

# Impact evaluation of program or program change abstract title



Descriptive statement of project outcome

## Key findings

Include 1-3 sentences highlighting key findings.

*Example:* We find that simplifying income documentation did not increase the number of new applications to the [NAME] program. However, it reduced application processing times by [X%] and increased approval rates by [X%].

## Agency priority

Clearly define the agency's priority, why it's important to the agency, and the extent of the problem in 3-4 sentences. *Example:* The

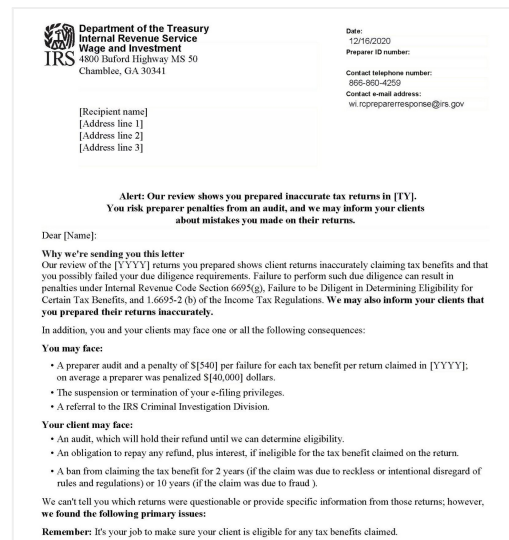
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) spends more than \$1 billion per year on public housing utility costs for heating, lighting, and cooling.<sup>1</sup> In turn, these costs affect HUD programs. HUD seeks to encourage residents of federally assisted public housing developments to reduce household energy use, thereby reducing federal expenditures on public housing utilities.

## Program change description [or Program description]

Include the more detailed description of the problem/bottleneck (with government citations or reference to base rates where possible), the evidence-based program change/intervention applied to the program (with citations), and references to prior research/evidence in 4-6 sentences. Include a high quality image of the intervention materials, when applicable. *Example:* Preparers may complete tax returns incorrectly due to a lack of awareness or understanding of due diligence requirements, or because they view the penalties for overclaiming as unlikely to occur or as too small to change their behavior. As part of their tiered strategy to improve the accuracy of claiming certain benefits, the IRS sends a letter, called the Letter 5025, to preparers prior to the filing season, if the returns they prepared for their clients during the previous season had likely errors in claiming

benefits. We collaborated with the Wage and Investment (W&I) and Research, Applied Analytics and Statistics (RAAS) divisions of the IRS to design an updated Letter 5025. The redesigned letter builds off of insights from behavioral sciences literature, which suggests that simplifying and clarifying the language, making salient the consequences of filing improperly, and communicating that the preparer's clients may also be notified of likely inaccuracies in their returns, may all serve as effective strategies in motivating voluntary tax compliance among preparers.<sup>2</sup>

Image # [When applicable]. Description of image below



## Evaluation design

Describe the evaluation method (randomization or other design), when the study ran, a description of the control and treatment(s) conditions, and the full sample size in 4-5 sentences. *Example:* The program change was evaluated with an individual level randomized control trial. The flyers with either one or five energy-saving tips were mailed to a sample of housing units at seven New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments in early September 2017. These units were randomized within blocks based on development and bedroom size (studio – five bedrooms) into either a no-flyer,

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Progress Report and Energy Action Plan Report to Congress, Section 154, Energy Policy Act of 2005 (2012)*, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/OSHCENERGYREPORT2012.PDF>

<sup>2</sup> Lerner, J. S., & Tetlock, P. E. Accounting for the effects of accountability. (1999). *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(2), 255–275

single-tip flyer, or multiple-tip flyer group. Single-tip flyers were mailed to 935 units and multiple-tip flyers were mailed to 932 units. No flyers were mailed to 929 units. Average daily energy use (in kilowatt-hours, kWh) for units sent flyers was compared to average daily energy use for units not sent flyers.<sup>3</sup>

## Analysis of existing data

**Include the primary outcome(s) and highlight the existing administrative data set used in 2-3 sentences.**

Include the footnote attached to this sentence (and throughout the abstract be sure to indicate any analysis that was not prespecified).<sup>4</sup>  
*Example:* Data from VA electronic health records were used to compare flu shot uptake between the two groups between October 1, 2017 and May 24, 2018. The data included not just whether a patient got a flu shot but also the date of the flu shot, which enabled us to assess whether the emails might prompt individuals to get shots earlier in the season. The data also included information about individual characteristics – including age, rurality, and prior flu shots – that enabled a more precise estimate of the emails’ effectiveness.

## Results

**Include 3-7 sentences with results and any implementation challenges that impacted the analysis. Cite the analysis plan, where relevant. Include secondary outcomes and exploratory analyses, if relevant and re-analyzed.** *Example:* We find that there was no significant difference in compliance rates between treatment and control schools six months post-report card treatment. Immunization compliance was 76.3% among schools that received the report cards and 76.2% among schools that did not ( $p = .836$ , 95% CI [-2.30, 2.84]). The same null results hold among day care, elementary, middle, and high schools, and for each vaccine type.<sup>5</sup>

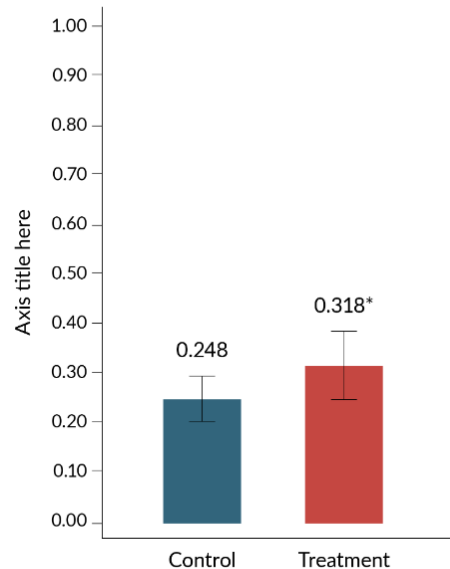
<sup>3</sup> Author. "Title." *Publication* (2010): 218-226.

<sup>4</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all of the analysis reported in this abstract was prespecified in an analysis plan, which can be found at <https://oes.gsa.gov>.

<sup>5</sup> For a full report, see: David Yokum, Julie C. Lauffenburger, Roya Ghazinouri and Niteesh K. Choudhry. "Letters designed with behavioural science increase influenza vaccination in Medicare beneficiaries." *Nature Human Behaviour*; 2(2018): 743-749.

**Figure 1.** Descriptive figure title

*Example:* Targeting incentives increased the response rate relative to allocating incentives totally at random



## Implications

**Summarize the broader evidence and learnings from the evaluation, including findings and methodological or operational lessons (beyond and broader than just the evaluation results). Note any implications for operations or policy, whether further evidence is needed, and if there is anything worth looking into further via exploratory analysis, in 3-4 sentences.**

*Example:* This study has implications for other state housing agencies’ outreach strategies: mailers may not be the most effective way to engage homeowners who are eligible for HAF, even those who are most in need. In this evaluation, our analyses were well-powered to detect the effects of mailer outreach to high-risk homeowners – where HAF funding could prevent them from losing their homes. We find that mailers did not impact their likelihood to initiate or complete applications. Future work could examine the effectiveness of more intensive interventions – for example, phone outreach, in-person outreach, or dedicated customer support to help homeowners complete applications.