantecllc.com"]

[IF E-MAIL WILL NOT WORK]

5. Is there some other way you can suggest so we can collect this information?

[ASK EVERYONE]

6. We know that utilities are made up of a diverse group of professionals, and we'd like to understand their range of information needs. For example, other professionals that might make use of the EIC services include: human resources, customer service, plant operations, conservation managers, or other department managers.

   Do you have a key contact in one or more of these, or other, relevant groups that you can refer me to about gathering their information? May I use your name when I try to reach them?

[IFYES, COLLECT THEIR NAME, TITLE, PHONE, AND EMAIL ADDRESS]

Appendix B. Online Survey Instrument

Utility Information Needs Assessment

This survey is sponsored by the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, which is a not-for-profit organization that works to make energy-efficient products and services available and affordable to the Northwest region's consumers. The Alliance wants to better understand energy information needs of electric utility companies.

You have been proposed as one of your company's employees who is likely to have a need for energy efficiency information as part of the work you do. We are asking you to provide the Alliance with feedback about your energy information needs in order to assure that services the Alliance sponsors provide valuable information to electric utility companies in this region.

The survey has a maximum of 20 questions and should only take five to ten minutes of your time. **Thank you in advance for your feedback.**

Please note that all individual answers are confidential, only grouped data will be used for research purposes.

1. What state do you work in?
   a. California
   b. Idaho
   c. Montana
   d. Oregon
   e. Washington
   f. Wyoming
   g. Other (Specify _____)
2. What utility company do you work for?
   a. Avista Utilities
   b. Benton County PUD
   c. Bonneville Power Administration
   d. Clark Public Utilities
   e. Cowlitz County PUD
   f. Eugene Water & Electric Board
   g. Flathead Electric Cooperative

h. Grant County PUD
i. Idaho Power Company
j. Montana Power Company
k. PacifiCorp
l. Portland General Electric
m. Puget Sound Energy
n. Salem Electric
o. Seattle City Light
p. Springfield Utility Board
q. Tacoma Power
r. Other (Specify _____)

3. What department do you work in? (Check all that apply)
   a. Energy services
   b. Conservation
   c. Engineering
   d. Human resources
   e. Customer service
   f. Other (Specify _____)

4. What is your job title?

   _____

5. What are your 3 primary job duties/responsibilities?
   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____

6. What is your e-mail address? [For survey follow up purposes only, your email address will **not** be added to any lists or shared with anyone.]

   _____

7. Do you have a need for energy efficiency information as part of your job?

   μ Yes μ No

8. Have you heard of the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, also known as EIC or EnergyIdeas.org?
   a. Yes, I have heard of the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, and have used it.
   b. Yes, I have heard of the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, but have NOT used it
   c. No, I have not heard of the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse

d. Not sure

[IF Q8=1 (USED EIC) OR Q8=2 (AWARE OF EIC)]

9. How did you first learn about the EIC? (Select only one)
   a. Word of mouth
   b. EIC booth or presentation at conference
   c. Ad in journal/magazine/newsletter
   d. Came up on Web search
   e. Found link on another Web page
   f. Other way (Specify _____)

[IF Q8=1 (USED EIC)]

10. Which of the following EIC services have you used during the last 12 months? (Check all that apply)
    a. Called the EIC telephone hotline
    b. E-mailed a question to the EIC
    c. Used the Energy Solutions database on the EnergyIdeas.org site
    d. Accessed the jobs page on the EnergyIdeas.org site
    e. Accessed the EIC publications or fact sheets on the EnergyIdeas.org site
    f. Accessed the Utility Resources or Communicators' pages on the EnergyIdeas.org site
    g. Received Energy Newsbriefs, or another EIC sponsored listserv
    h. Used some other services on the EnergyIdeas.org site
    i. Other (Specify _____)

[IF Q7=1(NEED EE INFO) AND Q8=1 (USED EIC)]

11. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly Disagree 1	**Disagree** 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	**Agree** 4	**Strongly Agree** 5
EIC directs its services to energy professionals.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC directs its services to the general public.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC provides excellent customer service.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC is the first place I go for energy-related information.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC is my preferred resource for energy-related job announcements.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
I use the EIC because of the convenience and quick response time.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
I use the EIC because I know they have the expertise to answer any energy-related question.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC Librarians provide high quality research services.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC consultants provide high quality, useful responses to energy-related questions.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
I often refer my residential customers to the EIC to get their questions answered.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
I often refer my industrial customers to the EIC to get their questions answered	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
I often refer my commercial customers to the EIC to get their questions answered.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
I often refer my colleagues to the EIC to get their questions answered.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
EIC develops high quality fact sheets on energy efficiency topics.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
One of the main reasons I use the EIC is because the services are free.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ
There are so many sources of free information about energy that I don't think I'd use the EIC if an annual user fee was charged, unless my company paid for it.	µ	µ	µ	µ	µ

[IF Q7=1(NEED EE INFO) AND Q8=1 (USED EIC)]

12. What additional comments or impressions do you have about the EIC?

_____

[IF Q8=1 (USED EIC) OR Q8=2 (AWARE OF EIC)]

13a. Is the EIC is associated with an academic institution?

a. Yes, associated with an academic institution [Which one? _____]
b. No, not associated with an academic institution
c. Not sure

[IF Q8=1 (USED EIC) OR Q8=2 (AWARE OF EIC)]

13b. In your opinion, how advantageous is it for the EIC to have a relationship with an academic institution?.

a. Not at all advantageous
b. Only slightly advantageous
c. Makes no difference
d. Advantageous
e. Very advantageous

[IF Q7=1(NEED EE INFO) AND Q8 NOT EQUAL 1 (HAVE NOT USED EIC)]

11Alt. Thinking about the primary energy-related information resource(s) you prefer to use, would you say that, in general…

.	**Strongly Disagree** 1	**Disagree** 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	**Agree** 4	**Strongly Agree** 5	**Not Applicable to my job**
The resource(s) focus on the needs of energy professionals.						
The services are focused toward needs of the general public.						
They provide excellent customer service.						
The first place(s) I go for energy-related information.						
They can provide high quality fact sheets on energy efficiency topics.						
They are my preferred resource for energy-related job announcements.						
They provide high quality energy information and/or research services.						
I often refer my colleagues to them to get their energy questions answered.						
I often refer my residential customers to them to get their energy questions answered.						
I often refer my industrial customers to them to get their energy questions answered.						
I often refer my commercial customers to them to get their energy questions answered.						
Services are convenient with quick response times.						
They have the expertise to answer any energy-related question.						
One of the main reasons for choosing an information resource is because the services are free.						
There are so many sources of free information about energy that I don't think I'd use those that charged an annual user fee, unless my company paid for it.						

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO)]

14. *Please tell us how often you have information needs in each of the following categories.

    * For each category in which you have a need, please tell us if that is for internal (company/personal) use or for external (customer) use.

Category	Need information?					Use of Information?		
	Never	Rarely	Occasion-ally	Often	Very often	Intern-al	Extern-al	Both
Energy efficient technologies								
Energy software								
Energy codes								
Energy-related jobs (list or seek)								
General energy efficiency								
Product assessments								
Utility conservation programs								
Energy-efficient building design								
Other energy information (Specify_____)								

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO)]

15. When you have need for energy efficiency information, how often do you use each of the following sources?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very often
On-Line					
Specific Web site (*up to top 3 sites):* 1. 2. 3.					
General search engines *(e.g., Google, Yahoo, Altavista)*					
Listservs, e-mail announcements, newsletters, links to other web sites					
Off-Line					
Library - (university, public, corporate) Personally working with a librarian					
Newspaper/magazine/trade journal – doing independent reading					
Colleagues/peers – Casual conversation and/or Formal consultation					
Other (specify) _____					

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO)]

16. How do you prefer to get research-type questions answered? (Select one answer only)

    a. Search on the Web and find an answer on my own (e.g., I am likely to download &/or print reference documents &/or information screens)
    b. E-mail a question to an information source and get an answer back in 1-2 days
    c. Call a hotline, discuss my question with someone and get a verbal answer back in 1-2 days
    d. Call a hotline, discuss my question with someone and get a packet of materials in the mail within a week

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO)]

17a. Do you provide energy-related information to customers?

μ Yes μ No

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO) AND Q17A=1 (PROVIDE INFO TO CUSTOMERS)]

17. How often do you provide energy efficiency information to residential, commercial, or industrial customers?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very often
Residential customers					
Commercial customers					
Industrial customers					

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO) AND Q17A=1 (PROVIDE INFO TO CUSTOMERS)]

18. For each method listed below, please indicate how you provide energy efficiency information to your customers?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very often
Provide them information over phone					
Provide information in person					
E-mail them information					
Send them information by postal mail					
Refer them to specific Web site(s) for information					
Refer them to the EIC					
Other method [Specify: _____]					

[IF Q7=1 (NEED EE INFO)]

19. Which of the statements below best reflects your feelings about using product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as a source for energy efficiency information?

    a. I am comfortable using product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as sources for energy efficiency information.
    b. I use product-specific vendors and/or manufacturers as an energy efficiency information source but understand a conflict of interest may exist.
    c. I prefer getting energy efficiency information from source(s) not affiliated with particular products.

[ASK ALL RESPONDENTS]

20. For each logo you recognize, what organization do you associate it with?

	Organization Name	Do Not Recognize
	_____	❍
	_____	❍
	_____	❍
	_____	❍
	_____	❍
	_____	❍

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C.
E-mail Invitation to Participate in Survey

Thank you for speaking with me. As I mentioned, we are assisting the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance in assuring that the energy efficiency information resource program they sponsor, the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC), meets the energy-related information needs of the utilities they serve. I would appreciate it if you would be willing to take a few minutes to answer our brief on-line survey to determine your energy-related information needs and preferences.

We also need input of others who need and use energy-related information in utility companies. You could be of great assistance to us by forwarding this message to other people in your company who could give us feedback on information sources they use as part of their jobs.

The on-line survey will only take 5-10 minutes, and will be greatly valuable for determining the future direction of the EIC. You can find it by simply clicking on the link below:

http://coordination.nwalliance.org/survey/

Thank you for your assistance, and please contact me if you have any questions.

Appendix D.
Job Duties and Responsibilities

Customer Service

- ⇐ Customer service representative (13)
- ⇐ Member services (4)
- ⇐ Commercial/industrial accounts (2)
- ⇐ Key account services (4)
- ⇐ Deal with high bills & customer complaints (2)
- ⇐ Ensure most efficient service to customers at lowest cost
- ⇐ Manage customer services dept.

Member Information

- ⇐ My department develops and maintains customer relationships, Corporate customer relations
- ⇐ Oversee customer contacts, provision of technical information to customers
- ⇐ Oversight of customer accounting functions
- ⇐ Power Contract Negotiating & Management
- ⇐ Provide customers with energy resources/information
- ⇐ Public utility customer satisfaction
- ⇐ Respond to billing inquiries as they pertain to “demand charges”
- ⇐ Respond to C&I high bill inquiries
- ⇐ Target customers - commercial visits, programs

Supervise/Manage

- ⇐ General management (2)
- ⇐ Manage gas utility
- ⇐ Manage overall utility
- ⇐ Manage regulatory affairs
- ⇐ Electric manager
- ⇐ Oversee all public works activities
- ⇐ Oversee C&RD

⇐ Oversee dept support for customer energy use education

⇐ Oversee the utility

⇐ Responsible for employees

⇐ Planning, organizing & staffing conservation dept.

Energy

⇐ Energy conservation (7)

⇐ Energy education/weatherization (8)

⇐ Energy efficiency (9)

⇐ Energy audits/inspections (13)

⇐ Energy services (5)

⇐ Rates (5)

⇐ Power quality/supply (4)

⇐ Energy bill consultation

⇐ Energy engineering review for complex projects

⇐ Energy management

⇐ Energy project development & management

⇐ Analyzing energy usage

⇐ C/I energy assessments, tuning

⇐ Commercial customer (med & small) assistance

⇐ Electro technologies sales

⇐ Load & revenue forecasting

⇐ Manage C/I power quality program

⇐ Manage electric utility

⇐ Manager power

⇐ Power management

⇐ Purchasing

⇐ Running load management program

⇐ Energy Adviser - weekly column in newspaper

Conservation

⇐ Conservation (8)

⇐ DSM (7)

- ⇐ Conservation programs (23)
- ⇐ Energy efficiency (6)
- ⇐ Program develop/manage (4)
- ⇐ Developing low interest loan for lighting program
- ⇐ Direct heat pump & weatherization programs
- ⇐ Market transformation activity
- ⇐ Provide strategic direction and construct effective programs
- ⇐ Renewable energy and distribution/generation
- ⇐ Renewable Energy Research
- ⇐ Run incentive programs for customers
- ⇐ Utility rebate program- managing individual C&I customer projects

Miscellaneous

- ⇐ Administer all aspects of our C&RD program
- ⇐ Analysis
- ⇐ BPA C&RD program
- ⇐ BPA ConAug contract
- ⇐ C&I lighting specialist
- ⇐ Carry out the direction of the Board
- ⇐ Design
- ⇐ Issues related to BPA (power & transmission contracts, conservation programs, etc.)
- ⇐ NEEA board representation
- ⇐ Other energy services
- ⇐ Participate on Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance board
- ⇐ Partner w/public utilities on innovation like NEEA
- ⇐ Proactive with commercial needs
- ⇐ Promotion and education of the MT energy code
- ⇐ Promotion of SGC/NC manufactured houses
- ⇐ Protection
- ⇐ Provide Technical Assistance (when possible) to MPC Commercial Customers
- ⇐ Research similar efforts throughout region

⇐ Responsible to members

⇐ Responsible to board of directors

Appendix E.
Additional Comments Regarding the EIC

- ⇐ The "tip of the day" is too simplistic.
- ⇐ I must admit that I have not frequented the EIC site since the start of the energy crisis a year ago. I just revisited the site and will surely use it.
- ⇐ I am fairly new to the utility business and I will be using EIC in the near future. I know that other GC PUD Energy Services staff use the EIC.
- ⇐ Responsive, professional, well founded responses.
- ⇐ I've been pleased with the information and services provided - Not sure if I would use EIC, however, if there was a fee or charge
- ⇐ The EIC provides better technical support for industrial questions, at a much lower cost, than similar services provided by others, including ESource
- ⇐ I cannot answer many of these questions because I have only used the site a couple of times.
- ⇐ Newsletter is forwarded to me when it contains items of interest. Don't use EIC as a referral.
- ⇐ Having not used the EIC in a long time, I do not feel I can answer the above questions fairly
- ⇐ I have not used the services enough to develop an opinion on some of the questions.
- ⇐ I have on occasion used the EIC where it has taken several weeks to get a response. That is not to say it happens every time I request information.
- ⇐ Responsive, friendly, credible.
- ⇐ They must be overbooked because they've been excellent but recently lost some of our work we sent in for review
- ⇐ They do a great job
- ⇐ I should be referring the EIC more to my customers when I don't have the answer they need.
- ⇐ We "pay for" EIC through Alliance and BPA. We promote EIC Int/ext and appreciate staff responsiveness.

⇐ I have found this to be a great help for our utility, we don't have a lot of money and sometimes just need a quick answer for special situation.

⇐ I have not used the service enough to have formed opinions on these topics

⇐ I haven't referred customers to EIC because I guess I didn't realize it is intended for general public inquiries. Who is the intended market, and why

⇐ Quick response and useful info

⇐ In Q11 items 5,6,7 I ranked as neutral when really I had a more in depth response for which there was no category.

⇐ They do a very good job whenever I request information. Please continue to fund them.

⇐ Very professional. Conscientious staff. Friendly.

⇐ Have always appreciated the good service, prompt service; and excellent information

⇐ I check the tip of the day and the Q & A every workday.

