



FINAL REPORT

Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

November 2020

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ACRONYMS

ACPD	Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy
COP	Community of practice
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
DoS	U.S. Department of State
ECA	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
EP	Evaluation partner
FGD	Focus group discussion
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
GEC	Global Engagement Center
GTM	Government Technical Monitor
IIE	Institute of International Education
IIP	Information, influence, and persuasion
IP	Implementing partner
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key informant interview
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MODE	Monitoring Data for ECA (Framework)
PD	Public diplomacy
RCT	Randomized controlled trial
REU	Research and Evaluation Unit (of R/PPR)
R/PPR	Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
TOC	Theory of change
USIA	United States Information Agency

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public diplomacy (PD) programs are complex and implemented over long periods, presenting challenges for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). The Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau's (ECA) Evaluation Division has been working in this space since 1999. In its 2019 Comprehensive Annual Report, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy recommended an assessment of the Evaluation Division be conducted. This report presents the findings from that assessment.

Assessment Questions and Methodology

The following questions, developed in coordination with the Evaluation Division, guided the assessment:

1. When designing and conducting evaluations, is the Evaluation Division applying best practices for assessing public diplomacy programming, including exchange programs?
2. To what extent is the Evaluation Division's monitoring framework structured to provide timely and useful data to inform ECA programing?
3. Is the Evaluation Division applying best practices in the use, learning, and capacity building for M&E?

A qualitative design involving a literature review to identify best practices, a document review, and qualitative data collection to surface current practice was applied.

Findings and Conclusions

While the overall perspective was the Evaluation Division had improved under new leadership, the opacity and inefficiency of some processes impaired the Division's potential to effectively execute its work in evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building. The Evaluation Division has undergone some key changes in the past couple of years starting with a new Division Chief in 2018, followed by additional personnel and funding for evaluation efforts. Overall, respondents viewed these staffing and management changes as a positive development. The Evaluation Division was also described as collaborative, communicative, and flexible by ECA program staff and external evaluation partners throughout the evaluation lifecycle and during the development of the Monitoring Data for ECA (MODE) Framework. However, the assessment found some obstacles to effective communication, as well as inefficiencies in some processes, suggesting room for improvement. With respect to the MODE Framework, some communication gaps were identified during its rollout, which has led to questions from the ECA program officers and implementing partners (IPs) regarding its implementation.

The general absence of clear programmatic theories of change (TOCs) and contextual factors influences the Evaluation Division's ability to assess how ECA programs advance public diplomacy priorities. Stakeholders inside and outside of ECA stated recent evaluations were more rigorous and utilization-focused compared to the past. However, ECA evaluations fell short in their ability to assess how effectively its programs advanced PD priorities, in part due to the

absence of clear programmatic TOCs and methodologies which do not capture programmatic complexity, both key best practices identified in the literature.

The MODE Framework addresses inconsistencies with current monitoring practices of ECA programs that exist due to the decentralized, grant-based system of programming. However, several respondents expressed concerns about how the MODE Framework will be rolled out and implemented as well as concerns about its flexibility and adaptability.

The Evaluation Division has taken steps towards being a learning partner within a nascent learning culture, but some major challenges impede further progress. A strong learning culture supports an adaptive program management approach which allows for tight and rapid improvement cycles. Relevant and timely data informs programmatic decisions, and space is provided for programs to reflect on program data and pivot as necessary. The Evaluation Division has taken noticeable steps towards establishing itself as a learning partner inside and outside of ECA. However, the assessment found several institutional barriers hampered the Evaluation Division's efforts to further build ECA's reputation as a strong learning partner, including some MEL illiteracy within the Bureau and a culture of data use for accountability rather than learning.

Recommendations

- The Evaluation Division should clearly define its role and relationship with stakeholder groups across all four areas of its work.
- The Evaluation Division should work closely with ECA program teams to strengthen capacity on developing and using program TOCs.
- The Evaluation Division should continue employing a range of methods to answer evaluation questions and contribute to the body of evidence supporting those methods.
- The Evaluation Division should further invest time and effort in clarifying and clearly articulating how programs will integrate the MODE Framework into their work.
- The Evaluation Division should continue to play a leadership role in developing and refining outcome indicators for public diplomacy programs, taking into account guidance from the literature and other stakeholders in the field.
- The Evaluation Division, in conjunction with the rest of ECA, should work to define a clear vision for the purpose and use of data in ECA.
- The Evaluation Division should continue their work on capacity building webinars, seminars, and the community of practice, but should consider tailoring the content on their website to be more engaging.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Assessment Purpose

The ECA's Evaluation Division has been a pioneer within DoS through its monitoring and evaluation efforts since its inception in 1999. The Evaluation Division assesses the effectiveness of the government-sponsored PD programs that account for half of the DoS's overall PD budget. The Division conducts its work through four mutually supportive mechanisms: monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building.

In 2019, the Evaluation Division led an initiative to redesign the performance monitoring framework and process—the MODE Framework—creating a bureau-wide results framework with indicators and corresponding data collection questions designed to track program performance. The new performance monitoring framework is currently being piloted and will be implemented across ECA throughout 2021.

As recommended by the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy's (ACPD) 2019 Comprehensive Annual Report, this assessment was conducted to review the Evaluation Division's procedures in their four main areas of work: evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building. This utilization-focused assessment had two aims:

- Review the Evaluation Division's current approach to M&E, including its methodologies, instruments, and resources
- Identify best practices from other PD entities, the academic community, and the private sector that the Evaluation Division could realistically adopt

The assessment findings will assist the Evaluation Division in its efforts to assess ECA programming and facilitate data-driven decision making across the bureau.

Literature Review

While the United States (U.S.) and other nations have run PD programs similar to those implemented today for over sixty years, best practices for measuring the impact of PD remain weakly defined (Jones 2011). The general goals of PD are understood within the concept of “soft power” (Nye 1990), but, over the past 20 years, different Western European and North American countries, as well as different agencies within the U.S. government, have approached PD in different ways (Tsui 2013; Paul et al 2015). The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Defense (DoD), and Department of State (DoS), for example, all operate programs aimed at promoting democratic values and governing principles, with more or less overlap in the context and potential participants involved. While PD programs present multiple technical challenges for evaluation, a growing body of practice has developed best

practices for evaluating projects with both complex causal pathways¹ and longtime horizons to seeing impact. Key among these is the use of TOCs, which provide a framework for aligning programming decisions to outcomes and impacts throughout the life of the project.

The literature presented here focuses on the evaluation of those program types primarily employed by the DoS, drawing from grey literature² and from academic, peer-reviewed articles to present the state of the field and highlight new opportunities for connecting to other strongly relevant areas of evaluation practice. In particular, this review explores the body of literature related specifically to:

- cultural exchange-focused PD programs, including some previous literature on practices within the U.S. government (Green 2019),
- advocacy evaluation, which explores key challenges in connecting investments in relationship-building and message promotion with long-term, policy-level outcomes (Gardner and Geierstanger 2007; Kane et al 2017; Younis 2017; Stachowiak 2013)
- contribution analysis, a relatively young methodology that aims to rationalize means of connecting outputs to outcomes in contexts where causality is difficult to establish (Tsui et al 2014; Mayne 2008).

Public Diplomacy

The PD evaluation literature divides roughly into two camps: the first focuses on capturing outcome measures from program participants – or, on the gaps and opportunities in this type of evaluative activity. The second focuses on TOCs. Across both, there is a recognition of the prevalence of survey and self-reported outcome data. Buhmann and Sommerfeldt (2019) describe the issue in this way:

Evaluation has become particularly challenging in the era of ‘new’ public diplomacy—wherein two-way communication and long-term relationship building is emphasized—as opposed to ‘old’ diplomacy, which focused on instrumental use of one-way communication channels for image cultivation and nation branding. Indeed, evaluation remains in an ‘old’ public diplomacy mode, with countries around the world struggling to enhance evaluation skills to meet the demands of ‘new’ diplomacy...How to evaluate the effects of long-term relationship building, dialogue, and soft power cultivation is a pressing challenge in a field that still primarily relies on techniques to evaluate the one-way flow of information designed to meet short-term objectives. (Pamment, 2012:314)

Indeed, the impacts of PD programming may reveal themselves over the course of decades, while program staff typically have much shorter cycles for delivering evidence of value for

¹ In PD, the pathway from intervention to outcome is not linear and is influenced by a range of factors outside the intervention, resulting in a complex causal pathway.

² Grey literature is information produced outside of commercial publishing and distribution channels. It is generated by all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats.

money and efficacy. This can lead to an over-reliance on output metrics, particularly quantitative survey data, in order to justify continued public investments in public diplomacy programming (Tsui 2013; IIE 2011). Evaluating U.S. government programs, Pamment (2012) further cautions these data are often used for reporting purposes only, and seldom truly become part of the learning aspect of evaluation – the author finds little evidence that programs are adapted in response to evaluation findings from similar programs.

