

Practices and Procedures Evaluation: Efficiency Trade Network

Final Report

November 26, 2018



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Efficiency Trade Network Report

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Executive Summary

Efficiency Nova Scotia (ENS) engaged Research Into Action (“the evaluation team”) to assess the effectiveness of its Efficiency Trade Network (ETN), a network of market actors who help drive customers to ENS programs and services. Working collaboratively with ENS, Research Into Action identified three overarching issues to address in assessing the ETN’s effectiveness.

- › How do other ENS program managers, Business Development Managers (BDMs), and other ENS staff understand the ETN, perceive its value, and make use of it?
- › How effective is the ETN at recruiting, developing, and managing network partners?
- › How effective is the ETN at increasing participation in ENS services?

For this study the evaluation team reviewed recent literature about innovative approaches of trade ally networks, interviewed 11 ENS staff members, and interviewed 25 ETN members representing a variety of member types.

Key findings are organized by the three overarching issues about the ETN’s effectiveness.

Internal Understanding and Use of the ETN

ENS staff are aware of the ETN’s uses and benefits in the marketplace. They are aware of the searchable online list and they recognize that the ETN can help build industry capacity in Nova Scotia.

ENS Program Managers and BDMs primarily use the ETN list to (1) refer customers to the online ETN, and (2) to communicate with specific groups of members about program changes, updates, and opportunities.

The ETN is more important to ENS staff working with small businesses and homeowners than to ENS staff working with medium and large commercial and institutional customers: medium and large customers who have established relationships with contractors have minimal need to consult the ETN list.

ETN Member Recruitment and Retention

Findings from the literature review emphasized that trade allies are generally interested in trade networks only if they are easy to join and offer them clear benefits. Having recruited over 300 members since 2016, the ETN has been effective in engaging trade allies. Its structure allows ETN members to communicate directly with ENS staff, which in turns allow ENS staff to provide personal attention to members.

Most of the interviewed ETN members reported they realized more benefits than they had expected from being part of the network. Almost all members were highly satisfied with their interactions with ENS staff and most members review and appreciate the ETN newsletter. Roughly one-third of ETN

members said the ETN contributed to their development of new relationships within the industry and to work referrals to other members.

Consistent with best practices found in the literature review, the ETN offers training opportunities to its members. The majority of the ETN member respondents reported attending at least one training or event session. Those that attended a training, event, or information session typically took advantage of member discounts for events that had a fee and most learned about the events via email. About three-quarters of all members suggested topics or services ENS should focus on in future events. Interview findings also suggested the ETN could potentially recruit more members to attend trainings and sessions.

Again, consistent with best practices found in the literature review, the ETN provides contractors with marketing materials and support that helps sell efficiency programs to customers. A sizable minority (just less than half) of the ETN members interviewed reported they include ENS's logo on their materials to establish credibility through their association with ENS.

More than half of the interviewed ENS staff, as well as a few ETN members, suggested the ETN should strive to add new members with specific expertise. They reported professionals, such as engineers and architects, are particularly under-represented on the ETN.

The literature review showed that some trade ally networks have increased trade ally engagement through implementing rating systems or awarding cash incentives to high-performing trade allies. The ETN has not yet incorporated these strategies into their network design.

The ETN's Effect on Program Participation

ENS staff described the network as vitally important to their organization. They reported that programs with engaged ETN members are correlated with programs that exceed their savings targets.

At the same time, ENS staff and ETN members also thought the network could become even more valuable through taking these steps: expanding contractor support; conducting more contractor vetting to be on the ETN; expanding marketing support, and recruiting a greater variety of professionals and specialists.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations describe how ENS can build upon the ETN's strong accomplishments over the past two years so that the network continues to drive uptake in ENS services.

Conclusion 1: The ETN has followed key best practices for trade ally networks, runs effectively according to staff and member feedback, and has met its near-term objectives. Its successes include creating an online tool through which customers can find and select relevant companies for their energy efficiency projects, growing relationships between ENS staff and members, growing business relationships among members, and supporting members with newsletters, training sessions, and networking opportunities. The ETN could become even stronger if it bolsters its support of existing members and increases its number and array of trade allies. Maintaining and improving ETN support while growing ETN membership is the work of more than one staff person.

Recommendation 1-1: Consider assigning one or more ENS staff members to support or lead these tasks under the guidance of the ETN program manager: member recruitment, answering member questions, preparing the newsletter, coordinating with other regional associations, and planning additional training sessions.

Conclusion 2: An early lack of familiarity with all of the benefits of membership may help explain why current ETN members realized more benefits from participating than they had expected. In addition, a lack of awareness about the ETN's marketing support and its benefits may help explain why many members are not taking full advantage of cooperative marketing opportunities. Taking steps to demonstrate the ETN's multiple benefits to both existing and potential members will likely result in greater engagement of current allies, and in the recruitment of new allies.

Recommendation 2-1: Take a multi-pronged approach to raise awareness and showcase all the benefits of ETN membership to existing and potential members.

- › Working with ENS marketing, develop a series of "success stories" to show how membership relates to desired business outcomes, such as: growth that member businesses have experienced due to their ETN listing; ENS sponsored training that enabled contractors to take on new types of projects or grow their businesses; and new partnerships that members formed based on contacts they made at networking events.
- › Distribute success stories through a variety of internal channels (e.g., the ETN newsletter, training sessions, ETN meetings) and external targeted channels (e.g. trade publications, conferences, and professional meetings).
- › Enhance the visibility of the marketing support the ETN offers to members through one-on-one interactions with members and potential members, newsletter mentions, discussions at training events and conferences, and other member outreach.

Conclusion 3: Large BNI customers are less likely to use the member list to find a trade ally for several reasons. Some of these customers rely on long-term relationships with trusted allies, while others use a bidding process that targets a specific list of trade allies and do not consult the ETN. Finally, some specialties are not well represented in the ETN and this may hinder its use by these customers.

Recommendation 3-1: Target more specialists and professions who work with large BNI customers for recruitment, such as controls specialists, agricultural sector specialists, architects, designers, and engineers. One step might be to develop a list, using program files, of BNI trade allies who are already working with ENS's BNI programs to determine if they are ETN members. Then, target non-members for training and recruitment. Also, consider how current members might help champion the ETN, such as co-sponsoring events or industry conferences where large BNI clients, current ETN members, and non-member colleagues can network.

Conclusion 4: Members value training opportunities and are interested in learning more about a variety of topics. A wider range of training topics may also help ENS recruit new members.

Recommendation 4-1: Continue program-specific information sessions that cover the ETN program's achievements to date, program documentation requirements, and program updates. Also, offer cross-training to ETN members so they can identify multiple types of energy-saving opportunities at customer sites and refer customers to the ETN list for help in those areas.

Recommendation 4-2: Ensure the portfolio of training topics addresses current member interests and appeals to the new types of members the ETN is striving to recruit. Consider surveying members to gather topic ideas. Topics could include, for example, new/emerging technologies, whole building performance, and how to market energy efficiency and renewable projects to customers.

Recommendation 4-3: Offer online training videos to accommodate members who prefer online learning or have difficulty attending in-person sessions.

Conclusion 5: Multiple modes of communication are needed to effectively spread the word about information sessions and training opportunities. When ETN members are aware of training session discounts, members generally take advantage of them.

Recommendation 5-1: To reach as many current and new trade allies as possible about ETN sessions and training, continue advertising ENS sponsored events/ training through email, ENS's website, newsletters, and word-of-mouth. Coordinate with other industry associations such as Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) and Engineers Nova Scotia, to disseminate training opportunity information. Continue offering discounts to ETN members.

Conclusion 6: According to the review of other administrators' trade ally networks, many networks effectively use rating systems or cash incentives to recognize trade allies and motivate them to bring more projects to their programs.