Appendix F. Web Sites for Energy Information

Specific Web Sites Identified by Respondents for Energy Information
Base: Respondents Who Have a Need for Energy Efficiency Information

Organization	Rarely	Occasion-ally	Often	Very Often	URLs
Alliance to Save Energy		1	1		www.ase.org
BPA		6	7	2	www.bpa.gov
CA PUC		1			www.cpuc.ca.gov
California Energy Commission		1			www.energy.ca.gov
CEE			1		www.ceeformt.org
EIC Clearinghouse		8	2		www.energyideas.org
Conweb		1	1		www.conweb.com
DOE		2	4	1	www.energy.gov
EDU		1			NA
Enerfax.com		1			www.enerfax.com
Energy Design Update			1	1	www.cutter.com/edu
Energy Management Consultant			1		NA
Energy Outlet			1		www.energyoutlet.com
Energy Star		7	7	1	www.energystar.gov
Energy User News		1	1		www.energyusernews.com
EPRI		1	1		www.epri.com
EREN		2	2		www.eren.gov
Esource		1	1	2	www.esource.com
Franklinpud.com			1		www.Franklinpud.com
GE, Philips, Sylvania, Maxlite, TCP, SunPark, Greenlite Web sites			1		www.ge.com; www.philips.com; www.sylvania.com; www.maxlite.com; www.sunpkco.com;
Ghpc.org			1		www.Ghpc.org
Home Energy			1	1	www.homeenergy.com
Ariorg.com		1			Ariorg.com
Idaho Department of Water Resources			1		www.idwr.state.id.us
IEEE			1		www.ieee.org
Lawrence Berkeley Labs		2			www.lbl.gov
Lighting design lab		5	1		lightingdesignlab.com
Lighting research center		1			www.lrc.rpi.edu
Montana Dept of Environmental Quality		1	1		www.deq.state.mt.us
Newsdata.com			1		www.newsdata.com
NRECA Power Kit		1			
NW Energy Alliance		4	2		www.nwalliance.org
Northwest Public Power Association		2	1		www.nwppa.org
Oregon Office of Energy		3	1		www.energy.state.or.us

Organization	Rarely	Occasion-ally	Often	Very Often	URLs
Other Oregon Electric Cooperatives			1		NA
Pgecom/003_save_energy	1				NA
Power Marketing Ass List Serve				1	NA
Rocky Mountain Institute		1			www.rmi.org
Search for related site		1			NA
Seattle Lighting Design Lab			1		http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/light/conserve/cv4_ldl.htm
WSU			1		www.wsu.edu
Ask.com			1		www.ask.com
Carrier.com				1	www.carrier.com
CEE.com				1	www.cee.com
Federal Technology Alerts		1			www.pnl.gov/fta/index.html
Rtfnwppc.org				1	www.Rtfnwppc.org
Trane.com				1	www.trane.com

Appendix G. Marketing Plan – Consultant's Report

MARKETING PLAN

TARGET: REGIONAL UTILITIES

ENERGY IDEAS CLEARINGHOUSE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents a targeted marketing plan for the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC). While several such targeted plans are projected, this Regional Utilities plan, because it is the first, also presents a detailed overview of the EIC's general market placement, target markets, current users, and competitors.

For EIC background and market information, this plan draws upon the findings of the draft "Utility Information Needs Assessment" survey [Quantec, 2002] and the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance-sponsored "Market Progress Evaluation Report," which included two user surveys [Quantec, 2001]. In addition, Alliance and EIC staff provided information through formal meetings and informal phone contact. For comparative market information, a number of non-affiliated utility and energy information websites and resources were also perused.

Overview

The purpose of this Marketing Plan is to present strategies that will help the EIC succeed in its goals to increase end user (in this case, regional utility) awareness and use of its resources. However, before the EIC can decide where it needs to go and how it should get there, it needs to understand where it is. Therefore, the first half of this plan provides a situation analysis that offers background on:

- EIC services—which are the most comprehensive in the energy industry;
- EIC users—as represented by EIC's own tracking of hotline requests, website hits, and listserv subscribers, as well as by selected users' own responses to a variety of surveys; and
- EIC's competitors—of which there are very few (*see first bullet*).

The situation analysis also includes a brief overview of the EIC's strengths and weaknesses relative to its goal of meeting the target market's energy efficiency information needs.

The second half of this plan presents a general market strategy for renewing and sharpening the EIC's key messages and corresponding image to better communicate to all its target markets. In addition, a focused market strategy is outlined for creating a

specialized marketing campaign to address the Northwest regional utility market's energy informational and technical support needs. A timeline and budget are also presented.

The Regional Utility Marketing Campaign

The new general messages and image—and the specific targeted applications of these—will build a better understanding of who the EIC is, what the EIC can do for the user, and what that means for the user and community.

The goal is to create a strong organizational image for the EIC, one that will reflect a sharpened *mission statement*, a focused definition of its *market position*, and clearly defined *marketing objectives* both for the EIC as a whole and for each of the targeted markets. This Marketing Plan offers proposals for each of these elements; the new, sharpened messages that make up the EIC's organizational image will be developed by an EIC-led team, consisting of both internal staff and external consultants.

The proposed, sharpened mission statement targets the EIC's key markets and conveys its greatest strength: the sheer volume and accessibility of the resources at a client's disposal.

The EIC's market position is that: "The EIC is the Northwest's most responsive and convenient energy information service, with expert knowledge and comprehensive research resources provided without fee to assist Northwest business, industry, government and utilities in addressing all their energy-information needs."

The proposed marketing objectives for the targeted utility market are:

- To heighten regional utilities' awareness and increase their use of the EIC.
- To clearly define the needs of the various segments of this market so that the EIC can improve and tailor its services to each.
- To establish a process and criteria for developing new marketing communications that are in line with the new messages.

The utility marketing campaign will use the final versions of statements/definitions for these elements to create both the "umbrella" and targeted marketing messages that will inform all future EIC communications.

Reaching the Market

The first approach for the utility market campaign will be to target the opinion leaders through various personal and non-personal channels of communication. The goal will be to determine how to most effectively maximize the penetration in each of the market segments. The mix of promotional approaches will vary in response to the needs of each segment. For example, marketing research indicates the larger utilities already have a high level of awareness of the EIC and its services, so less effort will have to be expended to introduce the EIC to these utilities, both public and private, than would be required for the smaller utilities.

A second approach will be to focus on the EIC's relationship with the regional utilities (and with appropriate utility industry associations). A good relationship with the utilities will prove beneficial for the EIC not only through increased visibility with the utilities but with the utilities' own customers—exposure that will extend the EIC's ability to positively impact the energy decisionmaking and energy efficiency practices of Northwest business, industry, government, and utilities.

Strategies for Increasing EIC's Market Presence

Strategies are presented for developing key messages and applying these to communication tactics such as direct marketing, website representation/ communication, public relations, and utility information exchanges/alliances.

A number of message elements that may potentially motivate and resonate with the utility market include the following (suggested by the results of the "Utility Information Needs Assessment" [Quantec, 2002] market survey):

- Services are provided without fee.
- The EIC has the expertise to answer any energy-related question.
- EIC consultants provide high quality, useful responses to energy-related questions.
- High quality factsheets are available on many energy efficiency topics.
- The EIC provides excellent customer service.
- The EIC focuses on the needs of energy professionals.

Ultimately, the discrete messages will be combined to construct an umbrella message (above all other messages) that defines the EIC and clarifies its mission. (All messages will be tested with focus groups before implementation.)

Direct Marketing will serve a dual purpose. Initially, it will be used to introduce the EIC's new messages/image to its key markets. Later, it will serve a reminder role, keeping the EIC's name and messages prominent. The website is itself an advertisement for the EIC in that it is the core strategic vehicle for most of the EIC's interactions with its users. It therefore needs to clearly and simply communicate the EIC's key messages through its copy, overall look, and organization. It must offer a professional image as well as a functional usability, and it should prominently feature the EIC's most valuable offerings, including the technical hotline service and the Energy Solutions Database. A website usability assessment is currently planned and is expected to provide valuable input for future website evaluation.

Public relations tactics include making presentations to interested utilities and related associations, participation in energy industry events (including conventions and trade shows), creating specialized listservs, and continuing to produce factsheets on topics relevant to utilities and their customers.

All information exchanges, from the hotline to listservs to factsheets, provide opportunities for marketing the EIC as a utility partner. Emphasis in utility interactions will be on the EIC's role as a utility ally, one capable of overcoming the obstacles of lack of resources—notably knowledge, time, and money—that might otherwise deter implementation of energy efficient power solutions (products and practices) and use/integration of energy resources.

Managing the Utility Campaign

A team, reporting directly to the WSU Energy Program's Principal Investigator and Communications Manager and consisting of both internal staff and external consultants, will be assembled to create and develop the EIC utility marketing campaign components. This team will create and develop the marketing objectives, messages, and images for marketing collateral, and will develop a strategy for events and presentations to introduce the new EIC messages. It will also be responsible for monitoring the marketing campaign—through use of focus groups, the Alliance's evaluation surveys, and other research tools—to track its effectiveness.

A broad timeline and estimated general expense budget are provided at the end of this Marketing Plan as guidelines for the EIC marketing team. These identify the recommended order of development and implementation and offer a breakdown of expense elements by those that will primarily cost staff time versus elements that will require extra-operational funding.

CONTENTS

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC) has been serving the Northwest commercial and industrial energy producing and using community for more than a decade by providing unbiased energy information and technical support services. This section of the Marketing Plan offers background information on the EIC, what it is and what it offers, and on the utility markets as defined by types of operations and how these are affected by the current energy environment.

Background

The EIC was established—as the *Electric* Ideas Clearinghouse (1990)—and funded by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), a self-funded federal agency that is part of the U.S. Department of Energy. The clearinghouse was operated by the Washington State Energy Office (WSEO), a state-run agency that operated it until 1996, when the WSEO was closed. Several of the programs operated by WSEO were transferred to the WSU Cooperative Extension Energy Program (WSUEP), including the EIC.

In 1996, the utility-funded Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance ("Alliance") took over funding of the EIC—renamed the *Energy* Ideas Clearinghouse—as part of its mission to "catalyze the Northwest marketplace to embrace energy-efficient products and services." In 1997, the Alliance provided a 3-year contract to the WSUEP for EIC operation. The Alliance's primary goal is what it calls "market transformation," which is to encourage the acceptance of energy-efficient products and services in the marketplace by removing specific market barriers that prevent their widespread adoption. The Alliance has defined [Quantec, 2001] two market barriers to the implementation of sustainable energy practices within the commercial and industrial community that the EIC is intended to effectively decrease. These are:

- Lack of awareness of energy use options and associated energy/non-energy benefits, and
- Search and acquisition costs for energy efficiency information.

The MARKET STRATEGY section of this plan offers a roadmap for increasing utilities' awareness and use of EIC services, particularly with regard to providing knowledge of and access to information on energy efficiency options.

Products and Services

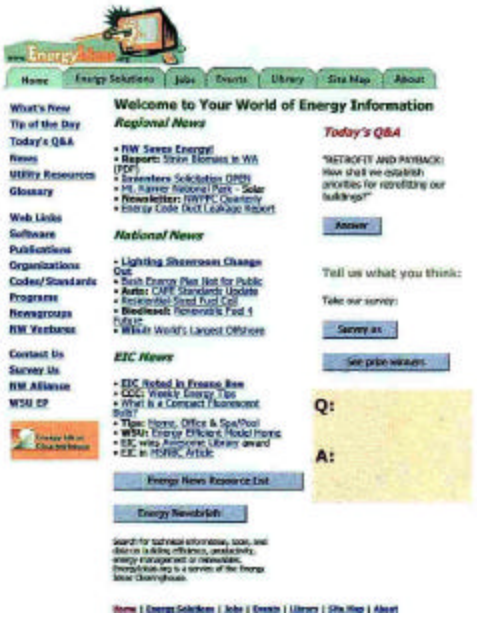
The EIC is a centralized source of energy information and technical support. The clearinghouse uses three major (and interrelated) means to disseminate information:

- A website, which offers general energy information and links to other information sources, including pdf file documents, software, energy program descriptions, and printed material;

- A telephone hotline that offers the caller a number of responses, ranging in complexity from prepared factsheets, to articles from EIC's substantial library, to direct discussion and analyses by technical experts; and
- Listservs and newsgroups, which offer subscriptions to online newsletters and energy-related discussion forums.

Website. The website, from its inception, has experienced incredible growth. Website user sessions at *www.energyideas.org* have increased dramatically over the past three years, rising steadily each year, from 1,170 a month in 1998 (the year the website was put online) to 7,000 a month by December 2000. The number of unique users has also increased over this period, from 309 to 843 a month. In 2001, these numbers jumped again, with the EIC documenting an average of 24,000 visitors a month throughout the year. The increase in use is likely due to a combination of things, among them: more people becoming aware of the resource and more energy users becoming interested in options and efficiency as the energy markets fluctuated wildly in 2001.

It is worth noting that the number of options presented on the home page could be initially overwhelming to first time users. The page offers a number of paths to the same information, starting with the seven main sections named on "file tabs" across the top of the page (and repeated at the bottom of the page). It is unclear how these relate with the shortcut links to the differing departments that are presented in a single-file column on the left side of the page. Links for direct access to specific regional, national, and EIC news items of interest are featured in the middle of the home page, followed by buttons for general/archived news items on the "Energy News Resource List" and the "Energy Newsbriefs" listserv. There are also a Question & Answer quiz of the day, a "Survey Us" link, and an Energy Solutions teaser (presented as a changing information block) stacked on the right side of the page, as illustrated below:



It is true that the EIC's website offers much more than a searchable library of energy-related information, but its unique offerings—which include energy-related job listings, an energy-related events calendar, energy software links, a custom technical response service (see TELEPHONE HOTLINE), and information/analysis tools for energy professionals—may be difficult to spot amid the general tumult of information provided.

Telephone Hotline. In what is perhaps the EIC's most unique feature, members of the Northwest commercial/industrial community and customers served by utilities in the Pacific Northwest can call in (toll-free), as well as email or fax, their questions concerning energy use to the clearinghouse hotline. Responses to questions are usually provided within eight hours.

Responses could involve any and all of the EIC's resources, including: customer service, product and pricing information, factsheets on a range of energy topics, referral to other energy programs, and (when warranted) technical expertise from an on-call cadre of top-notch professionals who offer engineering assistance and analysis services to help businesses and utilities solve thorny problems for which there may not be other resources. When there *are* other resources, it is likely they are available from EIC's library, which includes product literature, product reviews, technical reports, and energy-related articles and publications. EIC's energy library, which has access to WSUEP's resources as well, is the largest in the Northwest.

As with the website, there has been an increase in callers, from 473 in 1999 to 539 in 2000 (19% of year 2000 calls were from utilities).

Newsgroups/Listservs. The EIC offers connections (through its website) to nearly 40 energy-oriented newsgroups/listservs, and it currently manages ten of these listservs itself (although not all of these state clearly that they are produced by the EIC). Five of the listservs are private and are directed to a particular audience; private listservs are not available to nonmembers. (Only a few of the public listservs can be viewed by clicking on the LIBRARY tab at the top of the EIC web pages).

Of the five publicly available listservs, only the *Energy Newsbriefs* listserv is listed by name on the "About" web page. Appropriately, *Newsbriefs* promotes awareness of emerging trends of potential interest to the EIC's largest target audience: energy professionals. It offers weekly profiles of new information in energy-related professional journals in the WSU Energy Library holdings.

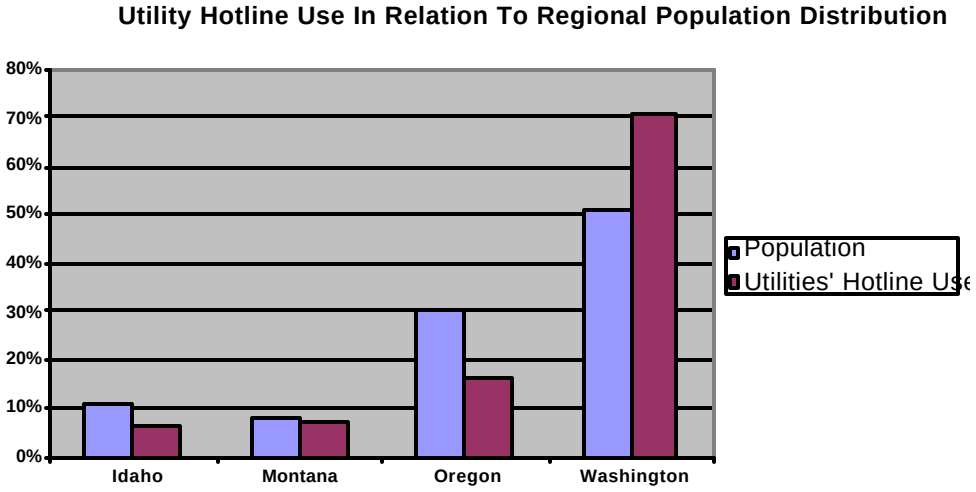
EnergyAg is, as its name suggests, aimed at the agricultural market and highlights selected WSU Energy Library articles on efficient use of energy resources. It also offers direct resource links. The *LGEnergy* listserv targets local governments, providing subscribers with relevant Northwest energy news (including references to current articles, websites, and publications) twice a month. The *Alliance 1* listserv is the only one of the five publicly available EIC listservs that is not targeted to a narrowly defined energy-user audience. Instead its purpose is promotional: to provide timely information about Alliance-sponsored market transformation activities. Finally, the *Industrial Roundtable* promotes sustainable industrial competitiveness for the Northwest.