For programs which do rely on a methodology of participant reporting, collection of qualitative success stories often accompanies Likert-scale (or similarly scaled) survey questionnaires administered before and after participants engage in program activities (IIE 2011; Yun 2014). Administering similar surveys to alumni years after the end of participants' engagement in programming is recommended for capturing outcome data at a greater time depth (Green 2019; DeLong et al. 2011). However, the potential for desirability bias to creep into evaluation data through self-reports is not mitigated by years of separation from programming; evaluators should critically examine alumni's willingness to 'say nice things' about the programs in which they participated, and ask, for example, whether participants' professional successes are a result of their participation in PD programs, or whether they are a product of the same characteristics that led program staff to select that individual for enrollment (Bean and Comor 2018). Contribution analysis, discussed below, is a relatively new methodology that provides a framework for critically assessing outcomes in this way.

TOCs are inherent to PD programs in the same way they are in Defense-related information, influence, and persuasion programs (Paul et al 2015). While robust TOCs are seen as a cornerstone of contemporary evaluation practice, they are not always made explicit in PD programming (Pamment 2013; Buhmann and Sommerfeldt 2019). All aims of PD programs may not be fit for public consumption; leveraging soft power to influence foreign policy outcomes is a politically sensitive matter, and the responsibility of evaluators and program staff to handle information around programs' strategic goals with discretion cannot be understated. Evaluators' commitment to "do no harm", in this case, pertains to both foreign policy/security interests, as well as the protection of program staff and participants (Kane et al. 2017). However, while PD programs may require more sensitive information handling practices than, for example, agricultural development programs, there is no less need for well-articulated TOCs. In an in-depth report on information, influence, and persuasion programs run by the DoD, the RAND Corporation described the importance of a program's TOC in this way:

Articulated at the outset, during planning, a theory of change/logic of the effort can help clarify goals, explicitly connect planned activities to those goals, and support the assessment process. A good theory of change will also capture possible unintended consequences or provide indicators of failure, things to help you identify where links in the logical chain have been broken by faulty assumptions, inadequate execution, or factors outside your control (disruptors). (2015:8)

In a 2017 article in the journal *Politics & Policy*, Efe Sevin describes what he calls "pathways of connection" for evaluating the impact of PD. Sevin lays out several key mechanisms core to the TOC in most PD programming (whether that theory is implicit or explicit). He describes his work as "a survey of public diplomacy practice and how public diplomats conceptualize their

role in helping their countries advance national interests, categorized through international relations and communication theories.” Sevin divides his six pathways into two groups based on their scope:

Larger Impact Pathways

1. *Attraction*: e.g., developing foreign interest in American culture;
2. *Socialization*: e.g., creating regular opportunities for foreigners to engage in American culture, as a way to normalize cultural values, such as free debate;
3. *Agenda-Setting*: fostering discussion among foreign publics on topics of strategic importance, such as women’s rights or climate change;

Focused Impact Pathways

1. *Benefit of the Doubt*: Sevin notes, “Projects establish an environment that fosters a sense of shared and mutual interests ... Therefore, the actions of the practitioner country cannot be against the interests of their home country and should be supported.”
2. *Direct influence* focuses on targeting communications to strategic individuals in order to change foreign policy outcomes; and, finally,
3. *Framing* is a discursive methodology that provides an alternative context and relevant interpretation for a contested issue, such as a political or economic conflict.

PD programs may employ a combination of these strategies to achieve the desired outcomes, and each pathway suggests one or more areas of inquiry for the program’s evaluation. For example, a direct influence campaign might want to track the policy actions of the specific individuals targeted as policy influencers, while an attraction strategy might want to look for the uptake or expansion of activities that are strongly identified with American culture (such as specific sports or art forms) across a wide target audience. In a program where multiple pathways are in play, triangulation of results across data streams (Kane et al. 2017) can help to provide a more complete picture of how program activities have contributed to desired outcomes. In other veins of evaluation literature, similar frameworks have been proposed by Younis (2017), ORS Impact (2007), and Hirota and Jacobowitz (2007).

In his original article, Sevin applies the impact pathways framework to the Young Southeast Asian Leadership Initiative (YSEALI), an ECA program run in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. Sevin frames the objectives of the program in this way:

YSEALI, if successful, should advance the American national interests, which can be found in declarations of American foreign policy goals ... the national interest tied with YSEALI can be seen as improved relations with the countries. A public diplomacy project should be deemed successful if it contributes to achieving improved relations with the countries in the region.

Sevin recommends public opinion surveys in the Fellows’ home countries to scan for evidence of *attraction* or a *benefit of the doubt*. Success in the *socialization* and *direct influence* pathways could be assessed through alumni follow up, with key questions in this activity being, for example: Has YSEALI created new levels of access to important individuals in participants’ home countries? YSEALI activities involved socializing participants to American ways of

participating in civic activity, such as free debate, networking, and advocacy; alumni follow-up should strive to assess whether participants have continued to embody these socialized activities. Finally, media and social media analysis can provide data on the extent to which YSEALI has succeeded in changing the *framing* of key issues in former participants' and their compatriots' social media discussions, as well as what topics of interest may enter the public sphere (*agenda setting*). All of these methods, however, rely on some method of constructing counterfactuals to ensure the program is not erroneously attributed; Sevin does not offer a preferred methodology for this.

Advocacy

Over the past twenty years, advocacy evaluation literature has focused primarily on domestic policy advocacy programming in North America and Western Europe. In comparison to PD programs, organized advocacy initiatives tend to have a narrower focus in terms of the specific policy or legislative outcomes of concern. However, advocacy efforts can have similarly long time horizons and complex causal pathways to impact (ORS Impact 2013). Both types of efforts seek to use information and social networks to influence key stakeholders and create desired policy outcomes. While advocacy evaluation is still a relatively young field itself, scholars and practitioners of advocacy evaluation have developed a number of frameworks for identifying and measuring impacts where attribution is far from certain (Stachowiak 2013; Dalberg 2017).

In addition to stressing the need for sound TOCs, advocacy evaluation scholars stress the need to collect baseline data and conduct some form of interim outcome tracking throughout the advocacy period, typically referred to as the campaign (Hendricks-Smith 2007; Patton 2008). This facilitates evaluators' ability to identify events from the campaign period that proved to be critical turning points towards or away from the program's ultimate objectives. Tracked interim outcomes should be "discrete areas of progress that lead up to and support policy change and social change agendas" (ORS Impact 2010). This could include shifts in social norms, strengthened organizational capacity, strengthened alliances, or a noted change in the strength of support for the issue. In summative/final evaluations, these interim data points help to demonstrate whether the assumptions within the TOC held true; if key assumptions did not hold true, interim outcome data can help to establish where, when, and why things began to deviate (Tsui et al. 2014).

Jones 2011; Teles and Schmitt 2011; Stachowiak 2013; and others advocate for interim outcome data to be used to inform a flexible TOC, which, they say, should be adapted as necessary throughout the campaign to reflect updated assumptions and contextual factors. Advocacy efforts, like PD programs, rely heavily on certain assumptions about the context of the situation holding true – yet the policy environment is fraught with potential for unexpected events to change key individuals' priorities and willingness to cooperate with advocates (ODI 2014; Younis 2017). In some situations, events such as regime change or economic destabilization may completely derail advocates' efforts to push for specific policy changes. In these situations, interim outcome data can provide evidence of program progress and accountability when it is no longer feasible to continue with the campaign, or when substantial updates to the TOC and programming are necessary (Coffman 2007).

Stress-testing an evaluation's initial findings is another way in which advocacy evaluators work to establish causal linkages between a program's efforts and long-term outcomes. Kane et al. (2017) recommend sharing an early draft of the "story" of the program's impact not only with program staff, but also with implementing partners (IPs), key individuals involved in the policy process, and participants in any organized activities (capacity building, letter writing, etc.). The objective of this activity is to identify gaps between how different stakeholder groups view key events unfolding; if all parties attribute a certain outcome to the advocacy campaign's activities, evaluators can have higher confidence in the causal relationships between them. On the other hand, a systematic difference in opinion over how events unfolded could point to blind spots in the program story and the underlying TOC (ORS 2007).

Contribution Analysis

Contribution analysis is a young methodology that aims to rationalize the process of attributing interventions to outcomes in complex contexts where many factors may influence the desired outcome. Contribution analysis is not intended to provide a rigorous return-on-investment calculation of program efficacy; instead, it seeks to establish the through line between specific program activities, interim outcomes, and ultimate impacts. Mayne (2008) presents a 6-step process guide for contribution analysis, which has been adapted to a variety of policy contexts, adapted and presented by Riley (2018) as the following:

1. Define the attribution "problem" to be addressed through the framework;
2. Develop a TOC, defining the risks to the theory and its key underlying assumptions;
3. Gather evidence on the program that corresponds to the impact pathways articulated by the TOC;
4. Compare the evidence to the TOC and build a "contribution story";
5. Proceed iteratively to seek additional evidence to test the TOC;
6. Revise and strengthen the contribution story in light of the new evidence.