Recommendation 6-1: ENS should consider developing a tiered system for ETN members that recognizes and/or rewards members who are serving the program particularly well. The potential to earn special recognition (for example, "ETN champion" status) or a monetary incentive could motivate ETN members to bring more projects to ENS programs.

1. Introduction

1.1. Efficiency Trade Network Overview

Efficiency Nova Scotia (ENS) established its Efficiency Trade Network (ETN) in 2016 to provide, “a structured framework for recruiting, developing, and managing a [member] network...to drive uptake in ENS’s services.”¹ ETN members may be distributors, architects, engineers/consultants, contractors, manufacturers, retailers, or other professionals that serve Nova Scotian businesses and/or residential customers. These trade ally members fall into one or both of the following categories:

- › Trade network members: individuals and companies that affiliate, but do not contract, with ENS and meet minimum program requirements; and
- › Partner members: individuals and companies that contract with ENS to deliver services and meet specific ENS requirements based on the services they offer.

As of early June 2018, the ETN had close to 330 members, 41 of whom were partner members. Of the 330 total members, 180 were active.² ETN member benefits include:

- › **Listing on ENS’s website** with the ETN designation;
- › **Marketing support** from ENS, including access to ENS’s ETN logo for use on member’s website, marketing materials, equipment, and other advertising;
- › **Discounted rates** on training sessions and workshops organized by ENS, including ENS’s annual Bright Business conference; and
- › ENS’s bi-monthly **newsletter** that informs the network about upcoming training and events, program updates, and other relevant news.

While ENS staff may direct customers seeking project assistance to the ETN online directory, ENS does not endorse or recommend any individual ETN members to customers. Trade allies are encouraged, but not required, to be ETN members to work in ENS incented projects.

1.2. Research Objectives and Report Organization

ENS engaged Research Into Action (“the evaluation team”) to assess the effectiveness of its ETN. Working collaboratively with ENS, Research Into Action identified the overarching issues and associated research questions shown in Table 1-1 as the focus of this study.

¹ Efficiency Nova Scotia: Efficiency Trade Network 2016 Program Charter.

² “Active” members are those whose membership is not pending or suspended, and whose application materials were not declined by ENS or withdrawn.

Table 1-1. Overarching Issues and Research Questions for the ETN Evaluation

Overarching Issues	Research Questions
I. How do other ENS program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff understand the ETN program, perceive its value, and make use of it?	a. What do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff understand are the key elements of the ETN? b. How do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff perceive the benefits of and barriers to the ETN? c. To what extent do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff proactively refer customers to the ETN? d. What improvements do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff suggest for the ETN?
II. How effective is the ETN program at recruiting, developing, and managing network partners?	a. How adequate are the ETN program's resources (e.g., staffing) given the size of ENS's service area and the number of ETN members? b. Are there specialty energy-efficiency areas/trades that are under- or over-represented by the ETN membership? c. How can ENS grow the number of active ETN members, especially in under-represented specialty areas? d. What do members understand are the benefits of ETN membership? How do members value these benefits? What additional benefits, if any, do members want? e. How effective are the trainings? What additional trainings would members like? What program, market, or technological changes are expected that might trigger the need for new trainings? f. Have members formed new business relationships with other members as a result of their participation in the ETN? g. Do members refer customers participating in multiple programs to the online ETN directory and/or to specific other members (for example, members with other areas of expertise)? h. How can ENS enhance member experiences?
III. How effective is the ETN program at increasing participation in ENS services?	a. How do other program managers think using the ETN has affected participation in their programs? b. How can the ETN program be refined to increase participation in other ENS programs? c. How can ENS use the ETN to enhance customer experiences?

- › Chapter 2 of this report describes the multi-pronged methodology the evaluation team used for this evaluation.
- › Chapter 3 presents findings from the evaluation team's research. Table 1-2 (below) provides an outline of Chapter 3 and shows where, within the chapter, the research team addresses each of the study's research questions (listed in Table 1-1).
- › Chapter 4 provides conclusions and recommendations based on the evaluation's findings.

The report presents a list of the documents reviewed for this evaluation, along with the interview guides used to conduct the research, in the appendices.

Table 1-2. Mapping of Report Findings and Research Questions

Report Section		Research Questions
3.1 Internal Understanding and Use of the ETN	3.1.1 ENS Staff Perceptions of Key ETN Elements, Benefits, and Barriers	I-a. What do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff understand are the key elements of the ETN? I-b. How do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff perceive the benefits of and barriers to the ETN?
	3.1.2 Staff Use of and Referrals to the ETN	I-c. To what extent do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff proactively refer customers to the ETN?
	3.1.3 Adequacy of Current Resources	II-a. How adequate are the ETN program's resources (e.g., staffing) given the size of ENS's service area and the number of ETN members?
3.2 ETN Member Recruitment and Retention	3.2.1 Benefits of the ETN	II-d. What do members understand are the benefits of ETN membership? How do members value these benefits? What additional benefits, if any, do members want?
	3.2.2 ETN Coverage of Energy-Efficiency Trades	II-b. Are there specialty energy-efficiency areas/trades that are under- or over-represented by the ETN membership?
	3.2.3 Training, Information Sessions, and Conferences	II-e. How effective are the trainings? What additional trainings would members like? What program, market, or technological changes are expected that might trigger the need for new trainings?
	3.2.4 Marketing Support for Members' Businesses	II-f. Have members formed new business relationships with other members as a result of their participation in the ETN?
	3.2.5 ETN Member Partnerships and Referrals	II-g. Do members refer customers participating in multiple programs to the online ETN directory and/or to specific other members (for example, members with other areas of expertise)?
	3.2.6 Member Communication with ENS Staff	N/A
	3.2.7 Innovative Member Reward Approaches	N/A
3.3 The ETN's Effect on Program Participation		III-a. How do other program managers think using the ETN has affected participation in their programs? I-d. What improvements do program managers, BDMs, and other ENS staff suggest for the ETN? II-c. How can ENS grow the number of active ETN members, especially in under-represented specialty areas? II-h. How can ENS enhance member experiences? III-b. How can the ETN program be refined to increase participation in other ENS programs? III-c. How can ENS use the ETN to enhance customer experiences?

2. Methods

To familiarize themselves with the ETN, the Research Into Action evaluation team initially examined documents that ENS staff provided. These documents included past trade ally survey results, the ETN participation agreement, ETN member tracking data, the ETN Directory website, among others. Appendix A provides a full list of the program documents consulted.

With this background information in mind, the evaluation team proceeded to assess the ETN through a combination of primary and secondary research. The evaluation team reviewed recent industry literature to gather best practice information about trade ally networks operating throughout North America. The evaluation team also interviewed ENS staff and ETN members to gather first-hand information about the ETN from a variety of perspectives.

The following subsections provide more detailed descriptions of primary and secondary data collection methods.

2.1. Literature Review

The evaluation team worked closely with ENS staff to identify recent documents with information about innovative approaches and best practices for trade ally networks. The team explored sources such as American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), Association of Energy Service Professionals (AESP) papers and conference proceedings, as well as evaluations of trade ally networks Research Into Action has conducted for other clients over the past couple of years. A complete list of the documents from which the evaluation team drew best practice findings is presented in Appendix B.

2.2. Interviews

2.2.1. ENS Staff Interviews

Research Into Action interviewed ENS staff to gain insight into how staff use, interact with, benefit from, and value the ETN. The ENS staff interview guide is presented in Appendix C.

At the recommendation of ENS evaluation staff, the evaluation team interviewed 11 ENS staff who work with the ETN:

- › 1 ETN Manager
- › 4 Program Managers (1 each from Residential New Construction, Small Business Energy Solutions, Business Energy Rebates, and Custom)
- › 2 Service Delivery Managers
- › 1 On-site Energy Managers
- › 1 Director (serving as program sponsor)

› 2 Business Development Managers

The ENS staff interviews, conducted in August and September 2018, averaged approximately 60 minutes in length. The evaluation team used Microsoft Excel to analyze the staff interviews.

