Evaluating Your American Spaces Program

Asking the right questions to get useful data
What should you consider when evaluating programs?
What Are Our Evaluation Goals?

- Needs assessment
- Justify funding
- Inform stakeholders, external audiences, partners
- Determine what programs are worth continuing and which are not
- Demonstrate impact
Here are two EVALUATION TYPES:

Formative
- Needs assessment
- Process evaluation and program improvement

Summative
- Outcome assessment
- Impact evaluation
Here is a web site from the University of Michigan that you will want to review:

Evaluation: What is it and why do it?

Evaluation. What associations does this word bring to mind? Do you see evaluation as an invaluable tool to improve your program? Or do you find it intimidating because you don’t know much about it? Regardless of your perspective on evaluation, MEERA is here to help! The purpose of this introductory section is to provide you with some useful background information on evaluation.

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- Should I evaluate my program?
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**FORMATIVE**

**SUMMATIVE**

These summative evaluations build on data collected in the earlier stages.

**Adapted from:**

Norland, E. (2004, Sept). From education theory to conservation practice. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Association for...
What evaluation tools/methods have you used?
Evaluation Tools:

- Questionnaire or survey
- Interview
- Documentation review
- Observation
- Focus group
- Case study
Questionnaires or Surveys can be used to quickly and easily collect information from many people.

**Positives**
- Can be anonymous
- Inexpensive
- Easy to compare
- Build off existing samples

**Negatives**
- May not get careful feedback
- Wording can bias response
- May need sampling expertise
- Impersonal
Interviews have both positive and negative aspects:

**Positives**

- Full range and in-depth feedback
- Develops relationship
- Can be more flexible

**Negatives**

- Time intensive
- Difficult to compare
- Interviewer can bias response
- Can be costly
**Documentation Reviews** is a method of understanding how a program is operating, without interrupting it, using memos, budget, meeting minutes, reports.

**Positives**

Comprehensive and historical information

Doesn’t interrupt program

Less bias

Information already exists

**Negatives**

Time intensive

Need to be clear about what you are looking for

No flexibility in collecting data
Observations is a method of gathering accurate information about the operation of a program.

**Positives**
- Viewing things as they occur
- Can adapt to changing circumstances

**Negatives**
- Can be difficult to interpret observed behaviors
- Complex to categorize
- Observation can influence behavior
Focus Groups provide an opportunity to explore a topic in depth through group discussions. The Smithsonian Institutions has some great tips on focus groups.

Positives

- Quickly gather common impressions
- Efficient way to gather range and depth of information in short time
- Can convey key information about programs

Negatives

- Can be hard to analyze responses
- Need a good facilitator
- Challenging to schedule participants
Case Studies depict a single user’s experience, comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases

**Positives**
- Fully depicts one person’s experience with input, process and results
- Powerful tool to portray program to outsiders or stakeholders

**Negatives**
- Time consuming to collect
- Depth of information rather than breadth
Steps to a Useful Evaluation

1. Set the scene (formative)
2. Reaction level (formative/summative)
3. Attitude level (summative)
4. Results level (summative)
5. Share the impact
1. Set the scene - Needs assessment

Know where you are starting from

- Pre-surveys
- Needs assessments
- Social media listening
- Media scanning
- Focus groups
- “Word on the street”
- Different throughout your network?
2. Reaction level evaluation

Were they satisfied?

- Most immediate evaluation
- Easiest to get -- even lowest staffed spaces
- Low tech and high tech options
3. Attitude level evaluation

Did their attitude change? Did they learn something new?

- Pre and post surveys
- Word clouds
- May require some kind of testing
After coming to the America House Kyiv (AH) and attending events, associations with opportunities become stronger. This translates the perception that our audience sees AH as an institution that connects them to the opportunities. “Opportunity” is now the first association with the U.S. that comes to AH visitors’ minds after coming to AH. In the previous two waves of surveys, the associations were positive and reflected cornerstone American values like freedom and democracy. Now opportunities stood out, most likely as a testimony that AH makes opportunities available to its visitors and opens new horizons for them.
4. Results level evaluation

What is the long-term impact?
  ○ Ties back to Mission strategic goals and foreign policy
  ○ Net gain to the Department, bilateral relationship

Check out the following examples:
EVERY 10TH VISITOR

ESTABLISHES BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS
Love this Dar America video highlighting inspiring members -
Focus Group Role Play

Use the following scenarios to try out focus groups as a way of evaluating your programs.
Focus Groups can be useful for formative and summative assessment

- Needs assessment (working with new audiences, launching new program initiatives)
- Feedback on programs, services, resources
- Getting buy-in from stakeholders and key audiences (Embassy staff, partners, members, etc.)
- Evaluating a program, campaign, etc.
- Impact evaluation
Focus Group 1
Formative Evaluation - Needs Assessment

You would like to attract new audiences to your American Space(s), particularly university students. How can a focus group help you conduct a needs assessment of your target audience?
Focus Group 2
Formative Evaluation - Process Implementation

You have a well-established American Spaces program and would like to improve “whole-of-mission” programming by coordinating more closely with internal Embassy stakeholders. How can a focus group help you achieve more buy-in from this internal audience
Focus Group 3
Summative Evaluation - Outcome Assessment

You recently completed a MOOC Camp on Media Literacy in one or more of your American Spaces. You conducted a pre and post survey and have collected some data, however you would like to learn more about what the participants gained from the experience and whether or not this can lead to additional programming opportunities. You would also like some feedback on the MOOC Camp format since this is new for post. How can a focus group help you gain more qualitative feedback from your MOOC Camp participants?
Focus Group 4  
Summative Evaluation - Measuring Impact

You have a sense that your American Space is making a measurable difference in your community by connecting emerging leaders with valuable skills and information about the United States. How can you use a focus group with key target groups (i.e. Regular visitors, alumni, volunteers, NGO partners, etc.) to evaluate the impact your Space (and programs, resources, etc.) has made in your community?