



LED WATCH

James Brodrick

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF SPECIFIERS

An online tool streamlines product procurement and project management

Back in December 2015, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) convened a roundtable of lighting designers and specifiers who were asked to describe how they work up a project, what they need from manufacturers and how an independently verified LED lighting database such as DOE's LED Lighting Facts could best serve their needs. It was a loaded question, and we got an earful.

The result is a new online tool that should prove to be a huge boon for lighting designers and specifiers, making it easier for them to access and use the kind of information they need to make solid-state lighting projects successful. Called the LED Lighting Facts Specification Tool, it provides a customized platform to search and filter products from the LED Lighting Facts database and manage lighting projects. Why is that such a big deal? Well, because the LED Lighting Facts database includes tens of thousands of LED lighting products from nearly 1,500 manufacturers. So the tool can make specifying not only a whole lot easier, but also much more effective, since it puts a huge universe of products within the touch of a keypad. And those products are playing an increasingly important role in the toolboxes of lighting designers and specifiers, as SSL continues to develop and become competitive in more and more applications.

The LED Lighting Facts Specification Tool offers a customized work space that saves project details with associated

products and is accessible to colleagues in the same firm. It allows users to:

- Filter the LED Lighting Facts database for the desired information and save selected products to a project or "favorites" list, saving those same filter specs if desired
- Create "tags" that associate products to projects in the works
- Communicate directly with manufacturers to ask them questions about their products
- Assign products to a project fixture schedule
- Add time-stamped product or project notes that are accessible by colleagues
- Generate spec sheets, fixture schedules, project summaries and product filter downloads

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

One thing designers and specifiers told us at the December 2015 roundtable was that they wanted more product data about drivers, controls, color and optics—and more photos, spec sheets,

graphs and other helpful visuals. They also said they needed to be able to share project work space with their colleagues, to generate fixture schedules and uniform spec sheets, and to interact with manufacturers and sales reps. DOE took their comments to heart and developed a beta version of the new specification tool, which was introduced at LIGHTFAIR 2016. The feedback we received there was encouraging, to say the least. So, after several months of fine-tuning, the tool was formally launched in November 2016.

LED Lighting Facts has never been a static program. Since its beginning in 2008, it's evolved to keep pace with market changes and feedback from stakeholders. As one example of this, in March 2016 the product submission form was updated to make things easier for manufacturers, with the various metrics now being grouped in related, user-friendly chunks. The submission process has also been redesigned to make it as automated as possible, with the data now pulled from standardized electronic files and reports so that it doesn't have to be entered manually.

LED Lighting Facts tries to make as much product data as possible, as available as possible—while at the same time minimizing the burden on manufacturers. The overarching goal, of course, is to

make the database as useful as possible for lighting designers, specifiers, utilities and other stakeholders. That's why it's designed to reflect only the current market, with superseded products archived separately from the searchable database. Over 40 percent of the products in that database were listed during the previous 12 months, and roughly 2,000 new products are submitted each month. Due to changes in the market as well as in replacement-lamp testing requirements, LED Lighting Facts is no longer listing replacement lamps, which were removed from its database in December 2016, but luminaires and retrofit kits continue to be listed.

In the past two years alone, the LED Lighting Facts program has tripled in

size. It's now the main way for manufacturers to submit their products for DOE's Next Generation Luminaires Design

LED Lighting Facts is no longer listing replacement lamps, which were removed from its database in December 2016, but luminaires and retrofit kits continue to be listed

Competition. It's also the source for a wide range of DOE CALiPER Snapshot

reports, which examine SSL performance trends—and is a source for DOE's SSL market adoption reports.

The result is a unique and extensive database on current LED lighting products, designed to meet a wide range of user needs as effectively as possible. The LED Lighting Facts Specification Tool has been created to leverage the value of this database. Not only is the tool fast, but it's easy to use and available, free of charge, to all Lighting Pro Partners. For more information, visit www.lighting-facts.com/About/Content/LightingPros/SpecificationTool.

James Brodrick is the lighting program manager for the U.S. Department of Energy, Building Technologies Office.