2.2.2. ETN Member Interviews

Research Into Action interviewed ETN members to gather in-depth feedback about their interactions with the program. The discussion topics included components of the program design, training offered through the program, benefits members receive and would like to receive, challenges to program participation, and suggestions for enhancing member involvement with the ETN. The ETN member interview guide is presented in Appendix D.

Research Into Action completed 25 interviews with a broad range of ETN members, meeting or exceeding the completion goals for each member category (Table 2-1). Some respondents fell into more than one category. For example, an electrician may also serve as a lighting contractor and a solar contractor, and a distributor may sell multiple product types.

Table 2-1: Targeted and Actual ETN Member Interviews

ETN Member Category	Completion Goal*	Number Completed**	Completion Goal Achieved
Implementer of efficiency programs	2	4	✓
Lighting contractor	4	6	✓
Heat pump contractor	4	4	✓
Builder	1	1	✓
Engineer	1	3	✓
Home energy assessment provider	1	3	✓
Passive house consultant	1	1	✓
Solar contractor	1	5	✓
Electrical distributor	0	3	✓
Hardware distributor	0	1	✓
Plumbing distributor	0	1	✓
Total	25	32	

* ENS set a goal of 25 completed interviews: 15 with specific types of members, and 10 with unspecified types of members.

**The number of completed interviews by member category exceeds the number of respondents because some respondents fell into multiple categories.

Research Into Action conducted the ETN member interviews in September and October 2018. The interviews averaged 40 minutes in length. The team used Microsoft Excel to analyze the ETN member interviews.

- › The majority of respondents held executive level positions in their respective organizations. About half joined the ETN close to the program’s inception, and most of the others joined the ETN within the past year. About 70% of the ETN members the evaluation team spoke with first learned about the ETN directly from ENS, primarily through their prior involvement with the organization. Table 2-2 shows the breakout of ETN member respondents by role, duration of ETN membership, and how they first learned about the ETN.

Table 2-2: Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics	Count (n=25)
Role	
Executive (President, Owner, Vice-President)	15
Manager (Product, Department, or Regional)	7
Other (Technical, sales, or office staff)	3
Duration of ETN Membership	
One year or less	11
One to two years	2
Two years to since ETN inception	12
How they learned about the ETN	
ENS	17
<i>Had experience with ENS prior to ETN</i>	14
<i>Did not have experience with ENS prior to ETN</i>	3
Colleague	5
Advertisements	2
Don’t know	1

3. Findings

This chapter summarizes Research Into Action’s findings from the literature review, staff interviews, and member interviews. The chapter is organized by the overarching issue:

1. Internal understanding and use of the ETN
2. ETN member recruitment and retention
3. The ETN’s effect on program participation

3.1. Internal Understanding and Use of the ETN

The literature review revealed that energy efficiency program administrators across North America³ develop trade ally networks for reasons similar to those at ENS. Key objectives for networks are to expand their reach into the market, bolster and broaden efficiency program engagement with contractors, and increase program engagement with customers – all with the goal of meeting or increasing their savings targets. Administrators have found trade ally networks are an effective way to directly reach more customers than the organizations could reach with just their own staff. As one implementer of efficiency programs stated in a recent white paper, “It is evident that treating contractors as valuable *partners* in energy efficiency program implementation yields exceptional outcomes. In addition to gaining trusted, valuable advocates in the marketplace, overall contractor enrollment, participation, and retention increases—which, in turn, results in greater equipment sales and claimed incentives.”⁴

3.1.1. ENS Staff Perceptions of Key ETN Elements, Benefits, and Barriers

Interviews with ENS staff show that they are well aware of the ETN, its benefits, and uses. These interviews show ENS staff are aware of the ETN’s online searchable list of vetted professionals, and understand that the list includes allies who specialize in a variety of fields and are located throughout Nova Scotia. ENS staff recognized that the ETN helps build industry capacity by delivering training and networking opportunities to professionals across disciplines. Several ENS staff pointed out that the ETN helps ENS engage market actors in the efficiency industry, and that ENS learns from those actors’ direct customer experience about industry trends. Many interviewees also noted that the ETN helps promote ENS programs and acts as a sales force for programs.

³ Research Into Action’s literature review included information about trade ally programs in Michigan, Oregon, California, and the Rocky Mountain region.

⁴ Speil, Alyssa. (2017, February). Contractor Marketing and Outreach: Growing a Residential Efficiency Program from the Inside Out. A Whitepaper from WECC. (p. 3). Madison, Wisconsin. Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation.

3.1.2. Staff Use of and Referrals to the ETN

Staff who are closest to customers and contractors—the two BDMs and four Program Managers-- reported they use the ETN as a resource for their customers as well as for their own needs. Four of the six staff said they referred customers to the online directory and four said they used the ETN as a way to communicate with specific cadres of professionals. For example, one program manager used the ETN to inform builders about relevant training opportunities, and another program manager used the network to inform a specific category of contractors about program changes.

The ETN is more important to ENS staff working with small businesses and homeowners than to ENS staff working with medium and large commercial and institutional customers. Seven staff respondents have direct relationships with customers: the BDMs, program managers, and the on-site energy manager. Of these:

- › Two respondents who work with small business customers and builders reported the ETN was vital to their work. These respondents went on to explain that the ETN:
 - Helps them grow their program (1 staff);
 - Is a key conduit for getting program information to the market (1 staff); and
 - Helps set expectations for contractors who use the program (1 staff).
- › Five respondents reported that the ETN was not important to their work because they typically work with large commercial customers who:
 - Already have established relationships with contractors (5 staff); and
 - Issue RFPs for projects to specific contractors, but do not consult the ETN list to determine the firms that will receive an RFP (1 staff).

3.1.3. Adequacy of Current Resources

Current staffing and funding are sufficient for the ETN to continue functioning at its current level, but it will need additional staff to increase the program's engagement with the network and its value to ENS. The two ENS respondents who are knowledgeable about ETN program resources stated that additional staff would enable the ETN to recruit more members and better support existing members. The respondents suggested ETN staff responsibilities be split into these two areas: outreach and recruitment, and support and engagement with existing contractors.

3.2. ETN Member Recruitment and Retention

3.2.1. Benefits of the ETN

The literature review showed that contractors and distributors are generally interested in joining and remaining in trade ally networks only if they encounter minimal hurdles to joining and if they can see benefits to their organization's participation. Benefits may include increased visibility with potential

clients, training opportunities, marketing support, networking opportunities, and the opportunity for awards or special recognition.

ENS's recruitment of over 300 ETN members in two years suggests that barriers to joining the ETN are minimal and key membership benefits are apparent to trade allies. Detailed findings on recruitment and retention topics are in the following subsections.

Key benefits that ETN members cited from being in the network were attracting new customers, access to ENS events, staying abreast of industry trends, networking, and accessing solar programs. As shown in Table 3-1, close to 70% (17 of 25) of respondents said membership helped them attract new customers; 40% mentioned access to ENS events as a benefit; roughly 33% of member respondents said the network helped them stay current in their fields; and about 25% said they benefited from networking with other market actors. Solar contractors cited access to ENS's solar program as a key benefit of joining the ETN. Five respondents (two electrical distributors, one electrical contractor, one heat pump contractor, and one home energy assessment firm) said the listing had minimal or no effect on their businesses.

ETN members realized more benefits than they had expected. Table 3-1 also shows a notable number of members realized more benefits after joining than they had expected before joining, including that being in the network could help them attract new customers (increased from 11 to 17), and that they had access to ENS sponsored events (increased from 1 to 10).

Table 3-1: Benefits of ETN Membership (n=25)

	Expected Benefits	Realized Benefits
Attract new customers	11	17
Access to ENS sponsored events	1	10
Stay abreast of industry	8	8
ETN membership required for Solar program participants	5	n/a
Network with others in the industry	4	6
Access incentives*	3	n/a
Don't know	1	1

* Respondents mistakenly thought they had to be ETN members in order to offer incentives to their customers.