Contribution analysis is most appropriate in situations where external factors cannot be 'controlled' in a statistical manner. Instead, contribution analysis frameworks rely on the construction of counterfactual scenarios to introduce rigor into evaluation design. An evaluation practitioner proceeding through steps 4-6 of the methodology should ask, "Given how circumstances have unfolded, what would have happened had we not implemented our program?" Since the methodology was introduced in the late 2000s, UNESCO employed contribution analysis as part of an attempt to measure its systematic impacts across programs (UNESCO 2010). From a practical level, Mayne (2008) recommends employing a combination of common data collection methodologies to try to determine a program's contribution: surveys or interviews might ask participants to give their assessment of chains of causation or the relationship between observed events; tracking variations in the program across sites or other dimensions might also provide relevant indications of how well a program is (or is not) contributing to its desired outcomes.

As a relatively new methodology, contribution analysis continues to evolve. Riley et al. (2018) articulate several of the key questions under debate in the literature currently: "How can we build in varied assumptions about pathways of impact, especially how these are influenced over time? How might we bound analyses (e.g. focus on nested contribution stories) so they are both

rigorous and feasible? ... How can we account for competing explanations and influencing factors?” Donyina (2020) proposes contribution analysis as a viable and more context-appropriate alternative to randomized controlled trial (RCT)³ evaluations for PD professional or educational programs where selecting a comparison group may be theoretically challenging or even detrimental to the overall objective of the program.”⁴ A contribution analysis design, which would focus on the additive value of a program while still taking into account any external factors ... builds a case for reasonably inferring causality to a reasonable extent considering the complexity of potential confounding factors” (Donyina 2020).

As it grows, the body of knowledge on contribution analysis promises to provide important additional insights to inform the evaluation of PD programs. The British Council has recently adopted contribution analysis as a key methodology for evaluating the soft power impacts of its arts promotion programs (Thomas 2019).

Assessment Questions

The following questions, developed in coordination with the Evaluation Division, guided the assessment:

- 1. When designing and conducting evaluations, is the Evaluation Division applying best practices for assessing PD programming, including exchange programs?**
 - a. What are best practices for assessing PD programming, in particular for increasing the scientific and methodological rigor of public diplomacy evaluations?
 - b. Does the Evaluation Division use best practices and have sufficient resources to successfully assess PD programming?
- 2. To what extent is the Evaluation Division’s monitoring framework structured to provide timely and useful data to inform ECA programming?**
 - a. What are best practices for monitoring PD programming, in particular for successfully measuring difficult concepts present in PD, such as mutual understanding and the ripple/multiplier effect?

³ RCTs are often cited as the ideal methodology for determining causation based on perceptions they produce more credible and reliable causal inferences about the effect of an intervention and are independent and free of assumptions and influence. RCTs most often are constructed around comparing an intervention group and a no-intervention group on the assumption that no change will be observed in the no-intervention group. This approach originated in the field of psychology and has been expanded into medicine, now serving as the gold standard in clinical trials to demonstrate medicine or medical device effectiveness. Over the years, social sciences have adopted the RCT to make statements of attribution about an intervention’s impact. There is ample literature around how this methodology may not be appropriate when evaluating complex interventions as RCTs tend to downplay the non-linearity that occurs within complex interventions, adaptation and feedback loops that exist, the phenomenon of emergence, the role of history in producing the current context, and the role of human agency (see for example, Marchal et al 2013).

⁴ It should be noted that the assessment team did not identify any high quality peer-reviewed RCTs of PD programs in our review of the literature.

- b. Does the Evaluation Division use best practices and have sufficient resources to successfully guide and manage ECA program monitoring?
- 3. **Is the Evaluation Division applying best practices in the use, learning, and capacity building for M&E?**
 - a. What are best practices for ensuring distribution and use of M&E data and results?
 - b. Does the Evaluation Division use best practices and have sufficient resources to successfully ensure use of and learning from M&E data and results?
 - c. How has Evaluation Division training increased the M&E capacity of ECA staff and other participants? Are there additional resources that the Evaluation Division should create, leverage, or make available to better facilitate learning and capacity building in the bureau and/or externally?

For the purposes of this assessment, the assessment team is employing the following definitions:

- *Best practices* is understood to encompass theory, models, frameworks, design, and methods related to monitoring, evaluation, learning, and/or capacity building.
- *Resources* refers to financial, organizational, and human resources (including staff skillsets) housed within and available to the Evaluation Division.
- *PD* is understood to include educational, cultural, sports, and professional exchange programs.

Annex II includes additional detail on the specific lines of inquiry explored for each assessment question.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment team conducted a qualitative examination of best practices in PD evaluation and the ECA Evaluation Division's existing practices, approaches, and resources. A thorough **literature review** was conducted to elicit best practices in the field. A **document review** of 12 recent and ongoing ECA evaluations was conducted in which the best practices identified in the literature were used as a framework for assessment. **Qualitative data** were collected from 61 individuals through individual and group key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Data were collected between August and September 2020.

Exhibit 1: Qualitative Data Sample

Respondent Category	Respondent Sub-Category	Sample (individuals)
DoS	ECA Evaluation Division	6
DoS	ECA leadership	5
DoS	ECA program staff (affiliated with 8 evaluations); Embassy staff who have engaged ECA Evaluation Division in ad hoc activities; other DoS staff outside of ECA who have worked with ECA in some capacity; DoS staff who participated in the Evaluation Division's capacity building activities	16
DoS	Staff of the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy; staff from other research and evaluation units within DoS Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs	7
External	ECA IPs (Affiliated with 6 evaluations and representing 8 IPs)	15
External	ECA evaluation partners (Affiliated with 8 evaluations and representing 5 EPs)	8
External	Other public diplomacy M&E practitioners	4
Total		61

All respondents provided written consent to participate prior to data collection. All the data presented in this report have been anonymized to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Data analysis

Following a thorough review of the literature, the assessment team identified best practices along the evaluation life cycle, from design and implementation to learning. Each of the 12 selected evaluations was rated to the extent to which there was evidence of the better practice in the

evaluation report. We present the findings from this analysis in the aggregate to protect the confidentiality of the relevant interview respondents.

Qualitative data were analyzed using a combination of deductive and inductive codes, reflecting the Division's four areas of work (evaluation, monitoring, learning and capacity building) and contextual factors which influenced the environment in which the Division operated. Data analysis summaries with emerging themes for each assessment question were produced. During a Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis (DAIS) session, the assessment team affinity mapped these emerging themes to produce cohesive findings which reflected the range of data types and sources. Conclusions and recommendations that mapped onto the evidence were also developed during the DAIS session.

Limitations

Due to safety concerns of COVID-19 transmission, the entire assessment, including data collection, was conducted remotely applying the assessment team's deep experience conducting virtual interviews with applications of best practices for remote data collection. To reduce the potential for response bias, the assessment team conducted preliminary data analysis throughout the collection period to feed into subsequent data collection and systematically integrated data sources as well as selection of a range of stakeholders to increase reliability of findings. To reduce selection bias, the assessment team did not limit recruitment to only those in the Division-provided list of potential respondents and also relied on snowball sampling to access other individuals. The assessment team also continuously checked their own internal biases toward process-based evaluations to prevent influence by our own work. Generalizability of findings across all of the Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building will not be possible because the assessment applied a case study approach that drew heavily on qualitative data.

For a more detailed description of the methods, including the limitations, see Appendix I.

FINDINGS

The findings presented below are organized by assessment question; however, there is notable overlap in the areas of evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building which we have aimed to present linearly. As this assessment is primarily qualitative, the objective was not to seek consensus or ascertain prevalence of perceptions. The intention was to gain depth of understanding about the Evaluation Division's processes, procedures, and quality of their work from a range of stakeholders.

It should be noted that for many respondents, especially those who did not work in a direct MEL-focused role, there was a blurring of terminology between “monitoring” and “evaluation” which was apparent especially when speaking about outcome measurement and in reference to surveys carried out at the program level. While we explored this in interviews to ensure we had an accurate understanding of perceptions being conveyed, this misuse of language does point to a gap in understanding among some stakeholders about the relationship between monitoring and evaluation – their differences, their similarities, and where they fit within the program lifecycle (see findings on Assessment Question 3 for more details on capacity building).

Assessment Question 1: Evaluation

Finding 1: Across respondent types, there was a general sense that Evaluation Division staffing had improved under the current Chief's leadership.

According to respondents across all stakeholder groups, high staff turnover had been a challenge for the Division as it impacted effectiveness and the overall Division skillset. However, many respondents noted a positive shift with the new leadership (the ECA Evaluation Division Chief arrived in May 2018) and expressed an overall excitement and praise for the new Evaluation Division staff. Several EPs, ECA leaders, and program staff (n = 9) commented on the technical strength of the new staff, especially under the new leadership.

