

Choices, Decisions and Lifestyles:

Designing and Implementing Energy Efficiency
Policies Informed by Social Science

13 March 2013

Roundtable Concept Note



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Purpose

While achieving energy security and environment goals will require broad shifts in technology choices, it will also require a revolution in lifestyles, and the commitment and capacity of individuals and organisations to reshape their energy-service demands.

To date, policy attention has focused on overcoming technical, economic and information barriers to improving energy efficiency – including measures to promote and regulate energy-efficient technologies, inform consumers and incentivise purchase and uptake. While techno-economic policy interventions have led to energy efficiency improvements, an enormous amount of cost-effective energy potential still exists.

To tap this potential, the ‘Choices, Decisions and Lifestyles’ Roundtable proposes taking a step back from classic techno-economic policy approaches to identify **innovative levers informed by social science to scale up energy efficiency**. These levers recognise that there are more than 7 billion people on this earth from diverse cultures, geographies, socio-economic groups and generations and with different norms, values, attitudes, habits and infrastructures. These differences inform choices, decisions and lifestyles that, in turn, impact energy consumption.

Roundtable objective

The objective of this Roundtable is to share international experience with proven-practice energy efficiency policy interventions informed by social-science research. This Roundtable does not seek to identify measures that simply ‘change behaviour’ – this goal is too limiting. Policies should go beyond promotion of discrete efficient behaviours and products (i.e. turning off lights or purchasing LEDs) to enable transformative change (more efficient eating, playing, moving, working, bathing, sleeping, etc.).

What is an energy efficiency policy informed by social science?

Energy efficiency policies ‘informed by social science’ refer to a wide array of interventions, measures and campaigns that draw from sociology, behavioural economics, anthropology, geography, psychology, marketing, etc. to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy waste¹.

¹ Examples include assumptions, modeling, advice, information campaigns on washing, bathing, dressing (e.g. Japan’s Super Cool Biz), commuting practices; smart meter and other technology design that maximises interaction; marketing campaigns with

Participants

Roundtable attendance is on an invitation-only basis. Participants will be selected for their regional diversity and their experience working with/in government to develop and deliver energy efficiency interventions informed by social science.

Approach

Participants will be asked to make short presentations providing key insights from their work on:

- Understanding and modelling evolving human/technology interactions and practices;
- Tailoring interventions according to target group traits;
- Informing household, business and political decision makers' practices;
- Motivating changes;
- Empowering changes;
- Evaluating the impact of non-technical and economic levers.

The IEA will provide detailed guidance to participants on the format of their interventions. Presentations will be grouped by theme and followed by discussion.

Partners

This project complements the IEA Demand-Side Management Implementing Agreement Task 24 on *Closing the Loop: Behaviour change in DSM, from theory to policies and practice*. A representative from Task 24 will present at the Roundtable.

For more information

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