ETN members gave widely varying estimates for the percentage of new clients who learned about their organization from the ETN. Across the 12 respondents who gave estimates, percentages ranged from 0% to 75% (Table 3-2). Members in the same category generally gave very different estimates: one solar contractor said none of their customers were from the ETN, while another solar contractor reported that half of their customers learned about their firm on the ETN.

Three respondents explained that they had not been ETN members long enough to know how effective their membership was in attracting new customers, and nine respondents were unable to provide estimates.⁵

Table 3-2: Respondent Estimates of Percent of Customers that Came from the ETN (n = 12)

ETN Member Category	Percent of Customers from the ETN
Builder	0%
Distributors	0%, 25%
Electrical and lighting contractor	10%
Energy Assessor	75%
Engineers	20%, 25%
Heat pump contractors	0%, 5%, 35%
Solar contractors	0%, 50%

3.2.2. ETN Coverage of Energy-Efficiency Trades

More than half the interviewed ENS staff, as well as a few ETN members, suggested the ETN should add members with specific expertise. Respondents reported the greatest need is for additional engineers and architects (5 staff mentions and 2 member mentions). Agricultural, compressed air, controls, exterior sign, home builder, rural-based, and solar specialists, as well as electrical distributors, each earned one mention from ETN staff or member interviewees. Nearly all of the staff respondents (10) thought the ETN had adequate representation of lighting and HVAC contractors.⁶

3.2.3. Training, Information Sessions, and Conferences

The literature cited training as an integral and essential part of trade ally networks. Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), one of the largest utilities in North America with some of the most aggressive energy saving goals, credit their trade ally network as a “major contributing factor” to meeting program goals. Offering relevant training to their members has been an instrumental part of developing their network.⁷ DTE Energy in Michigan offers online training videos and about 30 technical training sessions annually and notes training is a key benefit for members.⁸

⁵ This question was not applicable to the implementer respondent.

⁶ ETN members did not provide feedback about the then-current number of lighting and HVAC contractors.

⁷ Manion, Andrea, A. D. (n.d.). Developing a Trade Ally Network from the Ground Up. Presented at the ACEEE.

⁸ Clemens, William. (2015). DTE Energy’s Designated Trade Ally Program. Presented at AESP conference.

The ETN has effectively implemented these best practices with the majority of ETN member respondents attended at least one ENS sponsored information session, training, or conference. Almost two-thirds of members interviewed reported attending at least one ENS event (Table 3-3).⁹ ENS's annual Bright Business Conference was the most frequently attended event. Of course, not all events are relevant to all members and, conversely, some sessions appeal to multiple categories of ETN members. For example, one electrician, one home energy assessor, and one heat pump installer—in addition to the two solar contractors-- attended a solar information session. However, it is important to note that just over one-third of the members interviewed had not taken advantage of training through the ETN.

Table 3-3: ENS Sponsored Events Sessions

Respondent Characteristics	Count (n=25)
Overall Event Attendance	
Attended one type of ENS events	10
Attended two types of ENS events	6
Did not attend any ENS events	9
Information Session Attendance	
Attended one information sessions	7
Attended four information sessions	2
Did not attend any information sessions	16
Training Attendance	
Attended one training	5
Attended two training sessions	1
Did not attend any training sessions	19
Conference Attendance	
Attended Bright Business Conference at least once	8
<i>Attended most years</i>	6
Did not attend any Bright Business Conferences	17

*This respondent may have been referring to the required webinar for new ETN members.

⁹ Note that ten of these members reported the events were an unexpected benefit of ETN membership (Table 3-1).

Training discounts may be important to many ETN members. Of the five respondents who attended a training, three took advantage of the member discounts, one was not sure if they had paid the discounted rate, and one was not a member at the time they took the training. This latter respondent became an ETN member soon after the training and noted using the discount when registering for the upcoming Bright Business conference.

ETN members most commonly learned about ENS events from email. Members also learned of ENS sponsored events through other modes of communication. The SBES session attendee received an email about the event and was also encouraged to attend by the ETN manager. One of the Solar Homes information session attendees learned about the session on ENS's website. The passive house session attendee, and one of the thermal storage training session attendees learned about their respective events through colleagues in the industry.

Half of the Bright Business Conference attendees expressed appreciation for the networking opportunities afforded by the conference. Two engineers, an electrical distributor, and a lighting contractor valued the chance to connect with others in the efficiency industry. Two of the four also stated they found the conference inspiring because they were surrounded by like-minded people who were also interested in promoting efficiency as a social and environmental good.

Half of the Bright Business Conference attendees offered constructive criticisms of the conference.

- › An electrical contractor and a solar contractor reported that some topics were too technical for the broad audience that comes to the conference. They suggested the conference sessions focus on more general topics.
- › One implementer of efficiency programs found the conference too similar to other conferences held in the Atlantic Provinces. The respondent suggested the Bright Business Conference differentiate itself but did not provide suggestions about how the conference could distinguish itself from others.
- › One lighting contractor reported the conference did not offer many topics relevant to their business.

ETN members suggested many topics and services for future information sessions and training. Eighteen of the 25 respondents provided suggestions. Their suggestions were:

- › Continue program-specific training, (8 members):
 - Details about program changes and expectations (7 members); and
 - Updates on program statistics, such as cumulative savings and cumulative number of participants (1 member).
- › Train on new topics, including (6 members):
 - Certified energy auditor and energy assessment (2 members);
 - Whole building performance (1 member);
 - How to sell solar projects to homeowners (1 member);
 - Lighting for laypeople (1 member); and

- Cross-training ETN members so they can identify additional energy-efficiency opportunities while they are at customer sites (1 member).
- › Continue training on new technologies, including (3 members):
 - Sessions to increase member understanding of the benefits of heat pumps; increase knowledge of “state of the art” heat pump technologies (1 member);
 - Comparisons of similar types of equipment from different vendors (1 member); and
 - Session to generally keep members up-to-date with new technologies (1 member).
- › Allow time to network during training (1 member)

ENS staff see opportunities to expand training offerings. Seven staff thought the ETN could expand its training offerings. Three staff suggested additional training opportunities that focus on new technological developments. Two staff suggested additional training opportunities that teach contractors to identify energy saving opportunities not typically in their purview. One staff member suggested additional training opportunities that teach contractors best practices for marketing energy efficiency. In addition, one staff member suggested ENS survey its staff and ETN members to identify the training topics they would like to see.

ENS staff reported the Bright Business Conference is well regarded by their peers and well received by ETN members. One staff member noted, however, that few builders attend the event and that the conference could be enhanced by attracting more builders. Another staff member reported hearing that some ETN members view the conference primarily as a public relations event for ENS rather than as a helpful session for members.

3.2.4. Marketing Support for Members’ Businesses

The literature review showed that a trade ally network best practice is to provide contractors with marketing materials and support they can use to sell efficiency programs to customers. One energy-efficiency program implementer cited in the literature noted the importance of making marketing materials as useful and easily accessible to contractors as possible. This implementer has an online form that builder members can use to order marketing materials such as program descriptions, case studies, desktop signage, and yard signs free-of-charge. This energy-efficiency program implementer also ensured contractors could easily access website content, program logos, and co-op support for their advertisements. Through nearly 20 years of program operation, the implementer found that providing energy-efficiency program marketing materials to trade allies was effective in reminding the allies to discuss the programs with their customers.¹⁰

While ENS has implemented this best practice, fewer than half of ENS’s ETN member respondents use the ENS logo. Eleven of the 23 non-implementer respondents reported using the ENS logo on their websites, handouts, or other materials. Three explained further that they include the logo on their

¹⁰ Speil, Alyssa. (2017). Contractor Marketing and Outreach: Growing a Residential Efficiency Program from the Inside Out (p. 20). 2017 AESP National Conference: WECC.

materials to establish credibility through their association with ENS. Few respondents reported that using the ENS logo affected their sales.

