

# 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:  
<http://meera.snre.umich.edu/evaluation-what-it-and-why-do-it>

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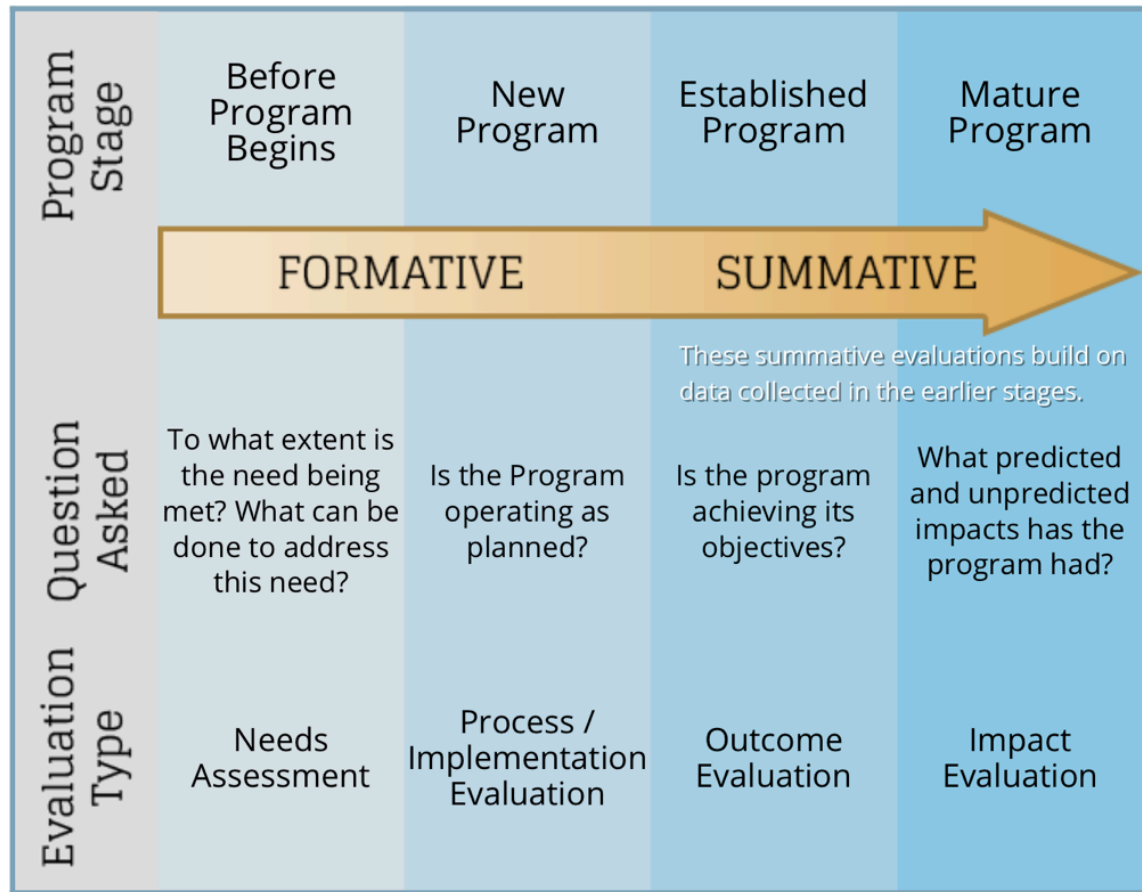
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## Evaluation: What is it and why do it?

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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**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?







### 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

# Change in Perception

Before



After



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


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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:



A video frame showing two women in a room. On the left, an American flag and a Ukrainian flag stand on poles. In the center, a woman in a grey dress and black blazer holds a small white card. To her right, another woman in a grey dress and black cardigan stands with her hands clasped. Behind them is a large screen displaying a painting of a group of people. To the right of the women is a wooden podium and a blue banner with the text 'AMERICA HOUSE' and 'HAS TO YOU'.

**EVERY 10<sup>TH</sup> VISITOR**

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0:16 / 1:47



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# Focus Group Role Play

Use the following scenarios to try out focus groups as a way of evaluating your programs.

## **Remember:**

### **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?