



Newsletter / September 14

Q3 2026: Market Research & Evaluation

Introduction

Hello readers,

Each summer, MRE Scientists identify and prioritize the market research and evaluation projects needed to support their program teams in the next calendar year. This involves identifying gaps in knowledge that can be addressed through market research, aligning on the key market progress indicators (MPIs) that should be addressed in upcoming Market Progress Evaluation Reports (MPERs), and collaborating with Market Analysts to identify baseline assumptions and other key savings inputs that are ready for review, among many other opportunities to support the region through rigorous third-party research and evaluation. We look forward to reporting on newly identified projects in the Q4 2026 newsletter.

In the meantime, highlighted below are a few published studies linked in this quarter's newsletter that demonstrate the breadth of research and evaluation being conducted at NEEA.

- The [HVAC Installation Contractor Market Research](#) used focus groups to collect in-depth, qualitative information on residential HVAC installers' sales and product selection processes and their attitudes toward product features supported by NEEA's Advanced Heat Pump and Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC programs.
- The [Fans Naturally Occurring Baseline Review](#) evaluated data sources and calculation methods that will be used to report savings for the Efficient Fans program and identified opportunities to improve NEEA's Fan Energy Index baseline estimation methods.
- The [Manufactured Homes Market Diffusion Evaluation Report #1](#) tracked market progress for manufactured homes meeting the Northwest Energy Efficient Manufactured Housing Program™ (NEEM)+ specification now that NEEA is no longer directly engaged in the market.

- Meghan Bean, Manager, Market Research & Evaluation

For Questions:

Meghan Bean, Manager, Market Research & Evaluation
mbean@neea.org

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PROJECT STAGE DEFINITIONS

MRE projects can develop rapidly, spanning more than one stage in each quarter reported on in the newsletter. In cases where multiple stages are anticipated, we categorize the project in the furthest attainable phase for this quarter.

- *PLANNING: MRE projects from inception through proposal selection*
- *FIELDING: MRE projects from kick off through completion of field work*
- *REPORTING: MRE projects in the analysis/synthesis stage through report posting*

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Market Progress Evaluation Report #1

Meghan Bean & Nithya Bengali

Program: Advanced Heat Pumps

Project Stage: REPORTING

Description	NEEA is conducting the first Market Progress Evaluation Report (MPER) for the Advanced Heat Pump program. The evaluation contractor is reviewing secondary documents, conducting in-depth interviews with key market actors including manufacturers, market influencers and participants in federal rule-making processes, and analyzing program progress to date. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Document the strategies and activities the Advanced Heat Pump program is pursuing for each of the efficiency improvements the program targets. • Document the status of key market progress indicators identified by NEEA.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q4 2025 and will conclude in Q3 or Q4 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	Michaels Energy

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Installation Contractor Market Research

Anu Teja & Meghan Bean

Program: Advanced Heat Pumps & Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC

Project Stage: REPORTING

Description	NEEA conducted market research with residential HVAC installation contractors to inform strategy for the Advanced Heat Pump program and the Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC program, which is currently in program development. Fuel Type: Dual-Fuel
Research Objectives	Conduct HVAC installer focus groups to gather in-depth, qualitative information on: • Descriptions of the typical heat pump selection and sales processes, addressing dual-fuel, single-speed and variable-speed configurations, including communication with end users. • Installers' attitudes toward decision making processes regarding installing supplemental heat in centrally ducted heat pumps. • Installers' commissioning practices for heat pump installations. • Which features installers would value in a new connected commissioning product.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q4 2025 and concluded in Q2 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	Evergreen Economics
Link to Report	HVAC Installation Contractor Market Research

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC Market Characterization

Anu Teja

Program: Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA is conducting a market characterization study on dual-fuel systems. The purpose of the study is to better understand the savings and market potential for dual-fuel systems in the region. The study will support the program's early efforts to validate assumptions about current practices for selecting, designing, selling, and installing dual-fuel systems. Fuel Type: Dual-Fuel
Research Objectives	The research seeks to gain insights through a series of mixed-mode research efforts (qualitative interviews and quantitative web enabled or phone surveys with supply chain and end users) into: • Challenges and perceived barriers associated with selecting and purchasing a new dual-fuel system. • Motivators for making a purchase decision. • Barriers to dual-fuel system adoption both for installers and purchasers • The value proposition for adopting a dual-fuel system. • Dual-fuel system perception, information sources, importance of website content and selection and purchase behaviors.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q1 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	E Source

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Market Progress Evaluation Report #2