3.2.5. ETN Member Partnerships and Referrals

Many ETN members said the ETN contributed to their development of new relationships within the industry and to work referrals to other members. Eight member respondents reported partnering with other ETN members on projects. Seven members stated they received referral work from other ETN members, and seven members said they had referred other members to their clients. One member stated their firm allows them to refer customers to the ETN in general, but not to specific other people or organizations.

3.2.6. Member Communication with ENS Staff

The ETN design fosters direct communication with ENS staff with good results. Of the 23 ETN members who said they were in touch with ENS staff—typically with Program Managers and Business Development Managers (BDMs)—12 had contacted ENS about ETN-related questions. For example, some contacted ENS with:

- › Questions about how to sign-up for the ETN and troubleshoot sign-up issues (5 mentions)
- › Concern about the quality of work from another ETN member (1 mentions)
- › Questions about attending the conference (1 mentions)

The ETN enables ENS to provide personal attention to members who may not otherwise receive such attention. For example, when the Green Heat program ceased offering a particular rebate, the ETN manager personally reached out to members who frequently used that rebate to explain why the Green Heat program was changing its rebate offerings. This personal contact helped build trust and foster an ongoing relationship between the ETN manager and the affected contractors. ENS would have missed an important community-building opportunity had staff simply informed contractors about the change via an email or website announcement.

Nearly all ETN members were satisfied with their interactions with ENS staff. Respondents reported staff are “helpful” and “timely” in their responses to questions and concerns. One dissatisfied respondent mentioned not having his question answered quickly or satisfactorily. However, this respondent seemed to think, mistakenly, that being on the ETN list would directly lead to additional jobs.

About two-thirds of members interviewed received the ETN newsletter and most found it helpful. Fifteen respondents said they found the ETN newsletter useful: seven respondents elaborated that they like the featured program updates, and seven respondents mentioned the ENS sponsored event listings. Additionally, one heat pump contractor explained the newsletter helped him learn about topics that do not typically apply to his company, such as information about ENS’s solar program. The implementer of efficiency programs reported using the newsletter to help generate ideas about groups with whom his organization can partner.

3.2.7. Innovative Member Reward Approaches

The literature revealed that some trade ally networks cite using rating systems or award cash incentives to high-performing trade allies as a best practice. Proponents of this best practice report it encourages allies to do even more work through the program. For example, DTE Energy¹¹ rewards allies with commissions and a fixed per-project incentive for each application a member delivers. Rocky Mountain Power designates their members as “standard” or “premier,” and encourages members to achieve premier status by providing premier members with additional perks. Energy Trust of Oregon employs a star rating system, giving more stars to members with greater experience with Energy Trust projects. The ETN has not implemented a rating or award system for members.

3.3. The ETN’s Effect on Program Participation

The ETN touches all programs, and is vital to many, because ETN members act as an extended sales force for ENS. ENS staff described the network as vitally important to their organization. They reported that programs with engaged ETN members are correlated with programs that exceed their savings targets. As shown above (see Table 3-1), the majority of ETN member respondents reported attracting new customers as a result of their ETN membership, and those new customers frequently became program participants. ENS staff explained that ETN members in some ways act like BDMs for smaller businesses. One ENS staff person described that BDMs are the voice of ENS programs for large energy users, and ETN members can be that voice for smaller energy users. Utilizing a combination of BDMs and ETNs helps ENS ensure that its entire marketplace receives some form of personal attention.

Staff and ETN members thought the ETN could become even more valuable to ENS if the ETN were to grow its activities. ENS staff and ETN member respondents thought enhancing the ETN in the following ways would result in a larger and better supported ETN membership that would, in turn, recruit more customers to participate in ETN programs and provide better customer experiences.

- › Expand contractor support by (9 staff, 19 members):
 - Developing more training (5 staff, 18 members)¹²;
 - Utilizing a rating system to distinguish more active, engaged, and skilled contractors (5 staff). This could include providing incentives exclusively for ETN members or providing members with higher incentives (1 member);
 - Improving response time to member questions (1 member); and
 - Reporting program statistics, such as progress towards savings goals, to ETN members (1 member).
- › Conduct more contractor vetting to ensure high-quality installations (2 members).
- › Expand marketing support by (3 members):

¹¹ DTE Energy is a Detroit-based energy company that includes an electric utility serving 2.2 million customers in Southeastern Michigan and a natural gas utility serving 1.3 million customers in Michigan.

¹² Section 3.2.3 lists the training topics members hope ENS will offer.

- Communicating the value of ETN to end-users (1 member);
 - Providing co-op marketing to ETN members (1 member); and
 - Showcasing ETN members at ENS end-user breakfast meetings (1 member).
- › Recruit and attract a greater variety of professionals and specialists (7 staff, 4 members):¹³

¹³ See Section 3.2.2 for specific member types ENS staff and ETN members suggested recruiting.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations describe how ENS can build upon the ETN's strong accomplishments over the past two years so that the network continues to drive uptake in ENS services.

Conclusion 1: The ETN has followed key best practices for trade ally networks, runs effectively according to staff and member feedback, and has met its near-term objectives. Its successes include creating an online tool through which customers can find and select relevant companies for their energy efficiency projects, growing relationships between ENS staff and members, growing business relationships among members, and supporting members with newsletters, training sessions, and networking opportunities. The ETN could become even stronger if it bolsters its support of existing members and increases its number and array of trade allies. Maintaining and improving ETN support while growing ETN membership is the work of more than one staff person.

Recommendation 1-1: Consider assigning one or more ENS staff members to support or lead these tasks under the guidance of the ETN program manager: member recruitment, answering member questions, preparing the newsletter, coordinating with other regional associations, and planning additional training sessions.

Conclusion 2: An early lack of familiarity with all of the benefits of membership may help explain why current ETN members realized more benefits from participating than they had expected. In addition, a lack of awareness about the ETN's marketing support and its benefits may help explain why many members are not taking full advantage of cooperative marketing opportunities. Taking steps to demonstrate the ETN's multiple benefits to both existing and potential members will likely result in greater engagement of current allies, and in the recruitment of new allies.

Recommendation 2-1: Take a multi-pronged approach to raise awareness and showcase all the benefits of ETN membership to existing and potential members.

- › Working with ENS marketing, develop a series of "success stories" to show how membership relates to desired business outcomes, such as: growth that member businesses have experienced due to their ETN listing; ENS sponsored training that enabled contractors to take on new types of projects or grow their businesses; and new partnerships that members formed based on contacts they made at networking events.
- › Distribute success stories through a variety of internal channels (e.g., the ETN newsletter, training sessions, ETN meetings) and external targeted channels (e.g. trade publications, conferences, and professional meetings).
- › Enhance the visibility of the marketing support the ETN offers to members through one-on-one interactions with members and potential members, newsletter mentions, discussions at training events and conferences, and other member outreach.

Conclusion 3: Large BNI customers are less likely to use the member list to find a trade ally for several reasons. Some of these customers rely on long-term relationships with trusted allies, while others use a bidding process that targets a specific list of trade allies and do not consult the ETN. Finally, some specialties are not well represented in the ETN and this may hinder its use by these customers.

Recommendation 3-1: Target more specialists and professions who work with large BNI customers for recruitment, such as controls specialists, agricultural sector specialists, architects, designers, and engineers. One step might be to develop a list, using program files, of BNI trade allies who are already working with ENS's BNI programs to determine if they are ETN members. Then, target non-members for training and recruitment. Also, consider how current members might help champion the ETN, such as co-sponsoring events or industry conferences where large BNI clients, current ETN members, and non-member colleagues can network.

Conclusion 4: Members value training opportunities and are interested in learning more about a variety of topics. A wider range of training topics may also help ENS recruit new members.