The EIC's five private listservs are highly focused discussion/information sharing forums. They are as follows:

- *AIACOTE* – Serves the American Institute of Architects and Committee on the Environment, primarily as a communication resource for committee members.
- *AIA Council* – A private email list for the Puget Sound American Institute of Architects.
- *BuiltGreen* – Serves members of the King and Snohomish County Master Builders as a forum for discussion of green building techniques and practices.
- *WASustain* – Serves Washington State agencies interested in sustainability issues. A working group meets on this topic, and they created this listserv to continue discussions and information sharing.
- *ITAP Execcom* – A private communication forum for the Industrial Technology Assistance Providers Executive Committee.

Regional Use of the EIC

Both the recent "Utility Information Needs Assessment" survey [Quantec, 2002] and the listserv survey [Quantec, 2001] indicate that the EIC has a larger presence with Washington utilities than it does with utilities in any other state. To a certain extent, these findings could reflect survey biases; however, this same imbalance is demonstrated by the distribution of utility use of the EIC hotline services by state. Requests to the EIC hotline, by state, are shown below. Clearly, more Washington utilities (in comparison to utilities in other states) use the EIC hotline service. The evidence suggests an opportunity exists to increase utility market penetration by the EIC.



It is worth keeping in mind that differing commercial markets have differing needs. It is not unlikely that states with large urban populations (e.g., Seattle) would have a greater interest in, say, energy efficiency resources, than would states such as Montana whose population centers have developed around mining, forestry, ranching, and agriculture.

Thus, political conditions aside (see ENERGY MARKET ENVIRONMENT), the market perceptions of Washington and Oregon utilities are going to vary from those of Idaho and Montana utilities, and the EIC's presentations to these regional utility markets should vary accordingly.

The discrepancy in EIC usage between Washington utilities and out-of-state utilities may also be due to state energy programs available to the utilities in Idaho and Oregon. The EIC has a number of advantages over such state programs, but only if the utilities are aware of the EIC and it offerings. The one thing that is clear is that opportunity exists for the EIC to increase the use of its services among out-of-state utilities.

Marketing Efforts

Until recently, the EIC's mission statement was: "WSU's Energy Ideas Clearinghouse helps people make sustainable energy decisions by providing valuable information and assistance that meets their immediate and long-term needs." This statement is very open and inclusive. The EIC's existing marketing approach and collateral also reflect the organization's openness and eagerness to assist its markets.

The recent EIC market progress evaluation undertaken by Quantec for the Alliance noted:

> EIC conducted a number of marketing activities during the past year …. [which], combined with the energy crisis, led to the substantial increase in hotline calls and activity on the website. [Quantec, 2001]

The EIC's current marketing strategy is basic but effective: Conference booths and mailings are among the more formal approaches, with press releases, conference papers, and brown bag presentations occurring more spontaneously. Both positively impact name recognition. More recently, the EIC has been making presentations explaining its services at utilities when invited. The presentations have been well received.

Target Audience

Commercial and industrial energy producers and users are the EIC's target markets, although they also serve residential customers of utility clients. This Marketing Plan specifically focuses on regional utilities. There are over 160 utilities in the regional Northwest (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana), and these can be segmented into three groups based on a continuum of resources: large investor-owned utilities, large public utilities, and small community entities.

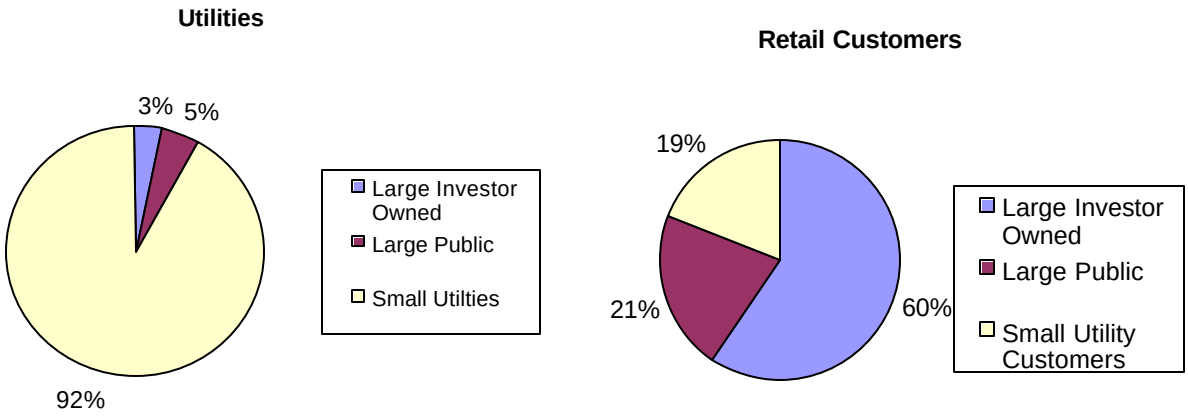
Large Utilities. The major electric utilities are primarily Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs), large Public Utility Districts (PUDs), and large Municipally Owned Utilities. Major utilities are defined by:

- 1 million megawatt hours (MWH) of total annual sales,
- 100 MWH of annual sales of resale power,
- 500 MWH of annual gross interchange power sales, or

- 500 MWH of "wheeling" (the transmission of electricity by an entity that does not own or directly use the power it is transmitting) for others.

It is primarily the degree of resources that separates the large private utility and the large public utility into two market segments. Resources allow utilities to designate specific resources and staff to focus exclusively on particular projects. Because the investor-owned utilities have ample resources to leverage and complement EIC's resources, their interest in and expectations of EIC services will differ from those of their publicly owned brethren.

Large investor-owned and large public-owned make up about 8% of the Northwest utilities but they serve 81% of the regional retail energy customers. Investor owned utilities delivered half of the power consumed in the Northwest in 1999.



Large Investor-Owned Utilities

Investor-owned utilities tend to have the most resources within the utility community. Because they are in the energy business to make a profit, they attempt to sell electricity on a profit margin, and the size of the margin determines the amount of resources they have available to try and improve that margin. Privately owned utilities are accountable to their investors (in addition to their customers), and it is the potential for return on investment that drives the organization.

Large Publicly-Owned Utilities

Large public utilities, PUDs and municipally owned, unlike their investor-owned counterparts, sell electricity on a cost-based rate and must answer to boards composed of publicly elected members. These utilities are thus ultimately accountable to the public, which makes them in some ways politically aligned with the smaller utilities, although many of their power management concerns parallel those of IOUs.

Small Utilities. The smaller utilities are all to some degree community entities. These utilities are built primarily with public funds in rural areas where the private business community chooses not to build due to the costs of developing the

infrastructure versus the small profits to be earned. The principal types of small utilities include:

- **Cooperative** – An electric utility legally established to be owned by and operated for the benefit of those using its services. The utility company will generate, transmit, and/or distribute supplies of electric energy to a specified area not being serviced by another utility. Such ventures are generally exempt from federal income tax laws. Most electric cooperatives were initially financed by the Rural Electrification Administration under the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- **PUD** – A publicly owned energy producer or distributor. PUDs operate as special government districts under the authority of elected commissions. Public utility commissions do not regulate them.
- **Municipal Utility** – A provider of utility services owned and operated by municipal government.
- **Mutual** – Similar to a cooperative; member-owned and directed, and usually rural.

The smaller, more rural utility has fewer resources in general, necessitating that its employees perform multiple functions within the organization and that the utility rely on outside services to a far greater degree than is seen in larger utilities.

Target Market Needs

Utilities, large and small, principally require timely, comprehensive, no-cost information on energy efficiency options from an information clearinghouse such as the EIC. In particular, they are looking for support that not only helps them manage their customer's needs but serves their own energy efficiency requirements:

- Many utilities want to offer customer service support for their commercial, industrial, and residential power users. Because most utilities prefer to work directly with their own customers, what they need from the EIC is support for their own inhouse programs.
- The degree of desired support, however, will vary. Smaller utilities are likely to prefer complete research and customer service packages (as opposed to the targeted research or customer support desired by larger utilities).
- In times of high wholesale prices, utilities want ready options and rapid support for implementing Demand-Side Management (DSM) programs. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), "DSM refers to actions taken on the customer's side of the meter to change the amount or timing of energy consumption." This can include strategies for "maximizing end-use efficiency to avoid or postpone the construction of new generating plants" [Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Network, 2002]. When wholesale prices are high, it is in a utility's interests to reduce or retime customer energy consumption while demonstrating how this in turn lowers the consumer's energy expenses.
- In times of low wholesale prices, utility boards may allocate few internal resources for conservation and energy efficiency programs, thus making the

information and analysis resources of the EIC all the more valuable for helping managers make short- and long-term energy management decisions.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the EIC in Meeting Market Needs

The purpose of this Marketing Plan is to present strategies that will help the EIC succeed in its goals to increase end user (in this case, regional utility) awareness and use of its resources. A successful strategy must be built around the EIC's strengths and the target market's needs. Fortunately, as exemplified by the noted increase in usage of EIC services year after year, the EIC's strengths and opportunities far outweigh its weaknesses, leaving the organization in an overall sustainable position.

Strengths. Due to its comprehensive energy usage/efficiency research data and energy publication collections, its knowledge of the energy market and of Northwest utilities, and the caliber of the technical experts associated with its hotline program, the EIC is in a strong position to build relationships with and become an ally for utilities with regards to implementing energy decisions and practices.

Recent surveys [Quantec, 2001; 2002] found that the EIC's clients most highly valued expertise and high quality customer service focused on the energy professional. The expertise and customer service embodied in the hotline/email services, in fact, are the EIC's greatest offerings. The EIC provides comprehensive, unbiased, expert, and fast technical advice and research services at no charge (the fact that the service is free to users was also stressed as valuable by survey respondents). If members of the Northwest business community, both commercial and industrial, can't find the answers they want online through the EIC's extensive holdings, they can call, email, or fax the EIC with any energy-related question. Responses to questions are usually turned around in less than 8 hours. These unparalleled services are the EIC's gems and what set the EIC apart from other energy efficiency and conservation information services.

The hotline service merges four EIC strengths to create a package that is larger and more meaningful than its separate components; however, all of the EIC's numerous offerings reflect these same four strengths to one degree or another:

- Expertise – The EIC not only has extremely talented people on staff, but it has (and shares) access to some of the best expert minds in the country. This is the kind of expert resource that not even the largest utility could provide on its own.
- Comprehensive Energy Information – Access to the WSU energy library, library staff, and outside technical experts, as well as readily available and rapidly disseminated journal information and news items (through the online publication holdings and listservs), helps most users to answer their energy-related questions with the latest research and knowledge of the newest and most promising technologies.
- Fast, Free Convenient Service – An average turnaround time of 8 hours *or less* for responses makes the EIC a timely research tool, and its no-cost status makes it more likely to be used by some of the smaller utilities or other commercial/

industrial users and generators that might not otherwise have the budget (or the time) to collect the information they need.

- Customer Service – An extremely committed and responsive customer service staff pulls from and merges the considerable EIC resources to address all inquiries and respond to hotline user questions, in particular, in a timely manner.

Weaknesses. The EIC's principal weakness as identified by the recent surveys is that, while there is a general awareness of the EIC and its services among utilities and the broader commercial and industrial community, *there is some confusion as to the EIC's function and intended clientele*. This is especially troubling since preliminary survey results from the Utility Information Needs Assessment [Quantec, 2002] indicate that many of the utility respondents were unsure as to whether the EIC was intended for the general public. Witness the responses to the following survey questions:

Statement	% Who "strongly agree" or "agree"	Number of respondents
EIC directs its services to energy professionals.	78%	67
EIC directs its services to the general public.	38%	66

The current EIC messaging and imagery on marketing collateral and the website are very broad and inclusive, making it difficult to understand the EIC's purpose and positioning as delivering comprehensive energy services to Northwest business, industry, government, and utilities.

Another weakness is that budget restraints and possible lack of capacity for increased usage have driven much of the marketing, positioning, and communications for the EIC. For example, hotline services are not prominently displayed on the website due to the fear that prominent exposure would elicit calls from outside the target market, thereby taxing the system.

Competition

The utility survey [Quantec, 2002] found that, among the utility respondents, no specific energy website clearly stood out as the leader for the energy industry. In fact, respondents stated their most common source of energy information was coworkers and peers (65% claiming they "very often" or "often" used these sources). With regards to on-line services, only the use of general search engines (48% survey respondents using these "very often" or "often") remotely competed with coworkers/peers as information sources.

The two websites that were listed most frequently as competition for the EIC are the BPA and Energy Star sites (both of which were listed 15 times as sites visited occasionally or often). Neither of these competing services is as comprehensive as the EIC:

- **BPA**. The BPA is a federal agency that sells wholesale electricity (providing half of the Northwest region's electric power) and operates three-quarters of the Northwest's transmissions, primarily to public and private utilities. The BPA's mission is to promote and foster the efficient use of energy and direct applications of renewable resources, mostly by promoting and fostering energy conservation programs and technologies and providing technical information and financial support to governmental agencies and businesses. Because the BPA is focused on far more than conservation and renewable generation, its website covers far more than energy information. The sections dedicated to its energy program, *Energy Efficiency Home*, are tucked away under the "Doing Business" heading. The *Energy Efficiency Home* page offers choices of: program/projects, energy@home, reports/publications, technologies, and business listings. Primarily the various subsections provide access to other energy-related links, reports, newsletters, and publications.
- **Energy Star**. The Energy Star mission is to offer business and residential consumer energy efficiency solutions that will save money while protecting the environment for future generations. The site is organized by market segment—home, business, small business, etc.—with each section customized to meet that particular audience's informational needs. The offering for each segment consists of various interactive tools (including calculators and software), energy information, links, and searches to look for expertise, products, etc.. The industrial section provides the most interactive support by offering an "Ask an Expert" service; however, links are challenging to find.

Energy Market Environment

Two events have contributed to the current energy market. The first was the 2001 energy shortage crisis, which it was commonly believed could carry on into 2002 and perhaps longer, but which ended abruptly, bringing wholesale prices back to earth. Wholesale prices are currently only a fraction of what they were in August 2001. The second event is the current move towards restructuring/deregulation of utilities, which closely affected a number of Western utilities in 2001.

Energy. Some price and supply fluctuations are the norm in the power industry, but the volatility of the past year was unusual. The recent extreme fluctuations in consumer power availability and end user pricing garnered national attention to the West and had most Western utilities riding the conservation roller coaster.

Faced last summer with shortages and volatile prices, Northwest utilities quickly implemented multi-pronged conservation and demand-side energy efficiency programs resulting in significant awareness and response from residential, commercial, and industrial customers. Now that wholesale prices have decreased, demand-side efficiency

financial incentive programs are being eliminated and conservation programs are being scaled back, if not completely eliminated, in an effort to cut costs.

The extreme volatility of the recent energy crisis has brought on a financial hardship for some utilities. During the height of the energy crisis, utilities committed to buying electricity at very high wholesale prices to ensure they had power to meet demand. Since then, wholesale prices have dramatically fallen.

Restructuring/Deregulation. Compounding the energy crisis for many utilities were the effects of restructuring and deregulation—changes that will continue to influence regional utilities' dealings with their customer base. Montana signed electric utility restructuring into law in July 1997 [American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, 2001]. Oregon's law was revised to delay implementation of retail access for large customers from October 2001 to March 2002 [Energy Information Administration (EIA), 2002]. Idaho and Washington currently do not see the benefit to restructuring or deregulating their power industries as they have the cheapest electricity in the country [EIA, 2002]. However, in May 2001, in a move that may have far reaching ramifications, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission announced a settlement between Puget Sound Energy and the utility's large industrial customers. The utility's six largest industrial customers will be allowed to buy power from any source, including other utilities, power marketers, and each other [EIA, 2002]. In the new, more competitive market place, utilities are looking for ways to be more visible and strengthen relationships with customers, especially with industrial and commercial customers, whose market segments have the greatest financial impact.