Kirstin Moreno

Program: Advanced Performance DOAS

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA's Advanced Performance Dedicated Outside Air Systems (DOAS) program seeks to transform the market for very high efficiency DOAS for electrically heated commercial buildings across the Northwest. This study is the program's second Market Progress Evaluation Report (MPER). The MPER will comprise expert review of educational and marketing materials, surveys with NEEA trainees, HVAC designer interviews, designer surveys, a web scan, web traffic review and document review. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Assess Market Transformation progress as measured by program market progress indicators. • Facilitate expert and potential user review of NEEA's new case studies and curriculum on hydronic systems and non-energy benefits of advanced performance DOAS and assess attendees' learning from upcoming trainings based on these materials. • Characterize the current alternatives to advanced performance DOAS. ○ Determine which systems or solutions compete with advanced performance DOAS. ○ Explore the design strategies specifiers and designers employ in jurisdictions with more stringent commercial HVAC code requirements. ○ Describe the perceived benefits and drawbacks of advanced performance DOAS as compared to other options specifiers consider and choose.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q3 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2027.
Third-Party Contractor	NMR Group (partnered with Apex Analytics LLC)
Link to Previous MPER	High-Performance HVAC Market Progress Evaluation Report #1

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Gas Baseline and Key Assumptions Review for Advanced Performance DOAS Program

Kirstin Moreno

Program: Advanced Performance DOAS

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	To support the potential expansion of the electric Advanced Performance Dedicated Outdoor Air Systems (DOAS) program to include gas, NEEA is conducting a third-party review of NEEA's newly developed Naturally Occurring Baseline for gas Advanced Performance DOAS and key assumptions for savings rates, market adoption tracking and incremental costs. Fuel Type: Natural Gas
Research Objectives	• Review and validate NEEA's Naturally Occurring Baseline for gas Advanced Performance DOAS. • Review and validate NEEA's key assumptions for gas Advanced Performance DOAS.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q3 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	Cadmus Group

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Commercial RTU Replacement Lead Time Market Research

Kirstin Moreno

Program: Advanced Performance RTUs

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA is engaging a contractor to conduct market research to better understand processes, timelines and other factors relevant to like-for-like and emergency commercial rooftop unit (RTU) replacement, which is the core target market of the Advanced Performance RTUs program. Participants will comprise commercial HVAC contractors and distributors. Fuel Type: Natural Gas
Research Objectives	• Describe typical processes, timelines, frequency and roles involved in near-emergency/temporary RTU replacement and emergency RTU replacement. • Describe typical circumstances, frequency, process, timeline and roles involved when RTU replacements trigger structural review of the building rooftop. • Analyze and outline the decision-making process for replacing gas pack RTUs with either all-electric or dual-fuel heat pump RTUs, including decision points, roles involved, timeline and other considerations including service upgrades and equipment weight. • Describe how RTU market actors navigate code requirements, like-for-like code exceptions and permitting in all real-world replacement scenarios.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q2 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	Swift Strategy

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Market Progress Evaluation Report #2

Kirstin Moreno

Program: Advanced Performance RTUs

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA's Advanced Performance Rooftop Units (RTU) program is actively working to transform the market for efficient RTUs in gas-heated commercial buildings across the Northwest. This study is the second evaluation of the program's Market Transformation efforts. The evaluation contractor will conduct a document review as well as conduct surveys and interviews with HVAC contractors and distributors, manufacturer representatives and efficient RTU adopters. Fuel Type: Natural Gas
Research Objectives	• Assess Market Transformation progress as measured by program market progress indicators. • Describe adopters' perception of advanced performance RTUs' value proposition and document their HVAC decision making priorities.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q3 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2027.
Third-Party Contractor	Apex Analytics, LLC
Link to Previous MPER	Efficient Rooftop Units Market Progress Evaluation Report #1

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Market Progress Evaluation Report #4

Zdanna King

Program: Luminaire Level Lighting Controls (LLLC)

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	The Luminaire Level Lighting Controls (LLLC) program will be fielding its fourth Market Progress Evaluation Report (MPER). This MPER will continue to track market progress indicators (MPIs) to understand progress on relevant market outcomes. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Review and verify that the LLLC program has conducted the strategic activities described in its quarterly strike zone documents and outlined in its logic model, since the most recent LLLC MPER #3. Document these activities and outputs in the final report. • Track identified MPIs that measure the reduction of identified market barriers and conduct year-over-year analyses to report progress on several outcomes predicted by the program's logic model. • Explore LLLC product differentiation messaging relative to stand-alone embedded control fixtures and midstream market actor and end-use consumer interest in and perceptions of integrating LLLC with single-zone HVAC systems using smart thermostat technology. This objective will result in a separate, free-standing final report.
Timing	This project will kick off in Q4 2026 and will be completed in Q3 2027.
Link to Previous MPER	Luminaire Level Lighting Controls Market Progress Evaluation Report #3