Recommendation 4-1: Continue program-specific information sessions that cover the ETN program's achievements to date, program documentation requirements, and program updates. Also, offer cross-training to ETN members so they can identify multiple types of energy-saving opportunities at customer sites and refer customers to the ETN list for help in those areas.

Recommendation 4-2: Ensure the portfolio of training topics addresses current member interests and appeals to the new types of members the ETN is striving to recruit. Consider surveying members to gather topic ideas. Topics could include, for example, new/emerging technologies, whole building performance, and how to market energy efficiency and renewable projects to customers.

Recommendation 4-3: Offer online training videos to accommodate members who prefer online learning or have difficulty attending in-person sessions.

Conclusion 5: Multiple modes of communication are needed to effectively spread the word about information sessions and training opportunities. When ETN members are aware of training session discounts, members generally take advantage of them.

Recommendation 5-1: To reach as many current and new trade allies as possible about ETN sessions and training, continue advertising ENS sponsored events/ training through email, ENS's website, newsletters, and word-of-mouth. Coordinate with other industry associations such as Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) and Engineers Nova Scotia, to disseminate training opportunity information. Continue offering discounts to ETN members.

Conclusion 6: According to the review of other administrators' trade ally networks, many networks effectively use rating systems or cash incentives to recognize trade allies and motivate them to bring more projects to their programs.

Recommendation 6-1: ENS should consider developing a tiered system for ETN members that recognizes and/or rewards members who are serving the program particularly well. The potential to earn special recognition (for example, "ETN champion" status) or a monetary incentive could motivate ETN members to bring more projects to ENS programs

Appendix A. Program Documents Reviewed for this Study

- › ETN Strategy Presentation, January 11, 2018
- › Efficiency Trade Network Brand Guidelines
- › ETN General Participation Agreement
- › ETN Program Charter
- › ETN Survey Results, January 14, 2016
- › ETN Survey Results, April 10, 2017
- › ETN Survey Results, March 12, 2018
- › ETN Member Tracking Data Extract, September 11, 2018

Appendix B. External References

Clemens, William. (2015). DTE Energy's Designated Trade Ally Program. Presented at AESP Conference.

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Speil, Alyssa. (2017). Contractor Marketing and Outreach: Growing a Residential Efficiency Program from the Inside Out. Presented at AESP National Conference 2017, Orlando.

Appendix C. ENS Staff Interview Guide

Introduction

Thanks for taking the time to talk today. I work for Research Into Action and as you know, we are working with ENS to provide feedback on the Efficiency Trade Network (ETN). As part of that, we are interviewing key staff like you so we can learn more about how the ETN works, the services it offers, its benefits and challenges, and ways in which the ETN could be improved.

Our talk will take about 30 to 60 minutes.

Before we start, I want to mention that we often use quotes from our interviews – without names attached – in our reports. We use these quotes to illustrate key points and make the reports more interesting and readable. At the end of our conversation, we can discuss how you would like us to approach quotes from this conversation. We can:

1. Quote you anonymously
2. Quote you anonymously and provide you an opportunity to review and approve the quotes before we use them
3. Not quote you at all.

Everything you say is confidential. We won't share our notes from the conversation unless we are legally required to, and we will not report findings in a way that would identify any individual respondent. I'll be taking notes as we talk, but I'd also like to record the call, just to help with my notetaking. Is that OK with you?

Response

If you want to refer me to specific documents to answer any of my questions, that's great – I'm happy to look things up if I know where to get the information.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Response

Roles and Responsibilities

[ALL]

1. Let's start with a bit about you. Can you please tell me your title and briefly describe your role and responsibilities at ENS? *[If not already answered]* And what is your role with regard to the ETN? [Response](#)

[ALL]

2. Have your job title or responsibilities changed in the last year? If so, how? [Response](#)

[ETN MANAGER AND ETN SPONSOR]

3. In addition to you, who else works directly on the ETN? What are the roles and responsibilities of these other team members? What is the team's reporting structure? [Response](#)

Staff Understanding and Use of the ETN

[BDMS, SDMS, PMS, AND OEM]

4. Overall, so I can be sure to ask you the set of questions that best applies to you, would you say you are very, somewhat, or not too familiar with the ETN's components, services, and internal operations? [Response](#)

[ALL]

5. How would you describe the goals of the ETN? What purpose or function does it serve at ENS? [Response](#)

[ALL]

6. Please briefly describe how the ETN works. [Response](#)

[ETN MANAGER AND ETN SPONSOR]

7. How does the ETN interact with ENS's programs? [Response](#)

[ETN MANAGER AND ETN SPONSOR]

8. How important is the ETN to ENS's programs? [*Probe*] How important is the ETN to the programs' success? To ENS's customers? [Response](#)

[PMS]

9. How does the program you manage use the ETN? [Response](#)

[PMS]

10. How important is the ETN to the program you manage? [*Probe*] How important is the ETN to your program's success? To ENS's customers? [Response](#)

[BDMS, SDMS, AND OEM]

11. How do you use the ETN in your current position? [Response](#)

[BDMS, SDMS, AND OEM]

12. How important is the ETN to the work you do in your current position? [*Probe*] How important is the ETN to the success of ENS's programs? To ENS's customers? [Response](#)

Internal ETN Resources

[ALL]

13. How adequate are the resources for the ETN given the services it is trying to provide to its members and other ENS staff? *[Probe about the staffing level if the respondent does not explicitly mention that topic.]* Why do you say that? *[If resources are not adequate and not mentioned, probe]* Does the current staffing level constrain the services that ETN can provide? How so? [Response](#)

[ALL]

14. How adequate is the ETN's budget for the 2018 funding cycle? Why do you say that? [Response](#)

[ALL]

15. *[If any resources are not adequate]* What additional resources does the ETN currently need and for what purposes? [Response](#)

[ALL]

16. Do you think the ETN's resources will need to change for the next funding cycle? *[If so]* Why? How will its resources need to change? [Response](#)

ETN Member Recruitment, Development, and Retention

[ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS] Next, I'd like to learn more about ETN member recruitment, development, and retention.

[ALL OTHERS] Next, I'd like to learn more about the ETN membership.

[ALL]

17. How are ETN members currently recruited into the ETN? [Response](#)

[ALL]

18. How adequate is the current number of ETN members to meet ENS's needs? [Response](#)

[ALL]

19. Is ENS trying to grow the total number of ETN members? *[If so]* How? *[Probe: Which staff are involved? What are their roles/responsibilities regarding ETN recruitment?]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

20. Are there any specialty trades—for example, HVAC contractors, or contractors serving specific building types or industries—that are under- or over- represented in the ETN? *[If so]* Which ones? Is ENS trying to grow the number of members in under-represented specialty trades? *[Probe: Are specific staff tasked with increasing membership in particular trades?]* How? [Response](#)

[ALL]

21. Are there actions you think ENS should take to increase ETN membership? Who at ENS should be responsible for taking those actions? [Response](#)

[ALL]

22. What benefits do ETN members get from being part of the network? Do you think ETN members are aware of, and take advantage of, all of these benefits? [Response](#)

[ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS]

23. Let's focus for a moment on the professional development opportunities ENS offers ETN members. Can you please briefly tell me about any trainings that ETN members are required to take to be in the network? And can you tell me about any optional training opportunities available through the ETN? What changes to the ETN trainings, if any, are already planned? [Response](#)

[ALL EXCEPT ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS]

24. Let's focus for a moment on the professional development opportunities ENS offers ETN members. What do you know about trainings the ETN offers to its members? Have you heard about any planned changes to the ETN trainings? *[If so]* What have you heard? [Response](#)

[ALL]

25. What feedback, if any, have you gotten about the trainings you just mentioned? Do you think they are effective at building industry capacity—for example, helping members obtain PHCan's Passive House certification or helping members become Certified Energy Managers through the Canadian Institute for Energy Training (CIET)? What has worked well with the trainings? What has been challenging? *[If needed: For example, has it been difficult to find trainers to cover specific topics? Has it been difficult to get the attendance numbers the ETN would like?]* What suggestions do you have for overcoming these challenges? [Response](#)