MARKET STRATEGY

The *general* market strategy is to renew and sharpen the EIC message and corresponding image to better communicate to all its target markets. The *specific* market strategy is to develop a specialized marketing campaign that speaks directly to the Northwest regional utilities' energy informational and technical support needs. The new general message and image—and the specific applications of these, as outlined in this Marketing Plan—will build a better understanding of who the EIC is, what the EIC can do for the user, and what that means for the user and community.

Organizational Image

The EIC will develop a new umbrella communications message and look that are inspired by a renewed and sharpened mission statement, a focused positioning definition, and clearly articulated marketing objectives (see below). The new message and image will be broad enough to be applicable across all target audiences, but will not lose sight of the EIC's ultimate objective: To significantly reduce the obstacles that deter business and industry from implementing efficient energy technologies and practices. The EIC's fundamental vision is that, by providing fast, convenient, and free energy information and technical resources, it can help create a thriving community in which business prosperity does not have to come at the cost of a healthy environment or vice versa but rather both can benefit through energy efficient policies and efficient use of resources. The messages it communicates through every one of its projects and outlets should reflect this vision.

Mission Statement

The proposed EIC mission statement is: "The EIC provides the most comprehensive, technical resource that NW business, industry, government and utilities use in implementing energy technologies and practices." This statement targets the EIC's markets and conveys its greatest strength: the quality and volume of the resources at a client's disposal.

Positioning

"The EIC is the Northwest's most responsive, convenient energy information service, with expert knowledge and comprehensive research resources provided without fee to assist Northwest business, industry, government, and utilities in addressing all their energy-information needs."

For the Northwest utilities—whose energy informational and technical needs are multi-dimensional and ever changing—the EIC is already well-positioned to be their reliable, convenient informational and technical resource and ally. The challenge is to develop messaging and imagery to communicate the EIC's position and ensure the message stays on the utilities' radar as a partner and ally rather than as a detached, uninvolved website of posted energy industry information.

To clearly convey the EIC's positioning, it is important that product placement and relationships are in agreement with and support the positioning statement. For example, EIC links should only be placed on sites that cater to the EIC's target audience: Northwest business, industry, government, and utilities. It is recommended guidelines be developed for EIC product placement.

The EIC's relationships with the Washington State University Energy Program (WSUEP) and the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance ("Alliance") can impact the EIC's position from the perspective of the utilities audience. To ensure a uniform message, the EIC needs to consistently communicate its relationship with the WSUEP and the Alliance. The following is recommended:

- WSUEP — "managed by," "maintained by," or "operated by"
- Alliance — "funded by" or "sponsored by."

Marketing Objectives

Objectives are quantitative, qualitative, and manageable milestones used to gauge effectiveness and ensure movement towards achieving each organizational goal. The primary marketing objective is to heighten awareness and use of the EIC (resources and services) by its targeted markets.

The primary utility marketing objective is to heighten the regional utilities' awareness and use of the EIC resources and services. This objective is key to realizing several of the EIC's organizational goals. The organizational goals are as follows:

1. Increase implementation of sustainable energy technologies and practices by Northwest businesses, utilities, and industries.
2. Reduce energy use by Northwest commercial and industrial users.
3. Increase recognition and trust of the EIC information and services.
4. Thrive as a long-term provider of energy information and services.

Secondary objectives include: 1) to clearly segment the regional utility market so that the EIC might better understand and serve the needs of each segment, and 2) to establish a process and criteria for the development of new marketing materials to ensure these are in line with the new communication messages. Both objectives are critical to the EIC achieving its organizational goal of "developing, maintaining and distributing useful information on sustainable energy technologies and practices to target audiences using [methods] that are tailored to our clients and the market sectors."

The Regional Utility Marketing Campaign

Campaign Message

"The EIC is an energy information service offering the most reliable comprehensive energy information and technical assistance available to Northwest utilities." This is an example and starting place for key messaging that targets the utility audience. Messaging speaks to benefits that make the EIC different and are valued by the target audience. Messaging concepts will be tested through scheduled focus groups, and the messaging will be adjusted accordingly.

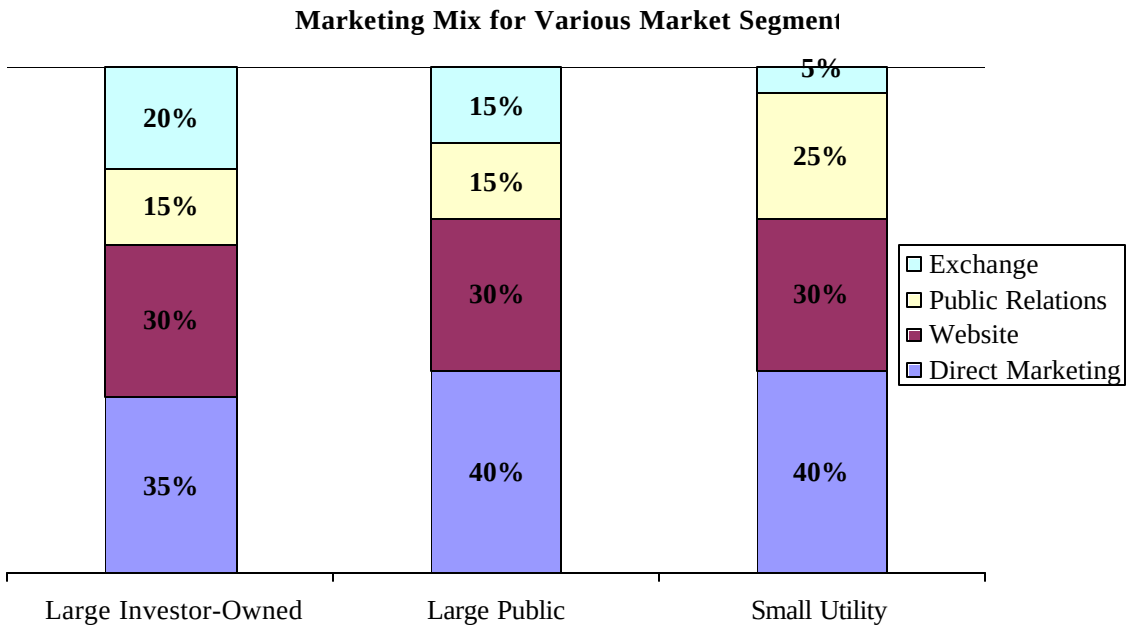
Strategic Approach

The strategic approach involves messaging and communication strategies, along with tactics, such as *supportive relationships* and *creating partnerships* that will maximize penetration, improve effectiveness, and increase the EIC's access to the desired markets.

The regional utility marketing campaign will focus on key messages and communication strategies that will increase the EIC's visibility and convince the utility audience that the EIC is the most reliable and comprehensive service guaranteed to meet all their energy efficiency needs. The EIC will support the claim of reliability and comprehensiveness by guaranteeing timely results—timely energy information from the experts, accessed via the website, listservs, or hotline service. Hotline responses of no more than 8 hours will be guaranteed. The tone of communications will be clean, direct, professional and intelligent to convey the competence and dedication the EIC staff demonstrates daily. The messages and strategies will be tailored according to focus group feedback to speak to each of the utility market segments: large and small; public and private—and perhaps even by geographic/political boundaries.

Open Communication. Because word of mouth between coworkers and peers is the most common way of learning of the EIC and its services, the first approach for the utility market campaign will be to target the repeat users as opinion leaders through various personal and non-personal channels of communication. The goal will be to determine how to most effectively maximize the penetration in each of the market segments. The tactics of communication and promotion specific to the utility campaign include direct marketing, public relations, website communication, and energy ally exchanges. The mix of communication channels (see chart) will be customized to best fit the needs and characteristics of each market segment.

A higher level of awareness and use of the EIC exists among the larger utility segments, both investor-owned and public utilities, than among the smaller utilities. Thus, these segments will require differing marketing approaches, with the larger utilities requiring more reminder and use prompts and the smaller requiring more introductory communication tactics.



For the larger utilities, developing a marketing mix of communication tactics that increase interactions between the larger utilities and the EIC will be conducive to building relationships that not only keep the EIC in the forefront of the user's mind but encourage repeated use as well. Specifically, communication tactics such as the "energy ally exchange," *UtilityTalk* listserv, and the website will figure more prominently for the large utilities. Listserv communications will require a similar amount of resources for each of the market segments; however, the level of involvement and interaction experienced through the energy ally information exchange program will require more resources.

For the smaller utilities a marketing mix that focuses on introducing the EIC and its services and supports is recommended, with follow-up communication tactics that remind and expand on the messages already delivered. Presentations for utilities and related associations will be a core tactic within the mix for smaller utilities.

Presentations at events and conferences and through associations, such as the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, will figure prominently for reaching the smaller utilities. These public relations events will provide the EIC with the opportunity to introduce itself, to explain the benefits of using EIC services and finally, to outline what the EIC can specifically do for the smaller utility. Follow-up direct mailings to small utilities will support the messages already delivered during presentations.

Supportive Relationships. A second approach will be to focus on the EIC's relationship with the regional utilities. This is critical because the regional utilities indirectly fund the EIC through the Alliance and because utilities are often the gateway to other market segments. It is important the utilities see and experience the EIC's contributions. Also, because the regional utilities serve the EIC's other target markets, a

good relationship with the utilities will prove beneficial for the EIC, extending its ability to positively impact the energy decisionmaking and efficiency practices of Northwest businesses and industries.

Creating Partnerships. It is also recommended that the EIC continue to develop alliances with appropriate utility industry associations. The partnerships and involvement with industry associations may provide opportunities and various vehicles for the EIC to communicate to select audiences, allowing messages to be tailored to fit the specific audience. Relationships with organizations such as the Northwest Public Power Association, Washington PUD Association, Oregon PUD Association, Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association, Montana Electric Cooperative Association, and Oregon and Idaho energy extension services, among others, would be beneficial for the EIC.

Strategic Tactics

The following subsections present strategies for developing key messages and applying these to each of the specific communication tactics to meet the EIC's marketing objective of increasing awareness and use of the EIC by the utility market segments.

Messaging. Key messages clearly defining the issue, connecting to the target audience, and indicating a course of action will be developed for the EIC in general and customized to specifically speak to each of the utility market segments. The results from the recent "Utility Information Needs Assessment" [Quantec, 2002] market survey hint at a number of message elements that may potentially motivate and resonate with the utility market.

- Services are provided without fee to the requestor.
- The EIC has the expertise to answer any energy-related question.
- EIC consultants provide high quality, useful responses to energy-related questions.
- High quality factsheets are available on many energy efficiency topics.
- The EIC provides excellent customer service.
- The EIC focuses on the needs of energy professionals.

A merging of various elements can result in the formulation of numerous messages that reinforce each other as well as reinforcing the EIC's purpose, direction, and value to the user. Ultimately, the themes will be combined to construct an umbrella message, above all other messages, that defines the EIC and clarifies its mission. Several messages including various EIC benefits will be tested among members of the target audience. It is recommended that, if testing cannot be organized and managed by EIC staff, an outside consultant be hired to work with the EIC and Alliance on focus group testing.

Direct Marketing. Direct marketing in this campaign will serve initially as an introduction to the sharpened and renewed EIC messages, and will eventually settle into a reminder role. The recent "Utility Information Needs Assessment" survey [Quantec

2002] pointed to a high level of awareness and use among the utility market, thus it is likely any targeted direct marketing efforts will come in contact with audience members that are aware of and have probably used the EIC. Due to this high awareness, coupled with the finding that word of mouth is the most common method of learning about the EIC, it is logical to keep the EIC message in front of the target audience as a reminder. It would also be valuable to persuade the user to pass the message along to coworkers, peers and customers. All communications will be designed to reinforce and enhance the EIC messages in a way that will resonate with the target market segments.

It is recommended that the majority of the direct marketing budget be applied to direct mailings. Direct mail (which includes letters, ads, and catalogs) allows for a high level of selectivity and penetration within more dispersed market groups. This approach will effectively reach audience members with at least some EIC awareness and provide an opportunity to motivate repeat use and/or the education of coworkers, peers, and clients regarding the EIC.

Budget permitting, print advertising in trade journals and industry newsletters should be considered in support of the direct mailing efforts and as fill-in between other marketing communication tactics.

The distribution of direct marketing should remain constant year after year. The role of direct marketing will continue to focus on reminding and persuading the target market to use the EIC and spread the word.

Direct Mailings

The role of direct mailing is to keep the EIC and its message alive in the mind of the utility audience members. The market objective is to increase awareness and use of the EIC and its services, direct mailing is an effective tool in achieving this objective. Awareness and use is higher than expected among the utility audience responding to the most recent information needs survey, providing the EIC an opportunity to increase its use by promoting repeat use and motivating users to spread the work via direct mailing.

Direct mailing is an ideal communication channel for the Regional Utility Marketing Campaign. Its strengths—selectivity and the flexibility to personalize—address the campaign's need to reach utility employees throughout the Northwest region. Direct mailing may be the most effective medium for delivering a message to a highly dispersed target market.

Print Advertisements

Small spot print advertising is an ideal communication tactic to support direct mailing since it allows for the customization of messages to address a specific market segment while complimenting the broader message of the direct mailings. Similar to direct mailings, print advertising can effectively target a specific audience by choosing vertical publications, such as the *Bulletin*, that cater to the target market. A variety of vertical publications, from industry trade journals to newsletters, are appropriate vehicles—

providing the desired selectivity and often offering editorial and publication opportunities as well.

Website Communications. The EIC website is a core strategic vehicle for marketing EIC services to the regional utilities. The website is the EIC's storefront, and often it will be the user's only exposure to the EIC. Therefore, the EIC must maximize the opportunity to communicate its messages clearly and rapidly. It is through the website that the EIC will most effectively communicate its responsive, convenient service and support and its potential to serve utility clients as an ally and advocate.

The website needs to clearly and simply communicate the key messages discussed above through its copy, overall look, and organization. The amount of copy needs to be pruned on key pages where critical messages are being communicated, such as the home page. The key messages are more likely to be heard and understood when they don't have to compete. The website also needs to have a professional feel to speak to the industry professional who is considering using the high level of expertise available from the EIC, whether via posted articles or technical advice received from the hotline service.

The target markets—Northwest utilities and their commercial and industrial customers—need to be clear, especially since the EIC's funding only covers the service and support of the target markets. It is recommended that clarifying the markets be done in two ways. First, it can be spelled out via copy and imagery. Second, the website be organized by market segments. A section for utility resources already exists. Sections for commercial and industrial resources will further clarify the target markets for the end user. Key to the EIC's relationship with its targeted end users is an understanding of each user's needs and preferences. Therefore, for the utility market, it is also recommended that a residential section be offered that provides some information but primarily redirects residential energy users to their utility for utility-specific energy programs. Care must be taken with the presentation of the residential section so as to avoid confusion regarding the EIC's target audience. It is recommended the residential section be labeled and sized in such a way to communicate "the EIC services business, industry, government, and utilities—if you are a *homeowner*, here are some organizations that may be able to help you."

Finally, the website needs to clearly communicate all its services, specifically the telephone/email hotline service and the Energy Solutions Database service. There is no better way to communicate the EIC's service and support difference, or its qualifications to stand with utilities as an ally in their quests to provide increased energy efficiency or customer service, than to promote the responsive, convenient, reliable, fee-free, and customized responses of its individualized services.

NOTE: *The target launch date for the website update is September, 2002. Updates should reflect recommendations from this marketing plan and feedback from the website usability study.*

Hotline Service

The hotline service (keyed to the website) is a primary strategic tool for communicating a number of EIC's messages. Customers calling this number will have the opportunity to speak to EIC staff regarding an energy-related topic and will receive an expert's response via telephone or email within 8 hours. This service is the embodiment of the EIC's strengths, and it should be prominently, consistently promoted through the website, listservs, factsheets, and marketing products.