I think it's just a really good example of how this current evaluation team—and I want to stress that it really is this magic mixture of Natalie's leadership, trusting her staff, supporting her staff, empowering her staff, and kind of leading by example that has changed the work that we do. And I hate tying accomplishments just to one person or personalities, but this—changing the way that ECA thinks about evaluation is not gonna happen overnight. And it requires people with not just the hard skills but the soft skills, the interpersonal skills or relationship skills. And that's one of the unique things about the evaluation office right now. (ECA Program Staff, #42)

Three respondents, external M&E practitioners and EPs, expressed the Division staff needed more technical expertise in overall evaluation design and a “broader methodological skillset” (External M&E practitioner, #22). The EPs specifically stated the Division did not seem to have experience in evaluation implementation such as data collection and how that is organized in the field which had implications on expectations around implementation, not knowing enough about the programs, and wanting high response rates but not realizing the distribution of responses

does not necessarily change with higher response, which at times may increase level of effort than was initially required.

I think the evaluation—the office needs a little bit more technical expertise in terms of how to run evaluations, how to go about projects, how to really understand the level of effort, to communicate that to the Program Office, write better statements of work so that the pricing and the level of effort align with what they really want.
(EP, #44)

The external M&E practitioner reported the Division should either be fluent in various methodologies to determine when it is appropriate to request those in RFPs and ensure they are executed properly during the evaluation or have methodological experts they can consult with to ensure appropriate utilization. Three respondents, two EPs and one ECA leader, reported the Division staff had limited PD field perspective, even though they did try to go into the field with the EP, but broader experience in more areas or regions would help bring that field perspective to the evaluations and avoid “missteps” in evaluations conducted (ECA leader, #8).

I think there would be value in having a PD practitioner—a Foreign Service Officer as part of the Evaluation Division. The couple times, I feel like there have been slight missteps, it has been because nobody in the Evaluation Division has that field perspective and I feel like having a—not a brand new Foreign Service Officer, but somebody that has been—done a couple of oversees tours in PD who could really bring that level of perspective ... I think that could be useful. (ECA leader, #8)

Finding 2: There were differences in understanding of the Evaluation Division’s role and function, which resulted in some perceived concerns regarding evaluation quality. Some inefficiencies in process, timing, and nature of engagement were expressed across all stakeholders.

When speaking about specific evaluations conducted by the Division, respondents had a clear understanding of the role of the Evaluation Division. Several EPs, IPs, and program staff stated that the Evaluation Division provided support in developing the scope of work and coordinating with the EP(s) during the course of the evaluation. However, some ECA leaders and EPs reported that the structural nature of the stakeholder relationships and engagement caused inefficiencies and miscommunications as the distinction between the Evaluation Division’s role and engagement with the IPs or program staff versus the EP’s role with those stakeholders were not always clear.

The thing that’s hard about these DoS evaluations is that the Evaluation Division is in the middle. And even though they are technically the contractual client, really your client is the program team, and they’re like one step removed. And so, in a situation where I think I don’t have to do a lot of teaching of the client, because the evaluation team is there to actually do that to the program team, when they don’t play that role, then I have to step in and

teach the program team a little bit more, and you're like, "This is just inefficient." (EP, #72)

It's first and foremost it's the Grant Officers in the Executive Office who are responsible for the terms of the agreement and the funding. Then our program officers who are the designated representatives to give directions to the cooperating agencies. So really the messages are all supposed to go through those two. So when you introduce something else, another channel of communication, it also raises some anxieties in the partners about what they're supposed to be doing. (ECA Leader, #90, #91)

Although several program staff and EPs described the Evaluation Division as being collaborative, communicative, and proactive about addressing problems as they arise, many of them, along with ECA leaders, also expressed gaps in the timing and nature of this engagement. They expressed the Division could engage earlier with the program teams and IPs to ensure understanding of evaluation goals or “getting people on the same page earlier” (EP, #72) as well as share cross-evaluation learning to facilitate conversations around evaluations. Specifically, they reported that engaging with the program teams with the objective of more fully understanding program(s) and what issues or questions are important for the program teams would contribute to an SOW which is reflective of the program context and nuances. Per the Evaluation Division’s standard operating procedures (SOPs), the program teams are engaged as soon they request an evaluation be conducted; however, earlier engagement with the IPs, as noted above by program staff and EPs, to further the Evaluation Division’s knowledge of the program as well as to include additional relevant questions in the SOW is not reflected in the SOPs and could be added. The Evaluation Division team also expressed a desire to continue to engage with program teams to create an “evaluation-receptive culture” (Evaluation Division, #1, #4, #6).

If I were to take away anything it would be that we need to work even more closely...I have no interest in interfering with the integrity of the data collection, but we absolutely want to ensure that if resources are being expended and we have a single opportunity every so often to look at the programs and evaluate them that we're really looking at the right issues and the actual impact of the program and not just things that we can easily count.

*I'm happy to count things we can easily count, but I also want to make sure that those behind-the-scenes conversations or on-the-record conversations or however they need to happen take place so that the folks who are best involved in this are best able to showcase, both good and bad, what is working, what is not working, what the impact of things are, and what we might do to make that even better. So I think it's—my biggest recommendation would be to ensure that we continue to work as closely as possible and design, review implementation and then sharing of results on these things so that we can always do better.
(ECA program staff, #95)*

I would probably still say early engagement with the implementing partner...if there were a way to more intentionally engage the partner, especially if they're going to be engaged in connecting with the stakeholders, having a clear sense

of the timeline and any updates as you move forward. Sort of more consistent communication with ECA evaluation on the project progress. I think that would be helpful. Also partly, because we get contacted by stakeholders, we have really appreciated the fact that at least we generally know when they are reaching out. Because otherwise, we'll get contacted by folks who will want to know if the survey is legitimate or if the contact is legitimate. And this is a way that we can actually help make sure that their efforts are--that they get the results that they're looking for in terms of response, and getting to talk to the folks that they need to. (IP, #34)

From the ECA program staff perspective, two respondents expressed strong resistance to engaging in the evaluation process due to numerous other priorities and insufficient work time, preferring the Evaluation Division to have control of the entire process, including communication with the IPs. In contrast, several other program staff welcomed the engagement with the Evaluation Division and reported the Division provided useful evaluation expertise and knowledge. One program staff also shared a desire to have direct contact with the EP(s).

The reality is, the staff who manages programs, there's a lot on our plate...I hate to sound so cynical, but I want them to just kind of take it over. Like remove us from the evaluations process. So the more that we can connect them directly with our implementing partners and evaluation is really done by the evaluations office and our implementing partners and we're just kind of looped in and aware of what's going on and information is shared to us, the less that we could do, that's honestly the best way I could be supported in my role is for them to take more of their role. (ECA Program staff, #26)

There were differences in perspective on the role and function of the Evaluation Division across DoS and external M&E practitioners as both sets of stakeholders perceived concerns about how potential subjectivity and other influences affect the quality of the Division's work. Both DoS and external M&E practitioners mentioned that independence of the evaluator from the program was an M&E gold standard to ensure objective, impartial evaluations. Although they recognized an embedded evaluation unit may allow for more visibility of the Division, they were concerned the Division may face pressure and influence from the Bureau in their evaluation work and perceived the Division of asking contractors to evaluate their own work which they considered a "red flag" (External M&E practitioner, #65). One of the respondents also mentioned that prior to the 2018 changes in Evaluation Division staffing, they had experienced the program offices use their power to try to influence the design for more favorable results. This difference in perspective about internal versus external evaluators may also stem from the epistemological gap between those who expressed RCTs and impact evaluations as being the "gold standard" and other respondents who see value in performance evaluations. The Department of State Program and Project Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (18 FAM 301.4-4) explicitly states that "Bureaus and independent offices may conduct internal, external, and collaborative evaluations" and that "Bureaus should ensure that evaluators and other implementing partners are free from any pressure or bureaucratic interference. Independence does not, however, imply isolation from managers. Active engagement of bureau staff and managers, as well as implementing partners, is necessary to conduct monitoring and evaluation, but Department personnel should not improperly interfere with the outcomes."

M&E practitioners internal to DoS reported the different roles and functions of the Evaluation Division versus other PD evaluation units at DoS was unclear. These respondents expressed a strong desire for more collaboration across these different evaluation units, such as sharing best practices or findings that could inform ECA programming, collaboration beyond the community of practice, and working together to establish M&E approaches which could be applied across public diplomacy. They also expressed a desire to collaborate on evaluations, but acknowledged that it was difficult to do so given timing of program cycles and structural organization.

Finding 3: Respondents were uncertain about the process by which programs were selected for evaluation indicating a lack of awareness of the Evaluation Division's Products and Services document across all stakeholder types.

IPs (n = 5) and ECA program staff (n = 3) were not certain how the Evaluation Division selected programs for evaluation. Most of them stated they believed the Division conducted or commissioned evaluations of programs every 5 or 10 years or for program anniversaries but were not sure if it was requested by the Division, ECA, or program team. One person from ECA leadership commented there should be a general timeline to which each program is evaluated.

