Towards Useful Evaluation in the FSI School of Language Studies
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FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

- Leadership and Management School
- Office of the Historian
- Transition Center
- School of Professional and Area Studies
- School of Applied Information Technology
- School of Language Studies
School of Language Studies (SLS)

- Offers course instruction in over 70 languages, with course length and curricula targeted at range of language proficiencies, from basic to advanced, and specialized programs from native- and near-native-speaking Language and Culture Instructors

- Co-creator of speaking and reading language proficiency rating scales used throughout the U.S. government; offers tests in over 100 languages

- Active within U.S. government interagency community of language trainers and testers; Frequent benchmarking on language instruction with academia and external foreign affairs agencies
We help SLS staff use evidence to better understand and develop their programs.
GAO: Government Accountability Office
DOS: Department of State
OIG: Office of Inspector General
What is evaluation?

...a mode of inquiry in which stakeholders in (language) programs collect, learn from, and use evidence toward programmatic actions and decisions.  

(Davis & McKay 2018)
What is *useful* evaluation?

Evaluations should be judged by their usefulness and their actual use.

*(Patton 2008)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evaluator</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What my mom thinks I do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What my friends think I do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What program stakeholders think I do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What the program directors want me to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What my adversaries think I do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What I really do</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What can prevent evaluation from being useful?

- No shared understanding of what evaluation is and is not
- Evaluation questions unclear or undefined
- Data not aggregated or easily accessible
- Focus on inputs and outputs, not outcomes
- Compliance instead of use
What is useful evaluation?
How to make evaluation *useful*

Start with specifying what **specific people** are going to **do** with the evaluation...

Plan the evaluation to ensure those specific things happen...

So that they happen.

*(AELRC Useful Evaluation Workshop 2015)*
## Evaluation users and uses in SLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Uses</th>
<th>Primary intended users</th>
<th>Stakeholder groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FSI Director, SLS Deans</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Staff Development (CSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division Directors (DVDs)</td>
<td>Language Testing Unit (LTU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Training Supervisors (LTSs)</td>
<td>Language &amp; Culture Instructors (LCIs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training Specialists (TSs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve language instruction, curriculum, and assessment to enhance the job performance of DoS employees</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document and demonstrate effectiveness of FSI language training</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document the contribution of FSI language training to achieving DoS mission</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sound policy, budget, and strategic decisions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The SLS Evaluation and Measurement Unit helps SLS staff use evidence to better understand and develop their programs.

- We collect and analyze information to understand how SLS and its programs are performing.
- We evaluate specific programs to help divisions and sections be more effective.
- We help SLS staff conduct evaluation for themselves by providing advice, resources, and training.
- We maintain institutional data systems and make data readily available to SLS staff.
Performance measurement
  What’s happening?

Program evaluation
  Why is it happening?
Performance measurement
  What’s happening?
  Student completion counts
  Student test performance
  Student feedback
  Post supervisor feedback

Program evaluation
  Why is it happening?
  Annual program review
  Annual evaluation report
What EMU does

Performance measurement

What’s happening?
Student completion counts
Student feedback
Student test performance
Post supervisor feedback
Frequency of job tasks at post

Program evaluation

Why is it happening?
Curriculum development proposal
What EMU does

Performance measurement
  What's happening?
  - Student completion counts
  - Interim vocabulary size test scores
  - Student test performance
  - Student feedback
  - Post supervisor feedback
  - Frequency of job tasks at post

Program evaluation
  Why is it happening?
  - Curriculum evaluation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMU Programs</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>• Business process management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/Instruction</td>
<td>• Curriculum evaluation</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Classroom observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Systems</td>
<td>• Data management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Platforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Visits/Qual. Methods</td>
<td>• Post visit support</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualitative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys/Quant. Methods</td>
<td>• Survey design and administration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quantitative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and workshops</td>
<td>• Training design and delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation Specialist coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and Coordination</td>
<td>• Program Review</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• DoS Evaluation Policy</td>
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</table>
## How we work together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>User</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Review and Evaluation Report</td>
<td>Deans, Division Directors, Supervisors</td>
<td>Improve program effective, Document effectiveness, Demonstrate impact, Make resource decisions</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew curriculum evaluation</td>
<td>Division Director, Supervisor</td>
<td>Improve program</td>
<td>Curriculum/instruction Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote language classes survey</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Improve program, Understand program, Communicate changes</td>
<td>Qualitative Quantitative Data systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual post visits</td>
<td>Language training supervisors</td>
<td>Improve program</td>
<td>Qualitative Training/Workshops Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The extent to which an organization can learn from, use, and do evaluation.
You consult with us but do it yourself

We do it for you

You learn to do it with us
How well did the onboarding program prepare new instructors to teach in the [language] section?

What is needed to prepare instructors to use a new curriculum?

What factors might contribute to students’ success or lack thereof?
How do we define EMU’s success?

SLS stakeholders...
- Work with us
- Find working with us useful
- Use information and results for decision-making
- Engage in evaluative thinking and practice
What’s next?

- Curriculum evaluation
- Performance measurement
- Predictive analytics
- Strategic and resource planning
Best practices for useful evaluation

1. Stakeholder involvement
2. Stakeholder learning
3. Shared understanding of evaluation
4. Effective communication
5. Feasibility
6. High-quality practices
7. Strong evaluation knowledge and skills
8. Ample evaluation resources
9. Effective program leadership
10. Evaluation ownership

(Davis & McKay 2018, p. 9)