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Industrial Market Research

Chris Cardiel

Product Group: Motor-Driven Systems

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA is fielding a study of regional industrial market dynamics in the Northwest to inform programs within the Motor-Driven Systems Product Group (Efficient Fans and Extended Motor Products – Pumps) and NEEA’s assessment of opportunities related to adjustable-speed drives. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Identify and prioritize industrial market barriers to uptake of highly efficient motor-driven equipment, including any similarities or distinctions by product type. • Document industrial market actor roles, motivations and the path to purchase throughout the specification and selection process for motor-driven equipment, including any similarities or distinctions by product type. • Assess the degree to which and ways in which industrial market actors consider energy efficiency to be a key factor in the selection of motor-driven equipment relative to other criteria. • Document industrial market actor usage of remote monitoring software, particularly as pertaining to rotating equipment.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q1 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	MarketWise Advising, LLC

Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)

Market Progress Evaluation Report #2

Chris Cardiel

Program: Extended Motor Products (XMP) – Pumps

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA's XMP – Pumps program actively engages with manufacturer representatives, trade associations and other market actors to increase adoption of energy-efficient motor-driven products (specifically, clean water pumps and circulators at or below 50 horsepower) across the Northwest. In this second Market Progress Evaluation Report (MPER), specific methodologies include surveys with specifiers, contractors and end users and in-depth interviews with manufacturers' representatives. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Build on the results of XMP – Pumps MPER #1 by tracking MPIs and reporting progress on near-term outcomes. • Conduct formative evaluation of market actor perceptions and attitudes (particularly trust and perceived relevance) regarding the Hydraulic Institute's Energy Rating label for pumps and circulators.
Timing	This project kicked off in Q3 2025 and will conclude in Q4 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	Apex Analytics, LLC
Link to Previous MPER	Extended Motor Products Market Progress Evaluation Report #1

Products (Consumer Products, Water Heating)

Market Progress Evaluation Report #4

Zdanna King

Program: Retail Product Portfolio (RPP)

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA is fielding its fourth Retail Product Portfolio (RPP) Market Progress Evaluation Report (MPER), which will assess the program's progress in overcoming market barriers in 2025 and 2026. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Document activities and outputs for each product in the RPP program (clothes dryers, refrigerators and televisions) and assess progress on applicable outcomes through measurement of market progress indicators.
Timing	This work will kick off in Q1 2027 and will conclude in Q3 2027.
Link to Previous MPER	Retail Product Portfolio: Market Progress Evaluation Report #3

Products (Consumer Products, Water Heating)

Commercial Dual-Fuel and Electric Water Heater Market Characterization Study

Anu Teja

Program: Advanced Commercial Water Heating (ACWH)

Project Stage: PLANNING

Description	The Advanced Commercial Water Heating (ACWH) program team will conduct a market characterization of existing water heating systems currently installed in commercial buildings. Fuel Type: Gas and Electric
Research Objectives	• Gain a clear understanding of the CWH systems path to purchase from the perspective of demand-side market actors such as building and facility managers and system operators • Identify barriers to adopting dual-fuel or electric water heater systems that include an electric heat pump. • Determine buyers' value propositions of one type of water heating system over another. • Gain insight into buyers' water heating product perception and information sources consulted during the purchasing process. • Understand key supply-side market actor perceptions and awareness around current CWH technologies and identify key supply-side market actors who engage with end-use purchasers or decision makers to understand their sales process and any variation of systems across the different building types.
Timing	The study is expected to kick off in Q3 2026 and conclude in Q2 2027.

Codes, Standards and New Construction

Oregon and Washington Residential Code Compliance Evaluations

Meghan Bean &
Nithya Bengali

Activity: Residential Codes

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA is conducting code compliance evaluations to review assumptions underlying its estimation of energy savings from NEEA and its partners' involvement in Oregon and Washington code processes. The contractor is collecting data from a variety of sources, including building energy permits, site visits to residential new-construction projects and virtual audits conducted with residents of new-construction homes. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Assess statewide compliance among single-family homes built under the 2023 Oregon Residential Specialty Code (ORSC) and 2021 Washington State Energy Code (WSEC). • Provide statewide findings regarding primary space and water heating fuel. • Provide an analysis of builders' choices regarding heating system and duct installation.
Timing	This work kicked off in Q2 2026 and will conclude in Q2 2027.
Third-Party Contractor	Industrial Economics, Inc.