Energy Solutions Database

The ESD, as the Energy Solutions Database is often called, is a searchable database of responses to previous hotline questions. The database is one more method the EIC provides to help its users access information. It speaks to the comprehensive nature of the EIC and needs to be prominently and appropriately positioned on the website. It is also recommended it be more clearly communicated that the search function is for searching previous responses rather than the general site.

Public Relations. Public relations facilitate opportunities for good publicity to reinforce and amplify the other communication tactics. The campaign will maximize the EIC exposure through regional industry-focused vehicles such as press releases, presentations, events, listservs, factsheets, and opportunities that may arise through energy ally exchanges. The press releases won't require a significant time or budget commitment from the EIC but, like the other public relations elements, will help to disseminate the focused communication messages.

EIC Presentations

Presentations are an especially attractive supportive publicity tool, due to the flexibility, allowing for various confirmed messages to be easily mixed and matched to address the specific audience's needs. Recently, the EIC has had success in presenting its services to utility staff. In light of the positive feedback, it is proposed that presentations play a more significant role in delivering the EIC's message. An organized presentation tour could be given for any interested regional utilities.

Events

The EIC will continue to support and participate in events associated with regional utilities, primarily but not limited to conventions and tradeshows. New displays for booths at events reflecting the new image and message will be necessary. When appropriate, new materials may be developed in concert with a utility partner if such materials are determined by EIC staff to meet a wider need as part of the EIC's effort to position itself as a utility ally and adjunct service.

Listserv Communications

Development of tailored listservs to be delivered regularly to the end users' work or home email account could potentially be one of the more effective ways in which the EIC could

maximize penetration in its target markets. Underlining the importance of making as much use as possible of EIC's listservs, newsletters, and website is the finding that 37% of the utility survey [Quantec, 2002] respondents "very often" and "often" get their energy information through listservs, email announcements, or websites other than the EIC's. It is critical the EIC take advantage of this opportunity to communicate its name and message. If possible, the message and name should also be supported with the EIC's logo. The EIC's listservs and factsheets will reinforce the webpage and hotline service and support efforts by providing additional energy information customized to address target market needs.

An opportunity exists for the EIC to develop a new listserv, *UtilityTalk*, to address the specific needs of the utility market. A listserv specifically targeted to utilities could quickly build a following (already approximately 20% of current EIC website/listserv users are utility employees), especially since Quantec's survey of listserv recipients suggests word of mouth is the most common way to learn about listservs (according to 49% of the respondents). Including an email-it-to-a-coworker feature or an option for signing up whole departments on listservs may help facilitate the word of mouth method of learning about the EIC.

Utility users primarily obtain their "off-line" energy information from coworkers and peers (65% of utility survey respondents claim they "very often" and "often" gain information they need from colleagues), followed by newspaper, magazines, and trade journals (47% very often, often). Thus, if the EIC can motivate its listserv subscribers to pass on their EIC listservs/newsletters/factsheets to colleagues, it will have tapped into two of the most commonly consulted sources of energy information, and at very little promotional expense to the EIC.

A secondary value to increasing the number of utility listserv subscribers is that research indicates listserv members are more likely to use the other EIC services: more than half of the listserv survey [Quantec, 2001] respondents called the hotline (55%), used the Energy Solutions Database (50%), or used other services from the *energyideas.org* site (50%).

Factsheets

The EIC produces factsheets on a range of energy topics. It is recommended that factsheets continue to be developed to address topics relevant to Northwest utilities and their customers. Factsheets are a wonderful opportunity for "value added" service.

Media Tool Kits

It is recommended all marketing communications—including marketing tool kit items, media materials, listservs, factsheets, and the website—be re-designed to consistently communicate the key messages. Key messages on various marketing tool items targeting specific market segments will be customized to fit the various market segments' needs.

Energy Ally Exchanges. Information exchanges, communication pieces requiring interaction, and project-based partnerships all provide opportunities to develop relationships with the utility audience reinforcing a cooperative image. The EIC should market itself as a comprehensive package rather than its individual products and services, thereby emphasizing a single image as an ally and partner in overcoming the obstacles of lack of knowledge, time, and money that deter business and industry from implementing energy efficient products and practices.

The energy exchanges fall into three categories: website, listservs, and partnerships.

Website

The website is a core vehicle through which interactions will be promoted. These interactions can take many forms. For example, web users can register for a listserv, use the hotline service, or search for specific data online, but if a search comes up empty, they should be prompted to use the hotline service, and if they sign up for a listserv, other listservs of possible interest could be suggested. Also, a message board to post questions, success stories, and innovative solutions is extremely interactive and would continually bring people back to the EIC.

Listservs

Secondary opportunities in initiating exchanges that will support the ally and partner role exist through the development of a customized utility listserv, *UtilityTalk* [see PUBLIC RELATIONS, above]. Incorporating a forum for feedback would ensure the listserv meets the utility audience's needs; these might include such opportunities for exchanges as "letters to the editor," an "Ask the EIC" column, and reader forums for sharing successes and innovative solutions to energy problems. *UtilityTalk* will provide a good platform for updating the utility audience on new research or on features the EIC has added. A send-to-a-friend feature could also promote a feeling of partnership between the utility subscribers and the EIC.

Partnerships

Finally, partnerships on key projects are an opportunity for the EIC to build lasting relationships with the utilities. This category of exchanges will be the most demanding, requiring the most innovation and flexibility due to the ever-changing aspect of the differing projects. However, the opportunity exists for partnership building through more structured and ongoing communication outlets (for example, the EIC can create monthly articles on new research for a variety of utility publications, from internal newsletters for employees to flyers for customers).

Utilities Campaign: Management and Organization

The EIC will administer and manage its marketing messages and efforts. A team consisting of both internal staff and external consultants will be assembled to create and develop the EIC utility marketing campaign components. Outside professional assistance

for development efforts should be sought as needed (see team list) so that final products are polished and have the desired effect. The team will report directly to the WSU Energy Program's Principal Investigator and Communications Manager.

A briefing process should be implemented for any products, marketing communications, advertisements and/or mailings detailing the project objectives, background, strategy and target consumer to maintain consistency in the image and message delivered. More about the Marketing Collateral Briefing process can be found in Appendix A.

The initial priorities for the team will be:

- Creating and developing marketing objectives, messages, and images for marketing collateral, and
- Developing a strategy for events and presentations to introduce the EIC.

Tracking and Evaluation. The marketing strategy will be monitored periodically to ensure it is increasing awareness and use of the EIC and its services. Tracking and reporting the impact of the marketing campaign will be accomplished though a mix of research tools: focus groups, data from EIC's client interactions, and Alliance evaluation surveys.

Focus groups will be organized prior to confirming the messaging direction; these will provide feedback on both messaging and imagery. Also focus groups will be used to gauge the users' awareness and understanding of the EIC's purpose and direction by gauging the user's subjective response to the EIC's messaging and imagery after the implementation of the marketing campaign. Interaction with the utility market also will contribute positively to the EIC understanding of a critical market segment.

More objective information will be gathered through the EIC's user data and the Alliance's regularly conducted surveys. This includes the number of utilities, which specific utilities are using the EIC, and what services they use. Measures will be taken to coordinate with both the EIC, the Alliance and Quantec [Alliance's contractor] to take advantage of their efforts and maximize the information obtained.

Timeline and Budget

The initial investment for implementing the marketing campaign will be larger (due to the design, development, and production costs) than that required to maintain and update the EIC's marketing presence in all areas except advertising, where the budget should remain fairly constant.

Timeline. The implementation of a marketing strategic plan begins with the team. The process begins by confirming the mission and positioning statements; these drive the organization. The creative process should begin with the development of the key messages, moving on to actual marketing collateral.

Strategic planning should be occurring as the creative process begins. The team will work out the details of the tactics for advertising, public relations, website communications, and energy ally exchanges. These include finalizing decisions for direct mailings, EIC presentations, events, listserv communications, factsheets, the media tool kit, and the website design.

The changes for the website are not included in the timeline presented here. Because a Website Usability Survey is planned to be completed in the near future, it is proposed the EIC wait until the survey results are available before responding to any of the website recommendations included in this Marketing Plan. The initial project (implementation) could be completed as outlined below. Follow-on maintenance tasks—such as continued advertising or utility partnership projects requiring EIC presentations or specialized flyers not mentioned below—are not scheduled or budgeted as part of this Marketing Plan.

March	Finalize selection of marketing team members Confirm mission statement Confirm positioning statement Detail PR plan: Key messages, events planning, media tool kits, media list, presentation, press releases Write Marketing Briefs Organize Focus Groups
April	Begin Creative Process: Key messages, images—logo and marketing collateral Write Energy Ally Exchange specifics Begin Creative Production Finalize Presentation dates Facilitate Focus Groups
June	Finalize Creative Production

Marketing Expenses. The primary expense of implementing this marketing campaign for the utility audience will be in the following areas (all costs given are approximate):

Direct Marketing

Direct Mailings	New marketing collateral is required. It is proposed the focus be on fewer communication pieces and higher quality. *$4,500* printing (10,000 pieces); *$600* postage (2000 pieces); *$3,400* design (40 hrs x $85 per hour)

Print Advertising	Publication such as the Bulletin:	*$3,000* (three 4-color advertisements, 1/4 page)

Website

Design	Budget to be determined after Usability Study:	[no estimate]

Public Relations

Presentations	This will require staff time:	[no estimate]
Events	New Display signs for booths at events and staff time:	*1,500*
Listserv Communication	Staff time to develop and coordinate listservs:	[no estimate]
Factsheets	Staff time to develop and coordinate factsheets:	[no estimate]
Energy Ally Exchanges	Staff time to coordinate:	[no estimate]
Marketing Collateral	General marketing brochures and post cards:	*$3,000* (printing 10,000); *$5,100* design (60 hrs x $85 per hour). [Other general marketing collateral, such as letterhead, is outside the scope of this marketing as the focus is the *utility* audience.]
Professional Marketing Assistance	Guidance for design, printer, maintain timeline, and branding criteria:	$3,750 (50 hrs x $75 per hour)
Focus Group	Facilitate two focus groups, analyze and implement feedback:	$3,750 marketing fees (50 hrs x $75 per hour)

Cost Overview

Direct Mailing (Printing, Design, Postage)	$ 8,500.00
Print Advertising	$ 3,000.00
Events and Promotion (Boards, Travel)	$ 1,500.00
Marketing Collateral	$ 8,100.00
Professional Assistance (Marketing)	$ 3,750.00
Focus Groups	$ 3,750.00
	$28,600.00

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Energy Information Administration (2002). "Status of States Electric Industry Restructuring Activity," US DOE website: *www.EIA.doe.gov*, viewed January 2002.

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Quantec (2002). "Utility Information Needs Assessment," draft report to Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, provided for review January 2002.

Appendix A:

The Marketing Briefing Process

The briefing process should be applied to all materials that come out of the EIC, whether they be products, services, or marketing collateral. For all individuals working on a specific project, the brief provides a list of criteria which the project must meet. However, the briefing process needs to be customized to the intricacies of the specific areas. For example, for product and services, a discussion of function is relevant.

A briefing process exists to ensure the following:

- Consistency between all product and marketing pieces.
- That market communications appropriately address the needs of the targeted audience.
- That communication will fit and support the organizational objectives.
- That individual communication pieces fit within the larger market strategy.

Briefing Components

Project Description/Background. The purpose of describing the project and its background is to provide specific details of project is importance, how the project came to be and why this is important to the organization.

Communication Objectives. Communication objectives must focus on the target audience along with the communica*tion activity* the particular project involves. For example, will the project educate, teach, inform, provide or mobilize to list a few. Communication objectives help the organization achieve the organizational goals.

Target Audience/Needs Specific to this Audience. This section is dedicated to the target audience, whether it be the complete target market or specific segments. Any special need or details about the target group should be mentioned to help in the message and image creation.

Copy Needs. Copy should be inspired by the key messages and directed to the target market.

Logos/Image Needs. Logos and Images are developed to speak to the organizations values and qualities. Specific images may be more applicable to specific market segments.

Schedule. The time requirements for creation, development and production should be documented for all individuals involved.

EIC Marketing Brief

Today's Date:

Project Name:

Target Completion Date:

Budget:

Quantity:

Project Description/Background:

Communication Objectives:

Target Audience/Needs Specific to this Audience:

Copy Needs:

Logo/Image Needs:

Schedule:

Appendix H. Web Site Usability Study – Consultant Report

NW Energy Efficiency Alliance Energy Ideas Clearinghouse

ZAAZ
1924 First Avenue
Seattle, Wa 98101
206.341.9885

ZAAZ

Usability Study Report

Energy Ideas Clearinghouse Website
www.energyideas.org

Susan Campbell

Interface Engineer and Usability Specialist

ZAAZ

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

A usability study for the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse (EIC) website was conducted on May 13, 14, and 16, 2002 at Gilmore Research study facility. The study design, moderation, analysis, and recommendations were created and conducted by Susan Campbell, Interface Engineer and Usability Specialist at ZAAZ. This report documents usability study goals, study method, usability findings, and recommendations for improvement.

1.2 Goals

Together in a kick-off meeting, ZAAZ, the Alliance, and the EIC staff created several goals for the usability study. The goals served as guiding factors in determining the target audience to participate in the study, areas of the site for investigation, study method and data collection.

Goals of the EIC Usability Study were to:

- Validate what is working well.
- Do an overall evaluation of the site and uncover areas for improvement.
- Focus on search functionality as the primary method of accessing site content.
- Benchmark current site usability as a baseline metric for future improvements and evaluations.

1.3 Recommendations Summary

Impediments to usability were found throughout the EIC website in the main information architecture, nomenclature, navigational scheme, page layouts, graphical user interface elements, and linking strategy. Participants failed most every task and were not satisfied with their site experience. Given the number and nature of usability issues found, a complete redesign is recommended.

Recommendations:

ZAAZ

- Re-architect all main content on the site. Group information in ways that are meaningful to the target audience. Consider grouping information by sector.
- Add a site search to the home page and establish site search as a main function in the site information architecture.
- Revise Energy Solutions keyword search and Explore By Topic functionality so that users always receive some positive result or reinforcement.
- Re-architect and update "Explore By Topic" categorical structure and nomenclature.
- Follow user interface standards for website design. Specifically, how to construct a navigational structure, taxonomy, page layout, and graphical user interfaces that meet industry standards and user expectation. Use industry expert manuals that are peer reviewed.
- Create a new professional/updated look and feel to reflect the high quality information and services the EIC offers.

Please refer to Section 3.0 and the task spreadsheet (eic_task_summary.xls) for a detailed explanation of findings.

1.4 Impact of Findings

Website usability is the key to a good user experience. A currently excepted guideline for website use is there are only a few seconds to engage a user and guide them toward their goals. Websites cannot afford poor usability.

Study participants indicated that they perceived the EIC website's content to be of high value. Due to poor site usability, they are not able to experience that content value and turned away dissatisfied. During task performance, participants were not able to find the information they were looking for and indicated they would leave the site – not likely to return.

The high level recommendations listed above are based on issues critical to the user experience and success of the site. Addressing the high level recommendations will give the EIC website a strong foundation. Regular updates to site content and checking usability will keep the user experience fresh and meeting users needs.

2 Study Description

The study design was based on goals and issues set in the study kick-off meeting and follow on meetings with Alliance to set priorities. For this study the focus was on evaluating the overall site architecture, nomenclature, page layouts, and graphical user interfaces. Special attention was given to all search tasks, as they are the primary start points to accessing the information. The following sections describe the main areas for investigation, study set up, participant profiles, and tasks and activities.

2.1 Nature of Usability Studies

Usability studies are conducted and feedback is analyzed to improve the usability of a website. Participants from the target audience are recruited to do real world tasks with the website. Study administrators observe and record participant feedback to gain insight on how the target audience perceives the information and how they want the site to work. Understanding these processes gives the project team insight on how to design the best fit between user needs and the site information architecture and web interface.