[ALL]

26. Have you heard from ETN members about any additional topics they would like to receive training on? *[If so: What topics?]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

27. What training would you like the ETN to offer to its members? Are there any upcoming program, market, or technological changes that you think could trigger the need for new trainings? [Response](#)

[ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS]

28. What feedback, if any, have you gotten about ENS's bi-monthly Network News, emails, and other communications with members? Have these been effective ways of keeping members up-to-date about the ETN and ETN training opportunities? What ideas do you have, if any, for enhancing ENS's communication with ETN members? [Response](#)

[ALL]

29. What feedback, if any, have you gotten about ENS's Bright Business Conference and Awards event? Has this been an effective means of keeping members up-to-date and engaged with the ETN? What ideas do you have, if any, for enhancing ENS's communication with ETN members? [Response](#)

[ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS]

30. We are curious to know if the ETN has helped members forge new professional relationships with other ETN members. Do you know of any ETN members who are coordinating or partnering with others as a result of joining the ETN? *[If needed: For example, have members told you they value the ETN because they expanded their professional network or got referrals from other professionals in the field?]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

31. What ideas do you have that could help the ETN recruit, develop, and retain members? Who at ENS should be responsible for taking those actions? [Response](#)

ETN's Effect on ENS's Programs

Let's switch gears and talk about how the ETN has affected ENS's programs.

[PMS]

32. Since the ETN's inception in 2016, what affect, if any, has the ETN had on your program? *[Probes: Has it helped boost participation numbers, increased the scale of projects, or made any other noticeable changes to program participation? If so, how?]* [Response](#)

[PMS]

33. What suggestions do you have, if any, for how the ETN could better coordinate with the program that you manage? [Response](#)

[ALL]

34. Since the ETN's inception in 2016, what affect, if any, has the ETN had on ENS's programs overall? *[Probes: Has it helped boost participation numbers, increased the scale of projects, or made any other noticeable changes to program participation? If so, how?]* *[Probe for program-specific effects.]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

35. Under what circumstances are customers referred to the ETN? *[If needed: For example, if a customer needs additional expertise for their projects?]*
1. Who refers them? [Response](#) *[If not already answered: Do you ever refer customers to the ETN?]*
 2. [ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS] How frequently do ETN members refer their customers to the online ETN directory? *[If needed: For example, if customers are participating in multiple ENS programs...]* [Response](#)

3. [ETN MANAGER, ETN SPONSOR, AND VERY FAMILIARS] How frequently do ETN members refer their customers to specific other ETN members when customers need additional expertise for their projects? *[If needed: For example, if customers are participating in multiple ENS programs...]* [Response](#)
4. What types of customers are referred to the ETN, for which ENS programs? [Response](#)
5. How often does that happen? [Response](#)

[ALL]

36. What suggestions do you have, if any, for how the ETN could help increase customer participation in ENS's programs? [Response](#)

[ALL]

37. What suggestions do you have, if any, for how the ETN could help improve customers' experiences with ENS's programs? Who at ENS would be involved with implementing those actions? [Response](#)

Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities

To wrap-up I'd like to get your feedback about the ETN's successes and challenges to date, as well as about opportunities for the future.

[BDMS, SDMS, PMS, AND OEM]

38. What would you say are the greatest benefits of the ETN to your work? [Response](#)

[ALL]

39. *[If not already answered]* How do you think the ETN benefits ENS overall? [Response](#)

[ALL]

40. What do you see as the ETN's key successes since its inception in 2016? *[If needed: Can you think of any stories or metrics that demonstrate these successes]*? [Response](#)

[ALL]

41. What key challenges do you think the ETN faces over the next two years? What suggestions do you have for overcoming these challenges? [Response](#)

[ALL]

42. How, if at all, would you change the ETN so that it better supports all of ENS's outreach efforts and programs? Why would you want to make these changes? [Response](#)

[ALL]

43. Those are all the questions I have prepared. Is there anything else about the ETN that you think is important for me to know? [Response](#)

[ALL]

44. Before we close, I want to check with you about using your quotes – anonymously – in our report to illustrate key points and make them more interesting and readable. We will do everything we can to protect your confidentiality. Please tell me if you: [Response](#)
1. Agree to being quoted anonymously
 2. Agree to being quoted anonymously, subject to your review and approval of the quote(s)
 3. Do not want to be quoted

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix D. ETN Member Interview Guide

Phone Script

Hello [CONTACT NAME],

My name is [NAME] and I'm with Research Into Action. As you may know, we are working with Efficiency Nova Scotia (ENS) to learn about how well their Efficiency Trade Network (ETN) is working within the energy efficiency industry. I understand your firm is a member of the ETN. Is that correct?

[IF NO, THANK AND TERMINATE].

[IF YES, PROCEED]

We are interviewing key members, like you, so we can learn more about how well the ETN works, the services it offers, its benefits and challenges, and ways in which the ETN could be improved. I would like to schedule a time to speak with you over the phone within the next two weeks to get your feedback about the ETN. Are you the right person at your firm to talk about the ETN?

[IF NO, RECORD NAME AND CONTACT INFO OF RIGHT PERSON].

[IF YES, PROCEED]

I estimate I will need 30 minutes of your time. Please suggest a time when you are available, and I will schedule an appointment for us.

Email Script

Dear [CONTACT NAME],

I work for Research Into Action and, as you may know, we are working with Efficiency Nova Scotia (ENS) to learn about how their Efficiency Trade Network (ETN) is working within the energy efficiency industry. I understand your firm is a member of the ETN.

We are interviewing key members, like you, so we can learn more about how well the ETN works, the services it offers, its benefits and challenges, and ways in which the ETN could be improved. I would like to schedule a time to speak with you over the phone within the next two weeks to get your feedback about the ETN.

I estimate I will need 30 minutes of your time. I am available during any of the following blocks of time.

Atlantic Daylight Time (ADT)	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
11 to 12										
12 to 1										
1 to 2										
2 to 3										
3 to 4										
4 to 5										

Please suggest a time when you are available, and I will schedule an appointment for us. If none of these times or days work for you, please suggest an alternative.

If there is someone else at your firm that is more knowledgeable about ENS and the ETN, please let me know and I will contact that person.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Albers
503-943-2139
Nathaniel.Albers@researchintoaction.com

Introduction to Interview

Thanks for taking the time to talk today. I work for Research Into Action and we are conducting research on behalf of ENS about their Efficiency Trade Network (ETN). We are interviewing contractors like you to learn more about how well the ETN works, the services it offers, its benefits and challenges, and ways in which the ETN could be improved.

Our talk will take about 30 minutes.

- I. Before we start, I want to mention that we often use quotes from our interviews – without names attached – in our reports. We use these quotes to illustrate key points and make the reports more

interesting and readable. If we want to use any of your quotes from today's discussion, would you like us to: [Response](#)

1. Quote you anonymously
2. Quote you anonymously and provide you an opportunity to review and approve the quotes before we use them
3. Not quote you at all.

Everything you say is confidential. We won't share our notes from the conversation unless we are legally required to, and we will not report findings in a way that would identify any individual respondent. I'll be taking notes as we talk, but I'd also like to record the call, just to help with my notetaking. Is that OK with you?