I wish there was some kind of timeline that, you know, in general we're going to evaluate every program once every, I don't know, ten years, five years. So that there's a starting point for conversation when you can say, "Hey your program hasn't been evaluated in the last 7 years, usually we do them every 5 years. Do you want to do them this year or next year?" I think that would be useful ... And having some kind of format, some kind of framework that would prompt a discussion. (ECA leader, #8)

The Evaluation Division does describe the selection process in their Products and Services document dated October 2019. The document also includes the process for ECA program staff to request an evaluation and links to a request form. Neither the document nor the processes described therein were mentioned by any respondent, including ECA program staff and leadership, who are the intended users of the document, indicating that awareness of the process or the document was low.

Three IPs reported that they only became aware an evaluation was going to occur when they were told an evaluation was being conducted and would have preferred earlier engagement in discussions about the scope of work, design, timing especially as it related to ongoing monitoring activities, or final deliverables, for example.

Finding 4: The Evaluation Division effectively budgeted for ECA evaluations.

Three EPs commented on the Evaluation Division's budget. Two reported that although the Division is budget conscious, the budgets are more reasonable than other clients, the Division puts more "thoughts and resources into managing its evaluations" (EP, #28) compared to others, and the Division is efficient with financial resources.

[B]ecause they know about evaluations, they're not as strict with their budgets as some other clients. I mean, they're definitely budget-conscious, which is good, but their budgets are a lot more reasonable to allow us to kind of do the

job well, and their timeframes are also good. And so in comparison to other clients, where clients are like, you know, "I want it to be \$150,000, and I want everything under the sun, and I want it in six weeks." So just their flexibility and understanding of what's actually feasible and reasonable in terms of budgeting and timeline is good for Evaluation Division. (EP, #72)

One EP, however, did report that although the specific evaluation was doable, it was "tight on resources" (EP, #36, #37). Among program staff, there was not clarity on the sources of funding for evaluations with two ECA program staff specifically stating that programs did not have adequate funding to support an evaluation, and one staff noted that the Evaluation Division was able to offer some financial support.

This is the research team for the entire bureau and the budget is much healthier. From what I understand. Like we had to pitch in to extend the contract on [redacted] on our [redacted] project but the bill was footed by the [Evaluation Division]. (ECA program staff, #15)

Finding 5: Evaluations tended to have unclear outcomes and program TOCs.

Our analysis of 12 Evaluation Division evaluations revealed that few included a clearly developed TOC linking programmatic activities to intended public diplomacy outcomes. Several external M&E respondents emphasized the importance of clear goals and indicators, while accounting for the unplanned either through logic models or TOCs, noting that this was missing from Evaluation Division evaluations.

It doesn't have to be an overwhelmingly complex logic model. And, you know, again I'll just say don't overcomplicate things. One of my favorite papers I read about evaluation, I can't remember where it came from, was to just use the KISS acronym, Keep It Simple Stupid. (External M&E practitioner, #22)

Furthermore, five respondents, all from various stakeholder groups, emphasized the importance of connecting programs back to foreign policy or PD goals and reported this link was also missing from Evaluation Division evaluations. However, several respondents across all stakeholder groups, also acknowledged that is difficult to evaluate PD programming because it can be difficult to link impact back to the specific program being evaluated as participants often have various other exposure and external factors which can contribute to the impact or outcome.

We do sports diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, or other exchanges not because they're fun or because they're interesting or because people like them, they're policy tools and they're meant to be used by our embassies overseas as such. So I'd like to see that reflected in the evaluation, whether it's good or bad, whatever the judgment is, it is effective and it would be good to see that included. (ECA leader, #68)

[P]ublic diplomacy is squishy, right? It's hard to pin down exactly what the impact is and exactly what outcomes can be attributed to participating in public diplomacy programming. For instance, if you recruit high-achieving young people to join a public diplomacy program that brings them to the

United States, it's very hard to know if they were already a high-achieving young person and would have already developed something, say, afterwards in their community to encourage public service—one example. So, public diplomacy is squishy. It's hard to track the real-world outcomes. (EP, #47)

I think for us it's been a bit of a struggle because ultimately what they always want is impact. And there's a certain level of outcome or impact around attitudes and skills and behaviors that you can measure at the end of a grant...you can ask them before "What did you think about the U.S.?" and then you can ask them after...when it comes to changes in attitudes and social change, all of that just takes a lot of time, and I think a lot of the time we're being almost ask to preview what that's going to be like, so we almost ask these forward-looking questions in the pre- and post-. You know that. We ask like, you know, "How do you think this is going to change your professional development?" You never go back to them to say like, "how did it?" And so I wish that ECA had either a mechanism put in or more nuanced—a more nuanced system to get at that impact, knowing that it might have to be that every five years, you know, you're going back to alumni who finished the program or something like that. (IP, #54)

Finding 6: Relying on few data collection methods was not always appropriate for the objectives or programmatic contexts.

Although a few (n = 6) IPs and DoS and external M&E practitioners reported there are standard methods specific to measuring PD impact or change, they only specifically mentioned referring to methods in the AEA guidelines for impact assessment, experimental methods, and Most Significant Change. These respondents were very interested to see ECA develop standard frameworks, such as MODE, in hopes of influencing standardized M&E methods and measures throughout the PD field.

Among the 12 evaluations included in our sample (n=4, pre-2018; n=8, post-2018), all 12 utilized mixed methods but heavily relied on interviews or qualitative examination (n=12) and online surveys (see matrix in Appendix III). None of the four pre-2018 evaluations in the sample included contribution analysis, pre/post surveys, or observational data, nor did they clearly mention any long-term alumni follow up. For evaluations conducted after 2018, two mentioned the use of observational data; none utilized contribution analysis or pre/post surveys, and five had long-term alumni follow up. Fifteen respondents, across all stakeholder groups including ECA leaders and Evaluation Division staff, emphasized the importance of utilizing appropriate and varied methodologies that “follow” (DoS M&E practitioners, #12, #13) the evaluation questions and determine impact or change. Although the Evaluation Division has not claimed application of the impact evaluation approach, evaluation questions and findings statements included in this sample did use the word ‘impact’, which for some respondents created the perception the Division was or thought it was conducting impact evaluations. MEL practitioners within and outside DoS suggested systematic approaches and established methodologies such as Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, Most Significant Change, triangulation, open-ended methodologies, with less reliance on self-reported data.

So being very clear on what ECA hopes to gain from these programs and being able to measure those things that you know happen. But another way to do it is if you don't know what you're going to get, right? Because some of these things with policy-- that's the thing about policy, it's a complex environment and you may not know the positive gains that you're getting from these and I think that part of what you do. In which case, an Outcome Harvesting method is much better, where it's like you're just gathering a whole bunch of outcomes that have happened and then you don't categorize them until you receive them all. So you have a much more open kind of question. (External M&E Practitioner, #66)

I think there needs to be a greater demonstration that the methods that they employ in their evaluation rigorously answer the questions that they outline. And there should be time spent in the reports justifying the methods that they employed. I think if they-- if we collectively want to continue to assess the impact, and I define impact as a direct causal relationship between our program and outcomes that we observe. I think the appropriate methodologies need to be employed. For example, there needs to be, at a bare minimum, a baseline assessment of conditions before the exposure, more appropriately, there needs to be a comparison group or a counterfactual to assess systematic change as caused by the program. So I think, you know, if the term 'impact' is going to be used and suggested that if these programs-- if the evaluation reports will continue to suggest that these programs have the impact as they currently suggest, I think the methods need to match and those methods American Evaluation Association has established standard guidelines for assessing impact. For example, it has some minimum standards that I think we all should be trying to follow as best we can. (DoS M&E Practitioner, #12, #13)

In particular, eight respondents from ECA leadership, Evaluation Division, EPs, DoS and external M&E practitioners spoke about RCTs being widely acknowledged as a gold standard in evaluation for assessment program impact. However, these respondents were evenly split in regard to the appropriateness of RCTs for PD programs representing an epistemological divide. As detailed in the Literature Review, there are other evaluation methods that can assess the contributions of PD programs without establishing control and treatment groups or counterfactuals. These include identifying and capturing interim outcomes along the causal pathway of a TOC and using contribution analysis.

Putting aside whatever debates there are in social science about whether you can use randomized control groups for social science purposes, that model would not work for us because when we tell Congress why we're selecting people, we are selecting with a bias on purpose. We are trying to get emerging leaders, we have to have geographic balance in what we're selecting for. I mean there are other factors in the kinds of persons we're trying to put on a PD program that don't lend themselves to allowing the final leg to be random in terms of selection. So that was-- that's this conflict between what might have been technically interesting for the evaluators as a pure evaluation exercise

and then our actual needs and ways that we manage the program. I know it doesn't give them a random group to control against but there are lots of other techniques for evaluation that don't have to rely on that. So we got past that and I think that that's a dead issue for our team. I think this team is in full agreement with us that that wouldn't be appropriate for ECA but I think there are still evaluators within the PD world who wish that they could do that kind of experiment. (ECA Leader, #90, #91)

I have a bit of an issue with experimental design in that, ethically, particularly in development contexts perhaps not so much in diplomacy contexts, is that you're denying one group the benefit of the program to compare to see if you've actually made a difference or not. So to me, that's a bit problematic ethically, but it does indeed show whether or not this program resulted in significant changes, quantitatively. (External M&E practitioner, #22)

Although several EPs and ECA program staff (n = 7) were pleased with evaluation designs and felt they were relevant to programs, many of the EPs and ECA program staff, as well as a few IPs, revealed some issues with the implementation. Specifically, some EPs, program staff, and IPs reported “scope creep” and gathering the inputs the EP needed was “a bit time consuming on our side when we were sort of assured at the beginning that it wouldn’t be our work to do” (IP, #40, #41); however, the work was, to an extent, unavoidable for IPs as they had to support EPs’ access to their program participants. A few IPs also reported that, to their knowledge, monitoring and internal data (such as alumni data) they had collected was not incorporated into the evaluation, and evaluation questions were unclear or never shared with them. In fact, several (n = 5) Evaluation Division staff, EPs, and embassy staff reported on lack of monitoring data to support the evaluation questions, suggesting that the Evaluation Division work with IPs and program teams to help them understand the significance of monitoring data in evaluation.