In usability evaluation, the goal is to identify major barriers to using the website. We're looking for gaps in the road, not needles in a haystack. We only need a few people to fall through the gap to realize it the gap must be fixed. The sample size for a usability study should represent each target audience and have at least 3 participants per sector to compare among participants and validate responses. In support of a smaller sample size for usability studies, Nielsen and Landauer (1993) presented a model to predict the number of issues found as a function of the number of evaluators [study participants]. Overall they found that beyond 10 evaluators, the number of usability issues found, increased at a diminishing rate, plateau-ing at around 15 evaluators. It is highly likely that the "gaps in the road" were stumbled on first. The article can be found online at: http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_evaluation.html. Participants, or evaluators, selected for the EIC usability study represented the three major audiences (commercial, industrial, utility) and had at least four participants for each sector. It is highly likely that all major barriers to use were uncovered in the study as well as the large majority of lower priority issues. It is good to continually evaluate the website with end users as it evolves.

2.2 Areas for Investigation

In the kickoff and follow on meetings, we identified the following areas of the EIC website as the priorities for usability evaluation. The intent was to first focus on top-level information architecture, main navigation, and nomenclature to gain insight on how main sections and sub-sections should be organized. The second critical areas are the places where search tasks for energy efficiency information are performed (Energy Solutions, Events, and Library). Search and retrieval has the greatest impact on the experience from the visitors' perspective, and it also has the greatest impact on the business case for the site. The value and

success of the EIC service online is directly related to site visitors' ability to effectively search and find relevant documentation.

Areas for Investigation were:

- Information Architecture – Information hierarchy, main categories, and cross-linking between related categories, user experience paths (start and stopping points)
- Nomenclature – Organizing taxonomy, section and page headings, and other headlines
- Navigation – Navigation technique, use of top and left bars, links within the site, and links outside the site
- Visual Language – Visual messaging, graphical user interface, and page layouts
- Search Type 1 –Keyword Search and Explore By Topic in the Energy Solutions section, search result list, refining results list
- Search Type 2 – Scanning link lists in sections such as Programs, Organizations, Software
- Search Type 3 – Keyword and Advanced Search in Events section, results list, refining results list

2.3 Participant Profiles

Gilmore Research successfully recruited 16 participants from the Seattle area representing the commercial, industrial, and utility sectors. Participants were selected because, as a group, they had the experience and knowledge typical of those who would likely use the site. We aimed for a mix of sectors, genders, organization size, occupation, internet experience level, familiarity with the existing EIC website, and need for energy related information. Please refer to Section 2.1 for additional discussion of usability sample sizes.

With every participant group, there are interesting characteristics to note. First, there were very few commercial/industrial participants who had visited the EIC site. In contrast, there were few participants from the utility sector who had not visited the site. Clearly the utility sector has more exposure to EIC offerings. Across sectors, there were a few participants at the managerial level that would be sharing EIC information with customer-facing staff, rather than using the information in their job. This may have some influence on tolerance level looking for information if the need is not there. On the other hand, they also may play a key role in encouraging or expecting staff to use the resource as part of their jobs. Two participants in the commercial and industrial sectors who owned businesses were more consumers of energy, rather than

energy knowledge workers. Their task performance data was added to the overall dataset because it did not vary from the group.

Given all participant variables, the data were extremely consistent. Participants performed similarly independent of gender, Internet use, energy knowledge, and sector.

Participants At–a-Glance *

Sector and Number	Organization and Role	Internet Use Level	Visited the EIC Site ?
Commercial – 7	IROD Corp – Sr. Principal Systems Consultant	Expert	No
	Getty Images – Director of Facilities	Intermediate	Yes
	Edmonds School Dist – Office Manager O&M	Beginner	No
	NW Educational Loans – Development	Intermediate	Maybe
	Sir Speedy Printing – President	Intermediate	No
	Madison Engineering – Owner, consultant	Expert	Yes
	Sellen Construction –Director of Pre-Construction	Moderate	No
Industrial – 4	Chateau Ste. Michelle – Materials & Facility Mgr.	Intermediate	No
	Belshaw Bros – CFO & Operations	Expert	No
	Universal Paper box Mfg – Owner	Moderate	No
	Korry Electronics – Facility Mgr.	Beginner	No
Utilities – 5	Peninsula Light Co – Marketing Coordinator	Intermediate	Yes
	Puget Sound Energy – Program Manager	Moderate	Yes
	Seattle Public Utilities – Program Manager	Intermediate	Yes
	Snohomish Public Utilities – Sr. Mgr. Of Energy	Moderate	No
	Seattle City Light – Dir. Of Energy Mgmnt Svcs	Beginner	Yes

*Please refer to Appendix 5.4 for the full Participant Profile Table.

2.4 Study Set Up

Participants were recruited for a usability session of 1.5 hours, one-on-one with the study administrator.

The study space consisted of a medium sized conference room with a one-way mirror and an adjacent observation room. The observation room accommodated about five people who could view the study through the one-way mirror and see the video recording on a TV screen.

The EIC website was tested live using a T1 line and Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0. Participants used a PC, standard mouse and keyboard, with a 16" monitor with 256K-color set at 1024x768 resolution.

Sessions were recorded using a tripod and moveable video camera. Proper video resources to capture the webpage screen and mouse movement as participants interacted with the site were not available. However, the video does illustrate user problems through verbalization and it is possible to identify the screen/webpage participants are looking at.

2.5 Study Design

The following outlines the study task sequence spanning over the hour and a half. Activities such as the card sort and category rankings were designed to illicit feedback on how real world users would organize energy related information and the terminology they use to describe it. The directed tasks were designed to capture different types of interactions users normally have with the site and reveal areas for improvement. Together, all the tasks and activities provide a comprehensive evaluation baseline of the site. This study design may be used again to evaluate future site improvements. Please refer to Appendix 5.1 for the full Study Guide list of tasks.

Background Interview

The study began with a brief background interview to validate participation requirements and to gain insight into each participant's work responsibilities and related energy information needs.

Data Collected: Commentary, compiled in the Participant Profile Table Section 2.3.

ZAAZ

Card Sort

Participants were given a deck of 50 3x5 cards with one content description per card. Content descriptions were generated from the EIC website and represent the wide variety of energy related topics and content types available on the site. Please refer to Appendix 5.2 and the excel spreadsheet (eic_data_cardsort.xls) for the full list of Content Descriptions and data.

Using the deck of cards, participants were asked to:

- Group the cards into sections as if they were creating a website for their own use.
- Create cards for content they felt was missing from the original set.
- Create headings for each of their groups.
- Rank groups in order of importance.

Data Collected: Groupings and associated headings

Home Page & Navigation Review

Participants viewed the EIC home page on the computer monitor, and were asked some first impression questions about the home page.

Questions include:

- What do you notice first?
- What is the purpose of this site?
- What is most important thing on the page?

Then, on a color paper copy participants were asked to:

- Circle all the things on the page that you can click on.
- Cross (X) out the things that you are not at all interested in.

On the paper copy, participants were asked to read each main navigation term and say what they thought it meant and what they would expect to see when they clicked on the term.

- Top Navigation - Energy Solutions, Events, Library, About, and other as time permitted
- Left Navigation - Utility Resources, Web Links, Software, Publications, Organizations, Codes/Standards, Programs, Newsgroups, NW Ventures

Data Collected: Commentary on questions, count data from paper markings

Directed Tasks with Thinking-Out-Loud Protocol

Participants were then asked to look for information using the live EIC website. Tasks represent a variety of content types and pathways through the existing site. Tasks focused on broad searches using Energy Solutions, Explore By Topic, keyword search, Events search, and scanning list pages. Participants were asked to "think-out-loud" by verbalizing what they were thinking and doing and why. By observing participants performing real tasks with the website, we discover start and s topping points in navigating the site.

Data Collected: User pathways, errors, pass/fail rates, participant commentary

Task Debriefing

After the directed tasks section of the study participants had the opportunity to provide feedback in general and ideas for changes.

Data Collected: Commentary, listed in Appendix 5.6.

Category Review

All top-level categories in Energy Solutions, Explore By Topic were listed on a piece of paper. Participants were asked to scan through the list and cross off terms that were confusing or didn't fit the group. Then, participants circled their top three terms of interest. This exercise was to identify trigger words that people attended to, and words that may be problematic.

Data: List of confusing terms and most interesting terms, explained in Section 3.5.

Marketing Surveys

Three paper surveys were given to participants at the end of the study to get a look at marketing concepts relevant to the recently developed marketing plan. Please review Appendix 5.3 for copies of the surveys.

- Personal Information Survey – identify what personal information participants would be willing to give for selected EIC website services.
- Marketing Survey – insight into how participants perceive the EIC website, brand and services, as well as what energy-related content they are interested in.
- Organization Survey – learn about possible bias toward energy related organizations and the regions they serve.

Data Collected: Count data and written comments. Data collected in this study will be analyzed and summarized along with other Alliance / EIC marketing efforts.

3 Findings & Recommendations

This section lists and explains usability study findings and recommendations for improvements to the EIC website. Positive findings are briefly explained first, followed by areas for improvement. The objective for conducting a usability study is to discover where the problems are so this section focuses on tasks participants had difficulty performing. All findings may be cross-referenced to datasheets eic_task_summary.xls and eic_data_master.xls.

3.1 Positive Findings

Overall, participants perceived the EIC website as containing highly valuable information. They viewed it as objective and useful in the workplace and home. Many indicated that they would send EIC links to customers and pass them on to colleagues.

Regional and National news was very popular Home Page content, as was Codes & Standards. These are the links and information participants felt were most important to see first. The Home Page should continue providing current news and events. The Events section was also popular. To make it even stronger, consider listing the top 5 coming events on the main Events search page. This would meet users' expectations and continue to offer a sense of currency.

3.2 High Level Recommendations

Usability issues were found throughout the site: in the information architecture, nomenclature, navigational scheme, page layouts, graphical user interface elements, and linking strategy. Overall, participants performed poorly on most tasks, and in many cases, chose to abandon the site. Participants showed much frustration with the main function of the site, the Energy Solutions search and search results. Given the number and nature of usability issues found, a complete redesign is recommended.

Before diving into the details, it is important to consider a few notes on participant performance. Although participants varied by sector, familiarity with the EIC site, and Internet use, most participants' performed similarly – succeeding and failing at the same tasks. Participants who worked in the energy industry (utilities & energy knowledge workers), often performed worse than those not directly in the energy industry (small business owners, facility managers, consumers). Those who worked in the industry had expectations about the navigation terms and proper location of items. When they were mistaken, they gave up looking for that information instantly – thinking the site was wrong or that the information simply did not exist. Another interesting comparison is to look at expert Internet use versus beginner use. Expert Internet users had similar troubles with tasks as Beginner and Intermediate users. The main difference is that instead of giving

up on tasks, Experts found work-arounds including keyboard shortcuts and utilizing Internet Explorer browser tool bar functions (home icon and “Edit > Find”).

The following high-level recommendations address site-wide usability issues of information architecture, nomenclature, search, and the graphical user interface. These are the most critical issues impacting the user experience.

Recommendations:

- Re-architect all main content on the site. Group information in ways that are meaningful to the target audience. Participants indicated that it was not clear for whom the site was intended. Comments such as “Focus more on audience”, and “They are covering so much” were common. Consider grouping information by sector. This would allow for customized language and content by audience. Main site nomenclature and calls to action can be written in a voice and tone each sector is accustomed to. Current, frequently used, and high use content may be brought forward as appropriate to each sector.
- Add a site search to the home page and establish site search as a main function in the site information architecture. During the home page review, participants felt that a site search was missing from the Home Page. Many assumed it to be a safety standard on most websites. In task performance two participants mistakenly reverted to the Glossary search, thinking it was a site search. Before giving up on tasks, participants indicated that if there were a site search, they would use it and find what they were looking for.
- Re-architect and update “Explore by Topic” categorical structure and nomenclature. In task performance the Explore by Topic categories mislead many participants. This indicates that first level topics are too broad or misused to describe associated sub categories. In debriefing exercises, participants indicated that many terms were not descriptive enough and that there were more current terms they expected to see. Please refer to Appendix 5.5 for more findings on “Explore by Topic” categories.
- Revise Energy Solutions keyword search and Explore by Topic functionality so that users always receive results and positive reinforcement. Feature results on the results page, and place search tips to the side so they are not confused with error messaging. When there are more than 25 results received, the results page begins with a screen length of phrases or how to revise search parameters to get other results. In the study, participants partially scanned these phrases, and indicated to the study administrator that there were zero results. They returned to the search area and never scrolled down to find that there were indeed results.
- Follow user interface standards for website design. Employ simple rules for navigational structure, taxonomy, page layout, and graphical user interfaces that meet industry standards and user expectation. Specifically, rework Energy Solutions search, Glossary, list pages with “Sort by

Topic", search results pages, and other internal pages where graphical user interfaces do not follow standards for links, buttons, and so on. Use industry expert manuals that are peer reviewed.

- Create a new professional/updated look and feel to reflect the high quality information and services the EIC offers. Participants indicated that the EIC has valuable, objective, and accurate information. A more professional look would speak to the industry crowd and provide a more appealing wrapper for the site experience.

3.3 Card Sort

As described in the Study Design Section 2.5, participants were asked to group the EIC website content in ways that were meaningful to them – as if they were building a website for their own use. Participant content organizations are not recommended solutions to the redesign, but offer insight into the ways users perceive EIC information. They may also be valuable start points for exploring alternatives. The following lists short descriptions of card sort groupings. Please refer to eic_data_cardsort.xls for a full listing of card sort data.

Card Sort Group Overview:

- Based on sector interests and frequently accessed information (agriculture, industrial, commercial, utilities, residential)
- For the energy/utility office workplace
- For home use (residential)
- Current or hot topics, content for the home page
- Energy Categories (similar to Energy Solutions topics)

3.4 Home Page Review

The Home Page is the first impression site visitors have of the EIC website. Participants were asked a few questions to capture their initial thoughts and perceptions about the purpose of the site and areas of attraction.

Items participants noticed first were:

Color – There were two responses in favor of the site colors, but overall the first impression was negative. Comments from participants included:

- "Too much green, distracting – wrong contrast"
- "If I was on this all day, I'd have a headache."
- "Color is not serious looking."

Regional News – participants were pleased to see news on the Home Page.

Navigation & Layout - familiar top and left navigation layout

Text – difficult to read; need to increase space in between lines

Main Point and Purpose of the Site

The main purpose of the site was not entirely clear to participants. Most knew it had something to do with energy. It was not clear whether it was specific to the northwest or whether it was targeted toward a specific audience. A few participants felt it was mostly about news.

Home Page Content Interests

Participants were asked to circle the information on the Home Page they would be most interested in and to cross off content they would not be interested in.

High Interest:

- Regional & National News
- Articles, Fact Sheets & Case Studies
- Events
- Codes & Standards
- Organizations

Low Interest:

- Jobs
- Survey & Prizes
- Contests
- Software

3.5 Navigation Term Review

The words used to describe and label main categories of information on a website form the user experience pathways through the site information. In order to learn whether the EIC target audience understands EIC website terminology, study participants were asked to define the meaning of each main navigation term in their own words. Without seeing what information was behind the term, participants described what they might find if they clicked on each term. If participants correctly described the actual content within, the term "passed" and was put in the "Terms that communicate clearly" category. Looking at the list below, these terms are all specific (codes & standards) and common to other websites (about, contact us). If participants did not know what the term meant or incorrectly described its actual contents, the term "failed" was categorized as "problem terms". A table of problem terms and explanations are listed below.

Terms that communicate clearly:

- Contact Us
- Events
- Web Links (catch-all)

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- Jobs
- Codes/Standards
- About

Terms that were problematic:

Term	Number pass/Total	Explanation
Utility Resources	12/14	Confusion over whether these were utility resources for those in the industry or the consumer
Energy Solutions	13/16	Participants correctly guessed the contents of this term, but in task performance, it was misused
Organizations	10/15	Too broad, organizations of what?
Programs	8/15	Too broad, programs about what and for whom?
Library	5/16	Participants tied a physical meaning to Library. Place to find recommended books, books to purchase, search for energy articles, redundant with Publications.
Publications	5/14	Participants felt this was a redundant link – same as library. Place for newsletters, all industry publications.
NW Ventures	6/16	Participants had no idea what this label meant. Some guesses were joint ventures, business oriented, up and coming ideas in energy, investing.
Newsgroups	2/13	Participants mistook this term for an additional news link. This may be largely due to the fact that there are many links on the Home Page dealing with and using the term news.
Glossary	n/a	Glossary was misused in task performance. Two participants called it site search and used it as such.
Resource List of Event Listings	n/a	This term was unclear, and its meaning did not clear up when participants clicked on the link and saw its content.
Energy News Resource List	n/a	This term was perceived as redundant due to the 3 other news links on the Home Page.
Acronyms and abbreviations	n/a	Acronyms such as EIC, NW, and others should be spelled out.