Codes, Standards and New Construction

Market Progress Evaluation Report #7

Nithya Bengali

& Chris Cardiel

Activity: Residential & Commercial Codes

Project Stage: PLANNING

Description	NEEA is currently scoping and preparing to field the seventh Market Progress Evaluation Report in support of its residential and commercial codes efforts. The selected contractor will collect data from a variety of sources, including but not limited to (a) interviews with NEEA Codes program staff and a wide range of code market actors, (b) surveys with individuals who have completed NEEA-sponsored code trainings and (c) a review of publicly available data (such as utility program offerings, building certification records and jurisdictional publications). Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	Objectives for this study are currently under development.
Timing	This work will kick off in Q4 2026 and will conclude in Q4 2027.
Third-Party Contractor	TBD

Market Diffusion

Manufactured Homes Market Diffusion Evaluation #1

Anu Teja

Program: Manufactured Homes

Project Stage: REPORTING

Description	Since 2015, NEEA's Manufactured Homes program has worked to increase the adoption of manufactured homes meeting the Northwest Energy Efficient Manufactured Housing Program™ (NEEM)+ specification. Following the recommendations of the 2023 Transition Market Progress Evaluation Report (T-MPER), NEEA scaled back its investment in the program. NEEA conducted its first Market Diffusion Evaluation to track market progress now that the program is no longer directly engaged in the market. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Determine if manufacturers and retailers offer manufactured homes meeting efficiency specifications that provide whole-home energy savings of at least 10% over a home with market-average efficiency sold in the Northwest. • Track diffusion indicators to determine whether the market share of qualified homes remains steady or increases, at least three manufacturers offer qualified homes, and qualified home sales are geographically distributed across the Northwest.
Timing	This project kicked off in Q4 2025 and concluded in Q2 2026.
Third-Party Contractor	Apex Analytics, LLC
Link to Report	Manufactured Homes Market Diffusion Evaluation Report #1

Market Diffusion

Ductless Heat Pump Market Diffusion Evaluation #4

Kirstin Moreno

Program: Ductless Heat Pumps (DHP)

Project Stage: FIELDING

Description	NEEA worked to accelerate adoption of ductless heat pumps (DHPs) in the Northwest from 2008 to 2020. When NEEA scales back investments in a Market Transformation program, the organization continues to monitor market diffusion of the energy-efficient product or practice through a series of annual longitudinal evaluations called Market Diffusion Evaluations. This will be the fourth Market Diffusion Evaluation for the DHP program. A key activity of the study is to conduct phone and web surveys with HVAC installers. Fuel Type: Electric
Research Objectives	• Track diffusion of DHPs across the Northwest's residential HVAC market, specifically within the program's three target markets (single family zonal, single family electric forced air and manufactured homes with electric forced air) to confirm whether Market Transformation outcomes are being sustained. • Provide a recommendation to NEEA regarding whether Market Diffusion Evaluation #4 should be the last evaluation conducted for DHPs.
Timing	This project kicked off in September 2026 and will conclude in Q1 2027.
Third-Party Contractor	OWL Research Partners
Link to Previous Diffusion Evaluation	Ductless Heat Pumps: 2025 Market Diffusion Evaluation #3

Questions? Contact Us

Meghan Bean
MRE Manager
mbean@neea.org

Chris Cardiel
Sr. MRE Scientist
ccardiel@neea.org

Zdanna King
Sr. MRE Scientist
zking@neea.org

Anu Teja
Sr. MRE Scientist
ateja@neea.org

Kirstin Moreno
Sr. MRE Scientist
kmoreno@neea.org

Nithya Bengali
MRE Scientist
nbengali@neea.org



At-a-Glance

Project	Stage
Integrated Systems (HVAC, Lighting, Motors)	
Advanced Heat Pumps: Market Progress Evaluation Report #1	Reporting
Advanced Heat Pumps & Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC: Installation Contractor Market Research	Reporting
Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC Market Characterization	Fielding
Advanced Performance DOAS: Market Progress Evaluation Report #2	Fielding
Advanced Performance DOAS: Gas Baseline and Key Assumptions Review for Advanced Performance DOAS Program	Fielding
Advanced Performance RTUs: Commercial RTU Replacement Lead Time Market Research	Fielding
Advanced Performance RTUs: Market Progress Evaluation Report #2	Fielding
LLLC: Market Progress Evaluation #4	Fielding
Motor-Driven Systems: Industrial Market Research	Fielding
XMP – Pumps: Market Progress Evaluation Report #2	Fielding
Products (Consumer Products, Water Heating)	
RPP: Market Progress Evaluation Report #4	Fielding
Commercial Dual-Fuel and Electric Water Heater Market Characterization Study	Planning
Codes, Standards and New Construction	
Residential Codes: Oregon and Washington Residential Code Compliance Evaluations	Fielding
Residential & Commercial Codes: Market Progress Evaluation Report #7	Planning
Market Diffusion	
Manufactured Homes: Market Diffusion Evaluation #1	Reporting
DHP: Market Diffusion Evaluation #4	Fielding

PROJECT STAGE DEFINITIONS

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