[T]here's also question of just the general benefit of having them trying to collect data on top of ours. And I think it complicates our data collection process...You know, it's just like I already had a struggle trying to consolidate surveys conducted across the entire [p]rogram on the [EP] side, let alone the [program] side, the host communities, host countries and otherwise, and then ECA gets thrown into the mix. And then for what—to what end? I mean, I totally understand their interest in collecting their own data, but our data is their data. It belongs to them. So if they actually wanted to analyze it or do something with it outside of the reports that we submit, which sit on shelves—[laughter]—it's just—I mean, I'm gonna be completely honest that my least rewarding evaluation work is conducted on ECA programs. (IP, #53)

Another prevalent design issue was accessing diverse populations for representative samples. Twelve respondents across stakeholder groups reported on ensuring representative and diverse samples in evaluations by ensuring geographical or regional balance of respondents (n=4) and by reaching out to or maintaining connections with alumni groups (n = 5). Some suggestions on how to reach out to or maintain connections with alumni groups included working with ECA’s Alumni Affairs Office, finding better ways to get alumni contacts including through social media, establishing a comprehensive list of alumni as one EP specifically mentioned having to

go through email distribution lists and the alumni database to develop a list without duplicates. A few IPs were interested in comparing outcomes across programs by fellow types as well as obtaining a comprehensive understanding of a program by triangulating findings for the program across its various regions over time as not all locations can be included in the evaluation at one time. The Evaluation Division team themselves had reported on wanting to and trying to reach out to different respondent groups in the community.

So that's my biggest suggestion—really find a way to better get that contact information on those alumni or have that be part of the discussion at the beginning—is, okay, we don't have these alumni. Maybe we shouldn't do this evaluation until there's some campaign to find these alumni. Because that was a lot of money we spent on that evaluation and, like I said, we got some good stuff out of it, but it's hard for me to see it being worth it knowing how much money we spent on it and the years of effort by everybody. So I think that should be part of future evaluation discussions—is they decide "Should they evaluate this program? Are you trying to find the alumni from 10 years ago?", and if so, "Do you have that contact information now?" Because if you don't have it then maybe you shouldn't be proceeding. (ECA program staff, #38)

I like when we're able to expand that [the evaluation] out in a broader sense, as opposed to only looking at a very specific data set, but there's not always funding for that, because there's no way to compare what's happening in every aspect of a program. So I think—I can't even remember the name of the program that I'm thinking of, but they were only able to look at a few different locations out of a lot of locations kind of thing...They had to target the evaluations they were conducting, which is just a reality of doing evaluation, because it's prohibitively expensive to try to travel everywhere to conduct an evaluation. So—but I'd be curious to see, like, over a course of five years or ten years, how that could be triangulated to kind of get a more comprehensive picture of a program, would be really interesting. (IP, #82)

Four respondents commented on the consistency in evaluation quality over time. Two respondents reported that the Division cycles from high quality to low quality evaluations depending on who is in charge and whether the focus is on quantitative (which they perceived to be more rigorous) or qualitative methods. One respondent reported the Division has been inconsistent over the years while another reported that they have consistently improved over time. Despite the gaps in the Evaluation Division evaluations addressed in the sections above, 11 respondents across stakeholder groups reported on improvements in the Division's evaluations which included using more quantitative methods, which the respondents perceived to be an improvement and more rigorous methodology. They also reported the Division was interviewing more people for a more representative sample than they did previously.

[T]hey're trying to change things. Before, the evaluations definitely were really qualitative. "Oh, it's soft diplomacy. It's lovely," duh-duh-duh-duh. And I think they're really working hard on trying to get it to be more analytical,

*quantitative, and whatnot. And I think they're going in the right direction.
(ECA program staff, #50)*

Oh, I think they're of great quality. I think it's been improving. Again, like, it's like whenever I go back in time and look at, like, documents from I don't know 2014 or like older I see, like—now they tend to be more, like—take on more—take into consideration more regions or, like—so just from what I remember, right? In the past, I've seen conducted by their own implementing partner and just interviewing a few group [sic] of people. But now, I've seen that—some examples of the latest ones I've seen, like, where they would—a third party would travel to different countries. Even different implementing partners for the same program. And they interview more people. (IP, #63)

Finding 7: PD evaluations tended not to take into account contextual factors and programmatic nuance.

A review of sampled (n = 12) evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Division dating from pre-2018 (n = 4) and 2018-present (n = 8) revealed, overall, socioeconomic, political, and cultural contextual factors which could impact outcomes were not taken into account in either evaluation design or reporting. Various stakeholders, including IPs, EPs, and program teams also expressed lack of understanding of program nuances between the evaluation questions or questions asked in data collection instruments and the programs themselves.

And it sort of evolved into also needing to review all of their surveys and provide input in the surveys because there was definitely a disconnect between the kinds of questions they were asking and the actual dynamics of the program. And so there—that ended up being a much larger load, I think, than had originally been anticipated. And I'm not quite sure if it was miscommunication or misunderstanding on their part or maybe different communications of the goals. I wasn't quite sure where the disconnect was but there was definitely something. (IP, #35)

Assessment Question 2: Monitoring

The assessment team produced five findings related to monitoring, four of which focused on monitoring of PD programs and one of which focused on the MODE Framework. While many respondents (30) were at least somewhat familiar with the MODE Framework, it should be noted the Framework is very new, and, at the time of this assessment, only in the piloting stage. As a result, many respondents had limited experience with what the MODE Framework will look like in implementation, and their understanding of what the MODE Framework will mean for their monitoring work was limited. As a result, the respondents' perspectives presented below, both of monitoring more generally and the MODE Framework specifically, may be informed by their experiences with previous monitoring systems, such as E-GOALS (a previous ECA Evaluation Division monitoring initiative).

Finding 8: Respondents recognized the value of the Evaluation Division maintaining a close working relationship with ECA program teams for quality monitoring of ECA programs generally.

There was a sense among some stakeholders – including three EPs and an ECA program staff member –the Evaluation Division had increased its engagement with stakeholders and its leadership role for MEL within ECA over time. This included, for example, increased engagement with the solicitation process, being available to answer questions about MEL issues as they arise, and taking steps to ensure all stakeholders were in alignment with MEL requirements.

Respondents across all stakeholder groups also emphasized the importance of continuing to build closer working relationships between the Evaluation Division and ECA program teams, inclusive of both staff and leadership. These stakeholders expressed this relationship would help ensure the Evaluation Division's work is grounded in a strong understanding of ECA programming, including its contextual and operational complexities, and strengthen the knowledge of MEL practices and requirements on the part of ECA program staff.

I think what will be really important is for the Evaluation Division to have a very close relationship with their program teams...at the end of the day, they're [the program teams] the ones who have to advocate for M&E. They're the ones who need to understand why it's important, and why it can't just be a checked box. And I think that part of the Evaluation Division's role needs to be that level of advocacy. (IP, #54)

Finding 9: As best practices, respondents identified three key criteria for quality public diplomacy monitoring indicators: selecting indicators during program design, linking the indicators to the theory of change, and focusing on a small number of high-value indicators. The MODE Framework does incorporate these three criteria.

IPs and a DoS M&E practitioner indicated that selecting indicators during the program design stage was important to ensure that indicators were appropriate, and their associated data collection systems were set up at the outset of a program. One IP emphasized feedback from the Evaluation Division on indicators at the proposal stage would be useful to ensure they were aligned with expectations, standardization processes, and MEL goals of ECA. While the

respondents did not speak to this, it should be noted the MODE Framework is set up to incorporate indicators at the proposal stage as recommended by these respondents.

A few IPs also reflected on the importance of indicator alignment with the program TOC to ensure that monitoring data is well-placed to provide accurate, useful information about program results. These IPs reflected this was especially important given the complex nature of ECA programs that often adapt in response to contextual factors. In their view, static output-level indicators provide limited flexibility for program adaptation over time compared with indicators tied to outcomes in the TOC. The MODE Framework includes many options for outcome-level indicators aligned to PD objectives (see Finding 12), although respondents did not indicate they knew this to be the case, perhaps due their limited experience with the Framework.