3.6 Directed Task Findings

This section lists the most critical usability issues found as participants performed tasks with the live EIC site. Please refer to eic_task_summary.xls for a comprehensive spreadsheet of tasks, findings, and performance ratings. Each finding is listed with an explanation and recommendation.

Overall Information Architecture and Navigation

Finding: Information contained within the Energy Solutions database is not accessible enough. Energy Solutions heading is not clear.

- Explanation: When asked to look for generic and common information, (even self selected topics), participants did not know where to begin. They scanned the home page and left navigation for related topics. Top navigation bar, where Energy Solutions is located, was largely ignored.
- Recommendation: Add a Site Search from the home page. In addition, regroup and reposition this information by bringing key (perhaps audience specific) topics to the forefront. In the near term, consider renaming to “Energy Topics” or group all under an Energy Topics Library.

Finding: Top and left navigation scheme to not work as expected.

- Explanation: Participants noticed that it appeared on some main pages, but not others. The inconsistency was confusing.
- Recommendation: Typically the top and left navigation related to each other. When you select from the top, the items on the left change to reveal subcategories of the section. Redesign navigational hierarchy on the page. Near term - add to all main pages accessible from the top bar.

Finding: Sub page layouts offer an inconsistent experience based on the amount of search results on the page.

- Explanation: In search results and list pages, there is a big difference between pages with one listing and pages with many. It's not always clear how things work together.
- Recommendation: Footer navigation attributes too much of the confusion. Eliminate low priority/ unnecessary footer content. Add spacers in between dynamic content and footer to offer more visual separation.

Finding: The Glossary is confused/mistaken to be the Energy Solutions database search and site search functionality.

- Explanation: When attempting to revise searches, 3 participants used the Glossary keyword box, thinking it would affect their ES search results. Once they started this route, there was no way out.
- Recommendation: Remove Glossary functionality from Energy Solutions pages, Search Results, and all section footers where it is currently applied.

Search Type I - Energy Solutions

Finding: The current Search By Topic tree structure is too deep and not specific enough upfront.

- Explanation: Without a specific article in mind, participants used Search by Topic first. Two participants followed the path Lighting> Decorative> Holiday. Topics were essentially buried too deep. They immediately looked for keyword search afterward and often went to Glossary (see below). The majority of participants failed these tasks.
- Recommendation: Redesign Explore by Topic category tree to expose more specific topics upfront. Alpha order is working well. Make tree structure shallower (perhaps only 2 levels). Consider labeling as Explore by Topic to "Browse" to differentiate more from keyword target searches.

Finding: The way to start a new search is not clear enough.

- Explanation: Participants were not sure how to start over. Most clicked back or hit the home button. Current design is inefficient.
- Recommendation: New Search is located next to the Glossary. Move it up to the top near search function.

Finding: The Help button is in a harmful position.

- Explanation: When submitting search words, many participants moved their mouse over the help button first. Two clicked help instead of search and went off track.
- Recommendation: Remove the Help button from the bottom right corner. Since Help is not a function, change it to an underlined link. Perhaps rename as "Search Tips", or something more representative of page content.

Finding: The keyword search results page layout masks most of the result set.

- Explanation: When participants arrived at the search results page, many did not scroll to see all the results. Q & A was not expected and many pages require a lot of scrolling to see more.
- Recommendation: Redesign the Results Page to feature the most important content (articles, case studies). Position less important content after. Reposition “help” information off to the side.

Finding: Opening phrases on the Results Page misguide users.

- Explanation: Immediately upon reading the opening phrases, many participants went back and changed search results - thinking they had none.
- Recommendation: Given the amount of scrolling required to see results, offer results first, place help info to the side, and condense. Assistance is important the first time, the second time it's clutter. Remove Glossary from footer to avoid mistakes in searching Energy Solutions database.

Search Type II – Listing (Web Links, Software, Publications, Organizations, Codes & Standards, Programs, Newsgroups, NW Ventures)

Finding: Lists extending beyond 1.5 screen lengths is very difficult to scan to the point of frustration.

- Explanation: The visual lists form a sort of “Wall of Text”. Participants stared blankly, were overwhelmed, and gave up.
- Recommendation: Break down long lists into categories from the start. Add a search.

Finding: “Sort by Topic” is not visible.

- Explanation: When scanning and scrolling, participants missed the Sort by Topic functionality at the top and bottom of the list. The visual representation of a link misguides the user into thinking it's a link rather than a function.
- Recommendation: GUI standards dictate that underlined links lead to more information and buttons perform actions. Sort by Topic is represented like as a link, and people gloss right over it. Create a function button for sort, and place it closer to the list. Make it appear as though it affects the list. Consider a filter to aid searching this list.

Finding: The relationship of list items to Energy Solutions is not apparent.

- Explanation: When asked where participants were, they noticed the Energy Solutions tab was highlighted but were confused thinking the left navigation was persistent and not a subcategory of Energy Solutions.

- Recommendation: The inconsistency in interaction with top and left navigation is problematic.

Search Type III – Events

Finding: Search functionality was not expected/anticipated as the first page in the Events section.

- Explanation: When participants clicked on the Events link, they sat back a little and said they expected a listing. Search was ok, though.
- Recommendation: Consider listing 5 upcoming events per state, or for the NW and then offering a search for more. This gives people a sense of what information & results format will follow search.

Finding: "View all Events" is often misused to modify search results or initiate the keyword search.

- Explanation: Participants selected 'View All Events" to modify their search term. In fact, it does not work this way.
- Recommendation: Locate the "View all Events" button separate from the search function.

Finding: "See Resource List of Event Links" is not a meaningful label. The list itself did not offer value to participants, and linked them off-task.

- Explanation: When participants clicked on this button, they did not know where it took them, nor did they understand the purpose of the list.
- Recommendation: If the list is important, provide context and reposition in the site or Events Section.

Finding: Results listing can be very long and "Final 6 Events" button not visible.

- Explanation: Participants ended their task with the first screen of result listings because they did not notice that there were more results that continued on anther page.
- Recommendation: Place page navigation above the fold. Use one long scrolling list, AND/OR add filters to reduce result list, AND/OR place page indicators at the top of the listing as well as the bottom. <<BACK>> <<NEXT>> or <<1-10>> 13 <<30-50>>

Utility Resources Page

Finding: Utility Resources label is not clear.

- Explanation: It is not clear whether Utility Resources is for the industry or for the consumer.
- Recommendation: Differentiate. Consider " Info For Utilities" or "Info on Utilities", "Local Utilities" - something more descript.

Finding: Default content displayed does not match the link interaction shown on the page.

- Explanation: Utility Organizations, National Utility Assoc, NW Utility Orgs, are all purple links indicating that they are previously visited pages. In fact, the content is displayed on the active page, and the links re-anchor within the page. This is a design error.
- Recommendation: Adhere to GUI standards. Underlined text links should go to other pages. Either retain the full list and remove the associated links, or keep the links and remove the full list. Anchor links should look different than interior and exterior links.

Finding: "Utility Options Database" indicates an interior not an exterior link.

- Explanation: This links users outside the EIC site.
- Recommendation: Adhere to GUI standards. Differentiate links that leave the site from those that link to places within the EIC site.

Library

Finding: The label of Library does not communicate its contents well.

- Explanation: The only direct relationship is to EIC publications and to the WSU online library. There is little hierarchy of information within the section. Energy news may be seen as redundant since there are several news links from the home page.
- Recommendation: Change the name to be more descriptive or change the content. Offer some hierarchy in labeling.

Contact Us

Finding: Contact information does not have a strong central point.

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- Explanation: Contact information appears throughout the site, in various locations (left navigation, footer navigation, and top navigation). Participants chose at random.
- Recommendation: Locate all user/site contact information under one header. Differentiate from site spons orship information and logos.

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4 Start Points for Redesign

A complete site redesign takes some time to plan, design, and implement. In the meantime, some improvements can be made to the existing site that should increase usability in the short-term.

4.1 Changes to the Existing Site

Home Page Upgrade

- Reduce amount of content & features, reposition lower priority content deeper in the site. Participants were not interested in any of the content in the right channel (surveys, historic dates, flashing messages, quick tips). Remove this content from the home page. Continue to feature news, and perhaps add more features related to site content, such as new articles, events, programs, standards and codes. This is the information participants were most interested in.
- Revise navigation terms to be more explicit. Navigation terms were too broad to lead users quickly and easily to the information they were looking for (Programs, Organizations, Library, etc). Use more specific terms to describe main sections of content. Use active voice where applicable. Please refer to navigation terminology review for more on terms.

Sub Page Revisions

- Reduce footer content and functionality. The footer Glossary search and other associated functions hinder site navigation. Remove this extra functionality until it can be located in a place that does not distract the user from the real task. Footer information should only contain contact us, copyright, and other supporting footnotes.
- Revise all pages to adhere to standard GUI standards and expectations. For example, buttons do things and underlined text links go places. Visuals such as graphics, text appearance, and layout all send messages to the user about how the site works. Create a consistent visual language/rule base. Consistency is key to supporting the user as they grasp the meaning of the site and learn to navigate.

Begin Sector Research for New Information Architecture

- Interview users from the target audience to gain data about features and information they would be interested in, and the words they use to describe their needs.
- Write more use case scenarios to always keep the end user in mind.

-
- Use card sort results from this study to get ideas for future site information architecture. Run the use case scenarios through them to better understand the user experience.
- Use category review results from this study to get ideas on different ways energy related information might be categorized from the end users point of view.
- Create a site map of the existing site. Review linking relationships and current stop points. Sketch ways to make user pathways obstacle free.

4.2 Technical Notes

The following lists a few technical considerations for the near future.

- Consider adding a few more low weight feature graphics and spacer graphics to add interest and provide a more consistent layout.
- Continue to design for browser resolutions set at 800x600 pixels. This is still the most widely used setting and many of the participants indicated it was the setting they used. Pay attention to where the fold is located.
- Consider purchasing more URL names to increase visibility in search engines. It is recommended that you purchase both .com and .org for energyideasclearinghouse, eic, energyideas, and more as marketing finds appropriate.
- Consider developing the site with XML and XSL to provide a flexible modular site framework. This programming language is extensible to portable devices as well.

4.3 Online Resources

The following lists online resources for usability research and web design. They are respected sources in the web design community.

www.hcibib.com

www.usableweb.com

www.webmonkey.com

NW Alliance & EIC
Appendices

5.1 Study Guide & Task List

Part I: Study Directions and Background (10 minutes)

Background Questions

1. What is your occupation and role? (primary job responsibilities)
2. What do you use energy information for in your job?
3. How do you typically do your research? What resources do you use for the energy-related information you need?
4. How often do you use the Internet for this research?
5. Ever visited the EIC website? If so, about how long ago was your last visit? Do you remember it? Impressions?

Part II: Heading-less Card Sort (20 minutes)

Instructions for Card Sort

This deck of cards has descriptions of different types of energy related information. For this exercise I'm going to ask you to group and organize this set of cards in the way that you would like them to appear on the website for your own use.

If you would, place the things you think are your main topics on the left and then group items that relate next to them. If a card doesn't seem to belong and you don't want to include it, just set it aside.

Create Headings

Use these cards to create your own headings for the content groups you create. (4x6) Please write the name of your heading on the card and put it with the group.

Talk out loud.

As you're sorting the cards, please say out loud what you're thinking and doing and why. This gives us insights into your thinking process and how we can improve the design. (Note: For those who are familiar with the EIC website this not a memory test – we want to learn how they would organize the content.)

Discussion

Let's talk about how and why they grouped and labeled things as you did.
Order the groups in the way that makes sense to you.
Rank in order of importance.

Part III: Home Page & Navigation Review (10 minutes)

~~1.~~1. **Home Page Review** (start at monitor)

~~a.~~1. What do you notice first?
~~b.~~2. What is this page?
~~c.~~3. What is the purpose of this site?
~~d.~~4. What is most important thing on the page?
5. Does the color mean anything to you?
6. Circle all the things on the page that you can click on. Why? (paper copy)
7. X out the things that you are not at all interested in.

2. **Navigation Review** - noticed you circled these. What would happen if you clicked on this? What do you think you would get? Review each term for expectations.

Group 1 – Main Navigation (tabs across the top)
- Energy Solutions
- Jobs
- Events
- Library

Group 2 – Left Nav (Green)
- Utility Resources

Group 3 – Left Nav (Light Green)
- Web Links
- Software
- Publications
- Organizations
- Codes/Standards
- Programs
- Newsgroups
- NW Ventures

Part IV: Directed Tasks with EIC Website (30 minutes)

Discover start and stopping points on the site, and identify start and stopping points. Observe content organization, language, visuals, layout, and UI elements. Content on this site relates to all energy efficiency topics – efficiency/ conservation, policy/ planning, design/ operations/ management)

Talking out loud.

Task 1

Broad Search for Commercial Renovation/Marketing – Heating/Insulation. Let's say you work for a consulting firm and you want to sell your client on an upgrade/renovation to a more energy efficient heating system.

- What types of information would you want to arm yourself with?
- What type of info would you expect to get from this site?
- Where would you look first?
- Go ahead and look for it on the site.
- Results Page Questions (standard) –
- Is this result what you expected?
- Where are these results coming from?
- Does this display work for you?
- Which of these are useful or not useful to you? (results list)
- What would you do to refine your search?
- What would you do to expand your search?
- What would you do differently?
- What would you do to view these items? What you expected? (link off?)
- Where would you find related case studies or success stories?
- If you couldn't find what you are looking for do you see a way to contact the EIC directly? (Help, Site Map, Contact Us, Call?)
- If you were in the middle of your research but needed to stop for now and come back later, what would you do? Where would you get started again?

Task 2

Target Search for Electrical: Review Search by Topic categories.

- The EIC publishes seasonal information.
- Go ahead and find the fact sheet on Energy Efficient Christmas Lights.
- If you couldn't use the search box, what would you do?
- Have you found it? What is it?
- Results Page Questions (standard) –
- Is this result what you expected?

- Where are these results coming from?
- Does this display work for you?
- Which of these are useful or not useful to you? (results list)
- What would you do to refine your search?
- What would you do to expand your search?
- What would you do differently?
- What would you do to print this page?

Task 3
Broad Search for Electric Utility conservation programs - Observe how people approach utility links (ES or Lib). Find out if utility links are organized in a meaningful way. Checking labeling scheme (by audience or topic).

- Let's say you're a facility manager at Boeing and you'd like to look into energy conservation programs sponsored by your local utility company.
- How could you do that using this site?
- Is this what you expected?

Task 3 Follow Up
You then learn that Seattle City Light (assume it is your utility) has conservation programs. Go ahead and look for them.

- If you couldn't use the search box, what would you do?
- Results Page Questions (standard) –
- Is this result what you expected?
- Where are these results coming from?
- Does this display work for you?
- Which of these are useful or not useful to you? (results list)
- What would you do to refine your search?
- What would you do to expand your search?
- What would you do differently?

Task 4
Targeted Search for Special Topic (Software & Pumps) - What role does search box versus search by topic play. Are topics meaningful? Check relationship to Library and Software link.

- Where would you look for computer simulation tools to help you analyze Pumping Systems?

- Results Page Questions (standard) –
- Is this result what you expected?
- Where are these results coming from?
- Does this display work for you?
- Which of these are useful or not useful to you? (results list)
- What would you do to refine your search?
- What would you do to expand your search?
- What would you do differently?
- If you didn't get the results you wanted and decided to start searching over again. From this page, what would you do?

Task 5
Target Search for Events
Let's say you want to find the date for the "Excellence in Building 2002" conference.

- Where would you look? Go ahead and do that.
- What does this display tell you? What do those words mean to you? Are they important?
- How would you find events on HVAC?
- What is this link? (Resource List of Event Links) Where would it take you?
- Where are you now? Is this what you expected? Is this useful to you?

Task 6
Broad search for marketing info – Let's say you want to create a mailing to send to your clients.
What types of information would you want to give them, and where might you find that information?

