

OpenBCA FAQ

How to use this FAQ

Questions are numbered so users can reference a specific item in [GitHub](#) discussions or Technical Support Office Hours. The FAQ will be updated on a regular basis as questions and answers are updated or added. For additional support, see the Technical Assistance tab on NASEO's OpenBCA webpage.

1. Download and Launch

1.1. How do I download and launch OpenBCA on Windows or macOS?

Download the release package for your operating system and the two Excel input templates from the OpenBCA webpage or GitHub repository. Save the package to an approved local folder, extract the entire ZIP package, keep the application and supporting internal files together, and launch the OpenBCA application from the extracted folder. Do not run the application from inside the ZIP file.

1.2. What should I do if the application will not launch?

Confirm that you downloaded the correct operating-system package, fully extracted it, and kept all supporting files with the application. Organizational security controls may block downloaded executables, locally bundled Python components, or local file access. If the issue continues, provide the exact warning or error message to your IT department and direct them to the OpenBCA IT Requirements and Technical README resources.

1.3. Does OpenBCA require an internet connection or send my input data externally?

OpenBCA is designed to run on the user's local hardware without requiring an internet connection for model execution. An internet connection is needed to download the application and supporting materials. Follow your organization's data-handling and IT requirements.

2. Prepare the Excel Inputs

2.1. What is the difference between the two input files?

The Configuration File defines how impacts are valued, including global assumptions, value streams, calculation methods, avoided costs, temporal granularity, and subsets. The Program Input File defines what is being evaluated, including program and measure data, participation, savings, costs, useful lives, and load shapes. Both files are required.

2.2. Which file should I complete first?

Begin with the Configuration File. Complete the global assumptions and value-stream setup, generate the required value-stream tabs, and enter the system-level data. Then use the Build Program Input macro, which opens the Program Input File and creates the required load-shape structure. Complete program-level inputs first, followed by measure-level inputs and load shapes.

2.3. Can I rename the files or modify the workbook structure?

Keep the original filenames, .xlsm extensions, worksheets, columns, and required headers. To manage versions, store copies in separate date-stamped folders rather than renaming the active files. Use the provided macros to generate required worksheets instead of adding or renaming them manually.

2.4. What if I do not have the most granular load shapes?

The savings data must support the highest temporal granularity used by the applicable avoided-cost value streams. OpenBCA does not convert lower-resolution savings data into higher-resolution profiles.

2.5. Can OpenBCA develop avoided costs or other assumptions for me?

No. OpenBCA applies user-provided assumptions and data; it does not generate jurisdiction-specific avoided costs, define policy objectives, or determine which value streams should be included. Consult the NSPM, MTR Handbook, relevant planning studies, and other appropriate sources when developing inputs.

3. Upload and Validate

3.1. How do I upload the input files?

On the OpenBCA Home Page, select Browse Files, choose the completed Configuration File and Program Input File, and select Upload Selected Files. Confirm that both files upload successfully before selecting Validate Input Files.

3.2. What does validation check?

Validation checks technical and structural requirements, including required global and row-level parameters, unique program and measure IDs, mappings between measures and load shapes, and consistency between avoided-cost and load-shape granularity.

3.3. What should I do if validation returns an error?

Read the full message and identify the affected file, worksheet, field, program, measure, or value stream. Correct the issue in Excel, save the workbook, re-upload both files, and run validation again. Do not run the model while validation errors remain.

Important: Successful validation confirms that the input files meet the tool's technical requirements. It does not confirm that assumptions are reasonable, current, or aligned with jurisdictional policy.

4. Run the Model

4.1. How do I run OpenBCA?

After both files have been uploaded and validation has been completed without errors, select Run OpenBCA. The model processes the configured value streams, program inputs, measures, and load shapes according to the defined Jurisdiction-Specific Test. After a successful run, proceed to Insights & Analysis.

4.2. What should I do if the model does not run successfully?

Review the complete error message. Correct the identified issue in the Configuration File or Program Input File, save the files, re-upload both workbooks, rerun validation, and then run the model again. If the issue remains, retain the error message and a screenshot for Technical Support Office Hours.

5. Review and Export Results

5.1. What results should I review first?

Begin with total benefits, total costs, net benefits, and the benefit-cost ratio. Then review program-, measure-, subset-, and value-stream-level results to understand the drivers of the overall outcome and confirm that all expected elements are represented.

5.2. Can I download and revise the analysis?

Yes. Results can be reviewed in the interface and exported for further analysis and reporting. OpenBCA supports an iterative workflow: update the assumptions or program data, document the revision, and then upload, validate, and rerun the revised files.

5.3. What should I check if results appear unreasonable?

Review units and sign conventions, participation, program and measure costs, useful lives, NTG assumptions, annual savings, load-shape assignments, avoided-cost units and timing, discount and inflation rates, subsets, and value-stream configuration. A successful run does not guarantee analytically reasonable results.

6. Getting Help

6.1. What should I include when requesting technical support?

Provide the FAQ question number, operating system, OpenBCA release version, the step where the issue occurred, the complete error message, and a screenshot if available. Also confirm whether the input files retain their original names and structure. Do not share confidential data unless permitted by your organization and the support process.

Key Support Resources

Resource	Use it for
Template support buttons	Field definitions, units, and expected input formats
User Guide and tutorials	Completing inputs and running the application
NSPM and MTR Handbook	BCA principles, value-stream selection, and input development
IT Requirements / Technical README	Security review, application execution, architecture, and dependencies
Technical Support Office Hours	Questions that remain after reviewing the documentation