The State Department is not static at all. The programs are not static. The world environment is not static. And so, if you tie people into really minute output-level indicators you don't leave yourself flexibility to adjust. (IP, #35)

Finally, some external M&E practitioners, IPs, and an ECA program staff also highlighted indicator selection for PD programs generally should focus on a small number of high-value indicators, though there was no consensus on what constituted a small number. One external M&E practitioner referred to this as “working smarter, not harder,” by selecting a few indicators which could be reported on consistently and accurately throughout a project and “that will point us towards whether or not we’re accomplishing our larger objective” (#22). A few of these respondents also valued the menu approach, whereby programs can select a few relevant indicators from a priority list. Although these respondents did not mention this directly, the MODE Framework employs a menu approach, whereby program teams can select a small number of indicators from a larger list, similar to what these respondents encouraged.

Finding 10: There was an expressed interest for the field of PD monitoring to increase focus on outcome measurements, but many also recognized the challenges of developing strong outcome measures for PD programs. The MODE Framework does include long-term outcomes measures.

Echoing the literature, many respondents – especially M&E practitioners – expressed the importance of going beyond the output-level to measure outcome-level indicators in performance monitoring plans. Some respondents referred to this as measuring “impact,” while others referred to “outcomes,” but in both cases the emphasis was on an increased focus within the PD field of measuring results, rather than outputs alone. IPs likewise described an increased effort toward measuring long-term outcome indicators, coupled with the use of qualitative methods, in their monitoring work. However, some IPs also reflected on the challenges presented by grant cycles in carrying out longer-term outcome measurement, particularly when grants run on shorter cycles than the length of time needed to collect longer term data. Although these respondents did not speak to the role of the MODE Framework in addressing this challenge as it is designed to collect long-term outcome data at years one, three, and five. DoS M&E practitioners also recognized the challenges in developing strong outcome measures for PD programs, citing the complexity of programs and their contexts, the nebulous nature of many of the outcomes, and the long-term nature of many of the outcomes as key factors.

I would say the outputs and, particularly, the outcomes are more vague. So because of that I think it's been a pretty unique challenge to come up with reliable outcome-oriented and impact-oriented indicators. (DoS M&E practitioner, #56, #57)

The Evaluation Division's recent work on the MODE Framework suggests the Division has integrated a focus on long-term outcome measurement into its monitoring work. A review of the MODE Framework's indicators showed 70 percent of Core Indicators (those required to be measured by all ECA programs) measured outcomes, whereas 30 percent measured outputs. Similarly, 67 percent of objective-level indicators measured outcomes, whereas 33 percent measured outputs. For more information on the MODE Framework and its development process, please see Finding 12.

Finding 11: Given the key role IPs play in monitoring ECA programs, it is generally important for IPs to have adequate technical capacity to collect quality monitoring data.

Many respondents across stakeholder groups reflected on the key role that IPs play in monitoring ECA programs. Periodic surveys with program participants were the predominant method described, often featuring a heavy focus on the direct outputs. A few IPs described challenges with response rates on monitoring surveys, driven, in their view, by survey fatigue and survey length. IPs also reported mixed experiences with collaboration on monitoring with ECA teams. For example, many IPs described highly positive, productive collaboration with program offices and the Evaluation Division on steps such as developing indicators, survey design, and survey administration. Due to the recent development of the MODE Framework, these respondents' reflections were likely informed by previous experiences with monitoring systems, such as E-GOALS.

So that's when we looked at the evaluation. And at that time it was only final surveys, so we started introducing baseline. We learned that ECA is doing the same and we started collaborating with them. So we kind of split those surveys by output versus outcome...And I think that was a really good collaboration. That was our first time interacting that closely with the Evaluation Division. (IP, #74)

However, other IPs reported some challenges related to implementation of monitoring surveys, particularly with navigating overlap or duplication of efforts between ECA-administered and IP-implemented surveys. These reflections are likely informed by their experiences with the previously-used E-GOALS system, due to lack of experience with the MODE Framework's revised processing for administering surveys. Some stakeholders – including ECA program staff, EPs, and DoS M&E practitioners – also emphasized the importance of IPs' capacity to collect quality monitoring data and recommended the Evaluation Division provide increased support to IPs in this regard, either directly or in collaboration with program offices. Finding 14 speaks to the capacity building resources the Evaluation Division has been offering to stakeholders, including IPs, to build understanding of MEL concepts and requirements.

What [the program] noticed was there was a lot of duplication of efforts and burnout for the participants, which is 100 percent fair...I think the participants were getting flooded with M&E. (IP, #88)

I do think that they could maybe provide trainings to our implementing partners who would be the main ones responsible for doing the evaluations and conducting the surveys and really responding to the indicators that are put in place, reporting on this. I did speak to one of my [ECA program] staff members, and this was one of the [ECA program] staff who reached out to me with questions and I didn't really have the answers, but their implementing partner was also confused about this whole [MODE Framework] process.
(ECA program staff, #26)

Finding 12: The Evaluation Division was commended for inclusively and collaboratively developing the MODE Framework, which addressed a need for a standardized data system within ECA. However, there was confusion about the next steps, and concerns were raised about its implementation, including concerns about flexibility and potential data collection burden on IPs.

Several ECA program staff, IPs, and a few EPs expressed appreciation for the creation process of the MODE Framework, describing it as inclusive, participatory, and consultative. They particularly appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the Framework through the focus group discussions, the effort to ensure the indicators align with program, bureau, and PD goals, and the updates provided by the Evaluation Division throughout the process. Perhaps due in part to the collaborative creation process, most (30) respondents were familiar with the MODE Framework, whereas only a small number (6) had not heard of it at all – all of whom were external to ECA. At the same time, there was some discord between how ECA leadership and ECA program staff experienced the MODE Framework development process. Specifically, although not widely reported, some ECA leaders described the process of splitting up the ECA staff and ECA leadership in the focus group discussions put leadership in what they perceived to be an uncomfortable position of authority, rather than one of partnership, with the Evaluation Division, when they provided their feedback. Still, these ECA leader respondents mainly described the creation process's consultative nature as positive overall, and described these challenges as things to keep in mind for future consultative processes to foster closer partnership between the Evaluation Division and ECA leadership.

There was not consensus among respondents about the specific advantages or disadvantages of the MODE Framework, most likely due to differing levels of engagement with it thus far. Many respondents across stakeholder types, both internal and external to ECA, were excited and optimistic about the MODE Framework, expressing how the Framework will be valuable for quality monitoring and reporting to Congress. A few respondents highlighted the Framework's alignment to both program goals and policy priorities was particularly valuable in this regard. Some respondents – particularly those external to ECA – reflected monitoring practices were currently inconsistent across PD programs, partially due to their decentralized and grant-based nature, and many respondents were optimistic about the Framework's ability to remedy this issue. Notably, a few DoS and external M&E practitioners indicated a more unified approach to monitoring across all PD programs would also be beneficial for the field, while recognizing the responsibility did not rest with the Evaluation Division.

If you're familiar with the MODE Framework that ECA developed, I would encourage you just to have a look at that because I think how they have mapped the goals of ECA programming back up to—all the way to the national security strategy. They really took the time to align their indicators and what their programs do back up to the top-level priorities at State and measure against those fixed indicators. (EP, #47)

At the same time, some ECA program staff and IPs expressed concerns about the MODE Framework's implementation, mainly related to the potential impact of indicator standardization on the ability to remain flexible to program contexts and adaptation over time. These respondents were not opposed to the MODE Framework and in some cases welcomed it, but were reflecting on a tension they anticipated – perhaps based on experiences with other monitoring systems – between the benefits of standardization on the one hand, and the need for program specificity and adaptation over time on the other, and expressed hope that strategies would be developed to address this tension during the full roll-out of the MODE Framework.

I think one of the things that we talk about as a group is most programs at ECA are continually in a stage of adaptation. Whether that is based on foreign policy considerations or if it's based on Congressional priorities for the program or other consideration. We are typically always needing to adapt. And as such, often times the questions need to be adapted. So with the goal of moving toward questions that are going to be more static moving forward, that was one piece that we had discussed. The response was we understand that's going to be a challenge, but it's a greater priority of us to have questions that are going to be the same moving forward than to allow for the adaptation. And there was sort of recognition that that was going to be a challenge but not necessarily that that was something that was going to be changed. (IP, #34)

Some DoS M&E practitioners and IPs expressed concerns about the MODE Framework's methodological ability to measure change consistently and reliably over time. These concerns focused on two aspects of the survey questions themselves: first, they perceived the survey questions were not consistent over time (for example, a survey question at year one would sometimes be different than the survey question at year three), which would pose challenges in observing change over time. Since this inconsistency is not reflected in the MODE Framework itself, these reflections may indicate a lack of familiarity on the part of respondents with the MODE Framework in detail. Second, they expressed the self-reporting nature of many of the questions (for example, a self-reported assessment of language ability) may not yield reliable measurements, preferring observational approaches instead. It should be noted the MODE Framework includes data collection questions for home and host community members to obtain additional perspectives on the self-reporting of participants/alumni as well as community-level changes. Importantly, some of these respondents were still optimistic about the MODE Framework while expressing these concerns, indicating specific measures could be adjusted down the road, as long as the important goal of developing a standardized data collection system was achieved.