Extra Tasks if Time Permits:

If you knew of an energy-related resource you discovered at work that was really helpful, and you wanted to recommend that the EIC site administrator post it on the EIC site, how would you do that?

Broad Search for General Interest - Observe what content people are interested in and how they look for it. Review Search Results page. You are tasked with coming up with some energy savings ideas for your own company. What ideas & information would you want to gather?
Where would you expect to find it on the site? What type of results do you expect to get (white papers, factsheets, etc). Go ahead and do that.

Broad search for "Insulation" - What role does search box versus search by topic play. Are topics meaningful? Relationship to Library or other sections?

Where would you look for a variety of information on Insulation?

Broad Search for Sustainability – Review Search by Topic categories & results page. Relationship to Library or other sections?
Set up: We're going to look for info on sustainability. First, what does sustainability mean to you?
Question: Where would you look for information on sustainability?

Part V: Tasks Debriefing (5 minutes)

1. Describe in your own terms, what the purpose of the site is.
2. In your mind, what type of information does it contain and how useful is it?
3. What aspects are you most/least interested in?
4. Do you think the EIC knows who uses its web site? How could they determine that?
5. Open comments about the site design.
6. If you could change one thing about the site, what would it be? Why?

Part VI: Content Categories Review (5 minutes)

1. The web design team is considering using this list of topics to categorize energy related information on the site and they would like your help. If you would, quickly scan through these terms to see if they make sense to use as main categories. Circle the terms that don't seem right, and tell me why.

2. Which of these terms would you be most interested in? Put a check by them. Now let's look at this category a little more. These are suggested sub-categories. Do these work for you? Circle the one that do not and tell me what you think about them.

Part VII: Marketing Surveys (10 minutes to complete in wait area)

Now there are a few short surveys I'll have you do in the waiting area.

1. Personal information survey
2. Organization survey
3. Marketing survey

Thank you for participating!

5.2 Card Sort Content Descriptions

The following descriptions were used in the card sort. Each description was written on a 3x5 card. Participants were asked to sort the cards in ways that were meaningful to them, as if they were creating a website for their own use.

Refer to eic_data_cardsort.xls for cardsort data.

1 Agriculture
2 Appliances
3 Building Design
4 Building Envelope
5 Coal Systems
6 Codes/ Standards/ Legislation
7 Compressed Air
8 Economic
9 Education
10 Electrical Systems
11 Energy Information
12 Energy Use
13 Environment
14 Heat Recovery
15 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation
16 Industrial
17 Lighting
18 Management/Administration
19 Motors and Drives
20 Operation and Maintenance
21 Power Production
22 Pumping Systems
23 Refrigeration
24 Renewables
25 Software
26 Steam Systems
27 Transportation
28 Utility Companies
29 Water/ Wastewater
30 Water Heating
31 Weather Data
32 Online newsgroups and how to subscribe
33 Online form to request free commercial or industrial publications
34 Access to Washington State University's online library of energy related information
35 Utility program information on competitive and marketing projects and programs
36 National utility associations
37 Utility companies in the northwest
38 Current news about what's going on in the utilities industry
39 Marketing information for the utilities industry to use with their customers
40 Projects sponsored by the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance
41 Media Packet - Articles, text for bill stuffers, camera-ready ads, technical articles.
42 Home energy audit and savings calculator
43 EnergyStar product list
44 Energy savings tips for residential
45 Energy savings tips for commercial
46 Contact info for utility company call centers in the northwest
47 List of energy related organizations in the northwest
48 Link out to the Dept. of Energy's Federal Energy Management Program website (FEMP)
49 List of residential projects sponsored by the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance
50 Hotline to call for free energy related information

5.3 Marketing Surveys

Organizations Survey

Directions:

1. Organizations will often orient energy related information towards one region or another. Which states (OR, WA, etc.) do you feel each of the organizations listed below serve? Please write as many state names as you feel apply next to each organization.

2. Which of these organizations do you feel has the most objective, accurate, and valuable information? Please circle as many as you feel apply.

List of Organizations

Energy Ideas Clearinghouse
Washington State University Cooperative Extension - Energy Program
Bonneville Power Administration
Idaho State University
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Oregon State University
Northwest Power Planning Council
Oregon State University Extension Service Energy Program
Montana State University
Oregon Office of Energy
University of Washington
Washington State University
University of Oregon
University of Idaho
Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance
Idaho Department of Water Resources – Energy Division
University of Montana

Personal Information Survey

Directions:

For a one-time registration for Energy Ideas Clearinghouse website services, what information would you be willing to provide? [NOTE: Assume complete privacy policy.]

Please put an X by the information you would be willing to give to get the additional services listed below.

Personal & Company Information	**Services that require Sign up**			
	Access to Online Library	**Read and Edit Job Board**	**Receive email notices about articles of interest**	**Save your research & links on the EIC site**
Name				
Job Title				
Company Name				
Your company Phone Number				
Company Fax Number				
Your email address at work				
Company Business Address (street, city, state, zip)				
Your primary job functions				
Industry/Business Type				
Home address				
Home phone number				
Your email address at home				
Follow-up Surveys - Telling us how/what you use the information for & its impact.				

Content Survey (Page 1 of 2)

EIC Website Study
Content Survey

Page 1 of 2

Participant Number

Directions:
Please fill in the circle that best represents your experience of the energyideas.org website.

1. The Energy Ideas Website seemed...

Not at all Credible	○	○	○	○	○	Very Credible
Not at all accurate	○	○	○	○	○	Very Accurate
Not at all valuable	○	○	○	○	○	Very Valuable
Not at all relevant to my needs	○	○	○	○	○	Very relevant to my needs
Very Biased	○	○	○	○	○	Completely Objective

2. How important are the following energyideas.org website factors to you?

	Very low	Low	Med	High	Very High
Free information	○	○	○	○	○
Potential for contact with a real person	○	○	○	○	○
How the website looks (attractiveness)	○	○	○	○	○
How usable the site is	○	○	○	○	○
Logging in for a personalized section	○	○	○	○	○
Print-friendly versions	○	○	○	○	○
Multimedia (moving images, Flash, sound)	○	○	○	○	○

Other factors? (please write in) _____

Content Survey (Page 2 of 2)

Participant Number

3. What types of energy related information and services are you interested in?

	Very low	Low	Med	High	Very High
Frequently Asked Questions & Answers (FAQ)	○	○	○	○	○
Articles	○	○	○	○	○
Technical white papers	○	○	○	○	○
Case studies	○	○	○	○	○
Fact sheets about products	○	○	○	○	○
National organizations & programs	○	○	○	○	○
Local organizations & programs	○	○	○	○	○
Events (conferences, meetings, etc)	○	○	○	○	○
Hotline service - questions answered by phone or email	○	○	○	○	○
Newsgoups (online listserv)	○	○	○	○	○
Links to other related websites	○	○	○	○	○
Job search	○	○	○	○	○
Software	○	○	○	○	○
Energy savings tip of the day	○	○	○	○	○
Codes & standards	○	○	○	○	○
Calculators	○	○	○	○	○
Feedback forms	○	○	○	○	○
Contests	○	○	○	○	○
National news	○	○	○	○	○
Regional news	○	○	○	○	○
EIC website news	○	○	○	○	○

Other? (please write in) _____

Any other comments?

Would you be interested in participating again? If so, please write down your email or a phone number where we can reach you in the future. Thank you again for participating!

5.4 Participant Profile Tables

Commercial Participant Profile Table

	Job/Title	Company	Industry	Yrs	Energy Info Needs	Resources	Co. Size	Internet Hr/wk	Internet Use	Visited EIC ?
P1	Sr. Principal, Power Systems Consultant - he designs power systems. Electrical engineering.	IROD Corp	Commercial	8	Conservation, consulting research in energy savings for sm. biz	Online pubs, internet, apps, internet journals, call vendors	small (9)	20	expert	no
P2	Director of Facilities	Getty Images	Commercial	8	Forecasting trends in util. Rates. Current events, state regulations.	Websites for forecasting around Sept./Oct. Internet only.	large (2000)	2	intermed	yes, found on a search engine
P3	Office mgr. Maintenance & Operations	Edmonds School District	*Commercial/ Public	12	PUD grant writing, usage. She is the conduit for all energy info in her school dist. She passes on energy related info to others.	Internet only	large (500)	12	beg	no
P4	Dir. Of Corp. Dev. (makes all decisions for energy usage and facility operations)	NW Educational Loans	*Commercial/ Consumer	20	Cost savings on rental properties. Interested in SAD. Does this research once every few months.	Internet	med (160)	2	intermed	maybe
P5	President, and franchise owner	Sir Speedy Printing	*Commercial/ Consumer	21	Consumer - lowering cost, doesn't use this information other than to learn & control electric costs	Calls vendors, word of mouth	small (9)	6 to 10	intermed	no
P8	Owner, Consulting mech eng. All his work is EE.	Madison Engineering	Commercial/ Consulting	16	High level info for clients, product rsch,	Books, calls vendors, rarely the Internet b/c his cases are too specialized - uses Internet for specific target searches only	small (1)	15	expert	yes, 6 mo ago - visits from time to time, successfully found info
P10	Director of Pre-Construction. Works with design team to recommend ee systems.	Sellen Construction	Commercial/ Ind. Construction	25	Life cycle cast analysis, sustainability.	Has vendors do studies.Custom solutions. Internet once a week for this rsch.	med (400)	1	mod	no, but thinks he's heard of it - knew lighting lab

Industrial Participant Profile Table

	Job/Title	Company	Industry	Yrs	Energy Info Needs	Resources	Company Size	Internet Hr/wk	Internet Use	Visited EIC
P6	Materials & Facility Purchasing Manager	Chateau Ste. Michelle	Ind mfg./Agri	28	Track nat. gas, purchasing & contracts trade.	Uses the Internet for all research, looks monthly at qtrly numbers for pricing	large (850)	10	intermed	no
P7	CFO & Operations - designs equip for bakery industry. Operations mgr.	Belshaw Brothers	Industrial/mfg.	15	Buy, design, calibrate gas fryer machines, conservation. Wants to build more ee machinery for their customers.	Use Internet for all rsch. WA DOE - but feels its not user-friendly. Hasn't found one site that pulls all the info together. Q&A would be great.	large (2200)	30	expert	no
P9	President, owner	Universal Paper Box Mfg.	*Industrial/ mfg./ sales - consumer	8	Consumer - looking for payback on new windows, roof	Some Internet, mostly talk with contractors	small (21)	8	mod	no
P11	Facility Manager	Korry Electronics - mfg of controls for airplane cockpits.	Industrial	30	Reducing consumption costs. Currently more than 15K a month bill.	Seattle City light programs research, word of mouth, some general Internet research occasionally - none in particular, trade magazines	large (520)	3	beg	no

Utility Participant Profile Table

	Job/Title	Company	Industry	Yrs	Energy Info Needs	Resources	Co. Size	Internet Hr/wk	Internet Use	Visited EIC
P12	Marketing Coordinator, Accounts Manager	Peninsula Light Company	Utility	13	Talks with customers, gives estimates. Writes monthly newsletters (code changes are big). Refer people to the EIC website.	Internet	med (90)	7	intermed	yes, april, good site
P13	Program Manager	Puget Sound Energy	Utility	25	Talks with Customers - Marketing - Produce brochures to conserve energy. Manage programs for contractors and vendors, upgrades to more ee products	Market research, focus groups. Internet a little.	large (500)	1	mod	Yes, but not regularly
P14	Program Manager for Resource Conservation	Seattle Public Utilities	Utility	6	Talks with customers. Water conservation materials. Looks at usage per occup. To determine baselines for which facility is using.Staying updated with new techs and opptys.	Internet only.	large (3500)	2	intermed	yes, used a lot about a year ago for school report
P15	Sr. Manager of Energy/Electric and water util (not the consumer facing knowledge worker)	Snohomish Public Utilities Dept.	*Utility	16	Budgeting and forecasting, keep updated on legislative issues, product info	Word of mouth, conferences, paid subscription websites eSource, library	large (850)	5	mod	no
P16	Director of Energy Management Services (not the consumer facing knowledge worker)	Seattle City Light	*Utility	25	Policy issues planning, stay updated, implement conservation programs	Ask her staff for studies, eSource, Urban Consort. Of Energy,	large (2000)	7	beg	yes, confused by “Utility Resources”

5.5 Participant Category Review

All top-level categories in Energy Solutions Explore By Topic were listed on a piece of paper. Participants were asked to scan through the list and cross off terms that were confusing or didn't fit the group. Then, participants circled their top three terms of interest. This exercise was to identify trigger words that people attended to, and words that may be problematic.

Key:
C = participants from the commercial sector
I = participants from the industrial sector
U= participants from the utilities sector
Votes = participant voted this term as in their top 3 most interesting categories

Energy Solutions Category Review
Top Ranked Categories (not including sub-categories)

Codes/Standards	(8 votes) 5C, 2I, 1U
Energy Use	(6 votes) 4C, 2I
Heating, Cooling, Ventilation	(5 votes) 3C, 1I, 1U
Lighting	(5 votes) 2C, 1I, 2U
Electrical Systems	(4 votes) 1C, 2I, 1U
Industrial	(4 votes) 2C, 2I
Building Envelope	(3 votes) 1C, 1I, 1U
Power Production	(3 votes) 1C, 2U
Energy Information	(3 votes) 1C, 1I, 1U
O & M	(2 votes) 2C
Appliances	(2 votes) 1I, 1U
Education	(2 votes) 1C, 1U
Energy Information	(2 votes) 1C, 1I

Misfit Terms (too broad, unlike the others, unclear)

Management/Admin	(8 votes) 4C, 3I, IU
Economics	(5 votes) 3C, 1I, 1U
Transportation	(5 votes) 2C, 1I, 2U
Weather Data	(5 votes) 2C, 1I, 2U
Coal Systems	(4 votes) 1C, 1I, 2U
Compressed Air	(3 votes) 1C, 1I, 1U
Education	(3 votes) 1C, 1I, 1U
Software	(3 votes) 1C, 1I, 1U
Energy Information	(3 votes) 3C
Environment	(2 votes) 1C, 1U
Building Envelope	(2 votes) 1C, 1I
Renewables	(2 votes) 1I, 1U

5.6 Debriefing Commentary

Content Favorites

In the debriefing session, participants listed the following EIC website content as the content they are most interested in. Then, they were asked what they would like to see changed.

Commercial Sector Participants

- Local and regional news and events
- Forecasting utility rates
- Hotline & email contact info
- Cost savings and future energy solutions

Industrial Sector Participants

- Events
- Energy savings programs
- Regional news
- Energy audits
- Would like to project guides, case studies, and success stories

Utilities Sector Participants

- News
- Events
- Legislation
- Publications, articles, utility contact info
- Hotline (toll free)

Requested Changes to the Site

- In debriefing, participants were asked, “If you could change one thing, what would it be?” Their responses were:

Changes Related to the Home Page

- Make the home page more clear and less cluttered
- Take out this day in history and prizes
- Add site search to home (4)
- More professional design 2
- “Has good potential and there is a need, but it’s not user-friendly and as simple as it needs to be”.

Changes related to Navigation

- Software, Publications, and Web Links should be subsections
- Broaden search phrases
- Less clicks from the home page and searches
- Too many long listings – clutter
- Tabs on left need improvement – confusing
- Improve home page navigation
- It took me too long to navigate the site
- Eliminate redundant navigation
- Too many categories

Changes related to Content in General

- Should focus more on regional. Make it by state.
- More technical depth
- Too much information, info overload, too busy
- Bullet points

5.7 List of Related Documents

Participant Profile Table

- Filename: eic_participant_profiles.xls
- Contents: participant number, job, organization and other participation requirement responses

Card Sort Datasheet

- Filename: eic_data_cardsort.xls
- Contents: spreadsheet of raw data from participant card sort organizations

Task Summary

- Filename: eic_task_summary.xls
- Contents: summary spreadsheet of task performance and findings

Master Raw Data Sheet

- Filename: eic_data_master.xls
- Contents: contains all raw data by participant - related to background questions, home page review, navigation term review, task performance, debriefing, pass/fail ratings.

EIC Usability Findings and Recommendations Report

- Filename: eic_results_presentation_final.ppt
- Contents: powerpoint presentation given on May 31, 2002 - includes illustrations of findings