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Respondent Information

[ALL]

1. Let's start with a bit about you and your company. What are the main services or products your company offers? *[Do not read; mark all that apply]* [Response](#)

Implementer of energy-efficiency programs

Contractor: Lighting

Contractor: Heat Pump

Contractor: Solar

Contractor: Engineer

Contractor: Builder

Contractor: Passive House Consultant

Contractor: Home Energy Assessment Provider

Other *[specify]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

2. Can you please tell me your title and briefly describe your role and responsibilities at your company? [Response](#)

[ALL]

3. *[If not already answered]* And what is your role with regard to the ETN? *[Probe]* Are you your company's main contact for the ETN? How frequently do you interact with the ETN? [Response](#)

Member Recruitment and Perceived ETN Benefits

[ALL]

4. How did you first learn about the ETN? [Response](#)

[ALL]

5. In what year did you become a member of the ETN? [Response](#)

[ALL]

6. Why did your company decide to enroll in the ETN? How did you think the ETN would benefit your company? [Response](#)

[ALL]

7. Approximately how many of your new clients learn about your company from the ETN each year? [Response](#)

Information Sessions and Training

Now I'd like to learn about any ENS-sponsored information sessions you've attended, training you received, or workshops you participated in.

[ALL]

8. Which ENS-sponsored info sessions, if any, have you attended? *[Mark all that apply; read list if needed]*

1. Green Heat info session
2. Solar Homes info session
3. Procurement info session (webinar)
4. Non-electric funding announcement info session
5. Other info session *[Specify]* [Response](#)

[IF Q8 = DID NOT ATTEND ANY INFO SESSIONS, SKIP TO Q23]

[IF Q8 = ATTENDED ANY INFO SESSION(S)]

9. How did you learn about the info session(s)? *[Probe for each info session the respondent attended]* [Response](#)

[IF Q8 = ATTENDED ANY INFO SESSION(S)]

10. What did you like most about the info session(s)? What did you find the most valuable? *[Probe for each info session the respondent attended]* [Response](#)

[IF Q8 = ATTENDED ANY INFO SESSION(S)]

11. Was there anything you disliked about the info session(s)? *[If so]* What did you dislike? What would you suggest for improving the info session(s)? *[Probe for each info session the respondent attended]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

12. Have you attended any ENS trainings or workshops? *[If so]* What was the name of the training? *[If respondent cannot remember the training's name]* What topics did the training cover? [Response](#)

[IF Q23 = DID NOT ATTEND ANY TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS, SKIP TO Q26]

[IF Q23 = ATTENDED TRAINING/WORKSHOP]

13. How did you learn about the training/workshop? *[If needed: Newsletter, colleagues, contact at ENS]* [Response](#)

[IF Q23 = ATTENDED TRAINING/WORKSHOP]

14. Did you take advantage of any ETN discounts when you registered for the training/workshop? *[If so]* Do you think you would have enrolled in that training/workshop without the discount? [Response](#)

[ALL]

15. What topics, if any, would you like to see the ETN offer its members through info sessions or trainings? This could be an info session or training on technologies, upcoming programs from ENS, market changes, marketing or other topics. Why would this be useful to you? In what format would you like to see this type of information offered? [Response](#)

Marketing

I have a couple of questions about marketing/advertising support you may get through your ETN membership.

[ALL]

16. What effect, if any, do you think being listed on ENS's website as an ETN member has had on your sales of energy-efficiency services? Why do you say that? [Response](#)

[ALL]

17. Do you use ENS's logo or name on your company website or marketing materials? *[If so]* Why did you decide to do that? What effect, if any, do you think using ENS's logo has had on your sales? [Response](#)

[ALL]

18. Does ETN support your company's outreach to customers in any other ways? *[If so]* Please describe that support. What effect has this support had on your sales? [Response](#)

Communications

My next questions are about ENS's communication with you and your company.

Staff

First, I'd like to ask you about your interactions with ENS staff.

[ALL]

19. Have you ever contacted ENS with questions or concerns about the ETN? *[If so]* Who at ENS did /would you reach out to? Were they able to answer your questions and address your concerns? Was their timely? *[If not]* Why do you say that? [Response](#)

[ALL]

20. If you had any [IF Q19 = YES, READ "ADDITIONAL"] questions or concerns about the ETN, how would you go about answering them? Who would you reach out to? [Response](#)

[ALL]

21. Overall, how effectively do ETN staff communicate with you/your company? Why do you say that? What is the most effective method ETN staff use to communicate with you/your company? [Response](#)

Newsletter

Now I'd like to talk about a few specific ways that ETN communicates with its members. First, the ETN newsletter.

[ALL]

22. Do you receive the bi-monthly Network Newsletter? *[If so]* How regularly do you have a chance to read it? [Response](#)

[IF Q22 = READ NEWSLETTER]

23. How useful is the information in the newsletter? Why? What type of information do you find most useful? Least useful? How well does the newsletter keep you up-to-date about the ETN and training opportunities? [Response](#)

[IF Q22 = READ NEWSLETTER]

24. What additional information, if any, would you like to see in future newsletters? Are there any improvements you'd like to see to the newsletter? *[Probe]* [Response](#)

Conference

Let's shift gears and talk briefly about the Bright Business Conference.

[ALL]

25. Have you ever attended ENS's Bright Business Conference and Awards event? [Response](#)

[IF Q25 = NO, SKIP TO Q31]

[IF Q25 = YES]

26. How useful did you find the conference? Why? *[Probes]* Did it help you stay up-to-date about the ETN? Did you make any new business connections at the conference? Did you learn about technology and market changes? [Response](#)

[IF Q25 = YES]

27. The next Bright Business conference will be taking place on October 16. How likely are you to attend this conference, or future Bright Business Conferences and Awards events? Why do you say that? [Response](#)

[IF Q25 = YES]

28. What ideas do you have, if any, for improving the conference? [Response](#)

[ALL]

29. What should ENS do to improve communications with its ETN members about the Bright Business Conference? [Response](#)

Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities

To wrap-up I'd like to get your feedback about the ETN's successes and challenges to date, as well as opportunities for future improvements to the ETN.

[ALL]

30. Of all the things we've talked about, what does the ETN do really well? *[If needed: Provide relevant training to my staff, offer networking opportunities, generate work leads?]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

31. What benefits have you/your company gotten from being part of the ETN? *[Probes: Has it helped increase the number of projects you have done? Provided training that enhanced the skillsets of your employees, something else?]* Can you share any stories or metrics that demonstrate how your ETN membership has benefitted your company? [Response](#)

[ALL]

32. What suggestions, if any, do you have for how the ETN could better support your company's energy-efficiency services? *[If needed: For example, provide more or different training, provide more marketing support, opportunities to provide feedback about the ETN to ENS staff]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

33. ENS is particularly interested to know if ETN has connected you to other companies in the network.
1. For instance, have you partnered with any other ETN members to do work? [Response](#)
 2. Have you gotten referrals from other ETN members? [Response](#)

3. Have you referred other members to any of your clients? Under what circumstances have these partnerships or referrals occurred? *[Probe for whether these partners or referrals are needed because customers are participating in multiple ENS programs.]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

34. Are there any specialty energy-efficiency services or companies that you think are underrepresented on the ETN? *[If needed: for example, maybe a service/company that provides services that complement yours.]* *[If so]* What types of services or companies? [Response](#)

[ALL]

35. What suggestions, if any, do you have for how ENS can reach additional companies that might be interested in becoming ETN members? *[Probe: Can you recommend any conferences, trainings, or other industry events where ENS could meet companies that might be interested in becoming ETN members?]* [Response](#)

[ALL]

36. Do you have any suggestions for how the ETN could be used to increase participation in ENS programs? Please describe them. [Response](#)

[ALL]

37. What suggestions do you have for how the ETN could be used to enhance customer experiences with ENS's programs? [Response](#)

[ALL]

38. Those are all the questions I have prepared. Is there anything else about the ETN that you think is important for me to know? [Response](#)

[ALL]

39. Before we close, I want to check with you about using your quotes – anonymously – in our report to illustrate key points and make them more interesting and readable. Earlier, you said you'd like us to [Q-I]. Is that still OK with you? [Response](#)

[If not] Please tell me if you:

1. Agree to being quoted anonymously
2. Agree to being quoted anonymously, subject to your review and approval of the quote(s)
3. Do not want to be quoted

Thank you very much for your time.