[T]he indicators that are collected, baseline, in mind, I think it's one year, two years, five years, are not the same, so there's no way to really track progress

on apples-to-apples comparisons. I think that a lot of the actual questions attached to the collection instrument, attached to the indicators are really not necessarily specific enough to yield meaningful data. So the example I think is the—so like I think at the end of a program, they ask, “Did you learn”—“Did your English improve during this program?” And then a year later, they say, “Did you use your English language skills to get a job?” And then five years later, they ask a different question which was like—I can’t remember the exact question, but it’s different questions every time. (DoS M&E practitioner, #67)

ECA program staff and IPs described mixed feelings about the communication and implementation of the Framework’s next steps. Some felt the Evaluation Division had been highly communicative and supportive about the next steps – particularly those who had been involved in the piloting process – while others expressed a lack of clarity around the timeline and next steps for the Framework in the months ahead. Some of these stakeholders also anticipated challenges with implementing the MODE Framework at the program level, specifically with integrating the Framework with existing measurement systems on the IP side, potential challenges with successfully gathering and centralizing alumni information, and the Framework itself being perceived as lengthy and burdensome for IPs. Those who expressed concerns about a perceived burden for IPs specifically spoke about the length of the MODE Framework itself and the amount of information requested of IPs related to the Framework at the proposal stage, and recommended advance notice and guidance about the Framework be provided to mitigate this burden. One IP shared they struggled with figuring out how to develop their M&E plan and participant survey questions that incorporated the MODE indicators in a recent proposal they submitted. While the Evaluation Division has communicated about the Framework on their website, Finding 14 speaks to the capacity building avenues which respondents have found more or less useful. Some also anticipated a slow pace of change within ECA as a whole may hamper or delay the Framework’s implementation.

So I think one thing that the ECA evaluation team could do with this is better show what their plans are for this or kind of going two steps ahead and like, “This is how you’ll report it. This is how easy it is. This is what you need to ask your implementers to do.” So it’s kind of not a scary process for people. So I’m not intimidated by the process, but I feel like that’s kind of where—[laughter]—some other folks are having a hard time digesting, like they don’t see the value or they don’t understand why they’re being asked to do this. (ECA program staff, #33)

Assessment Question 3: Learning and Capacity Building

Finding 13: ECA has demonstrated signs of a learning culture, but there was tension around the purpose and use of data, specifically whether it should be used for accountability or learning.

External M&E practitioners stated a strong learning culture supports an adaptive program management approach where relevant and timely data informs programmatic decisions and programs are easily able to reflect on the learnings and pivot as necessary. The assessment found evidence of a nascent learning culture within ECA. External evaluation reports were published

on the Bureau's public-facing websites, which allows stakeholders to learn from past evaluations. The recently developed learning agenda was also available on its website. Also, ECA started developing Action Plans and case studies after an evaluation concludes. Further, ECA has demonstrated a strong practice of using MEL data to inform programmatic decisions.

The Evaluation Division and EPs stated current reports were published faster and were timelier in usability. Analysis showed evaluation duration before 2018 tended to be around 18 months to two years, with some having three to four years between award and final report publication. More recent evaluations have taken closer to one year from award to report publication. Three ECA staff, including two in leadership, were dissatisfied with past evaluations (those conducted pre-2018) for not providing applicable and timely findings and recommendations. Six ECA program staff found all evaluations helpful, as evidenced in the quote below.

I think in the [evaluation] report itself, I imagine using this 90-page document every stage of our program in the next year to say, "These are the recommendations for this point. These are the recommendations for this point". So I imagine this being a living document for at least the next couple of years as we draw out new things and ways that we can improve the program that we haven't thought of over time. (ECA program staff, #33)

Several barriers were identified as impeding ECA's progress towards a more robust learning environment. First, there was some MEL illiteracy within ECA and with IPs. As discussed at the start of the Findings, stakeholders misused the term evaluation and would reference monitoring for evaluation. Also, many ECA staff and IP respondents were not familiar with the concept of a learning agenda.

Second, although the SOP includes a section (Section 1.7) on how to prepare an Action Plan at the conclusion of the evaluation, ECA program staff did not mention Action Plans and also did not mention specific dissemination plans beyond a final briefing or posting of results on the website. EPs similarly stated there was not a detailed dissemination and learning plan of how the evaluation findings would be shared to various stakeholders following its completion. Also, several IPs shared when they submitted internal evaluation reports⁵ with their relevant ECA program staff, they received minimal to no feedback. It was unclear to them how the program team and the Evaluation Division discussed and used those reports.

Third, a shared learning culture with IPs presented some challenges. A few IPs stated they appreciated the increased learning opportunities, such as the Community of Practice. Although they wanted to embrace a learning spirit at these meetings, they were uncomfortable sharing too much information with other IPs, who were their competitors and could take away potential future business.

Finally, the assessment found that ECA's MEL culture was predominantly centered on the use of data for accountability and program promotion rather than learning, although the Evaluation Division has taken steps to use data for learning. As noted by several DoS M&E practitioners, the agency emphasizes quality monitoring of PD programs as an important role in Congressional

⁵ IPs referred to monitoring data reports as evaluation reports.

reporting, oversight, and accountability. ECA program staff, EPs, and IPs (n = 11) cited MEL data was frequently used to document program success as a means to justify funding and maintain program resources to leadership and Congress rather than to assess program's progress towards its objectives and broader PD goals. As noted in the Evaluation Division's SOP, they have started to create Action Plans on how to use evaluation findings and develop *Evaluation Matters* products after an evaluation is complete.

You know, you need good solid data in order to be able to assess the impact of your programs, and you want to be able to assess the impact of your programs for two important reasons. One is to continue to receive funding. You'll have to continually justify taxpayer expensive money, and that's fair, and ECA's very good at sort of working that angle of it, and talking about its programs in terms of its impact on the U.S. economy and that sort of thing. That's extremely smart. And then the—but the other thing, of course, and really as important as funding is making the programs better. And here it's a lot harder. You can report on money spent, but actual impact—the impact assessment in public diplomacy is very difficult because you're ultimately talking about shaping the way people think about things and respond to things. It's ultimately about informing and influencing other folks. (DoS M&E practitioner, #10)

Some ECA program staff and IPs expressed concerns that negative findings could potentially impact future program funding. Because it's like the findings are gonna inform whether or not we continue to be funded. And that's—that I think forces more protective reactions as opposed to, "What are we learning? How are we improving all of ECA? How is the—how am I part of the greater vision for how we evaluate our impact as ECA? (IP, #35)

External stakeholders cited this apprehension to identifying program weaknesses, a central tenet to a learning practice, will make it challenging for ECA to fully adopt a robust learning culture. Overcoming this barrier will require an organizational shift towards placing a higher value on continuous learning and understanding and identifying program weaknesses is not necessarily a negative reflection of individual or team performance, but a means towards understanding where and how the program can be improved.

So there's this culture of "I don't want to find out anything bad because it's gonna affect my evaluation and it's gonna affect my ability to rise up" and then for the civil servants it's like, "That's gonna affect my office and then my office is gonna go away and that's all I do. That's my livelihood". There's just this complete risk-aversion and until those two things really align and change—that the foreign service and civil servant believe that this is essential, that bad news isn't end-all be-all, that actually there's strength in discovering it, they can pivot and get stronger and get better—until that perfectly aligns, it's just gonna continue to be a slog. (External M&E practitioner, #23)

Finding 14: Respondents appreciated the Community of Practice, seminars, and webinars, but they were less familiar with the website and found it less useful. Respondents expressed clear capacity building needs and provided concrete examples of how to further build those resources.

Over the past year, the Evaluation Division has invested in MEL capacity building efforts for ECA and its partners. Examples included establishing a Community of Practice for MEL staff within ECA and its IPs, providing seminars and webinars on various MEL topics to interested DoS staff, and posting guidance, webinars, and other resources on its website. In general, respondents familiar with these resources responded positively to the Community of Practice, seminars, and webinars, while responses to the website were more lukewarm. Respondents across the board indicated they found sessions which offered practical application of different evaluation methods to be more useful.

I find that the most successful, the most useful from my perspective is the ones that started with an example of how a methodology was applied in a specific circumstance and the scenario around which it was utilized. Again, I come down to that social network analysis because the way it was presented was very comprehensive and understandable, and I had a lot of takeaways from that. (IP, #82)

Several respondents, in particular ECA and other DoS staff, suggested future sessions could move beyond an introductory overview and dig more deeply into specific methods or offer tiered training (e.g., beginning and advanced session) to better target users' varying skill levels and expertise.

It would be great to have sort of a next step. So this was sort of the general one. It'd be great to have a series of classes about surveying, or a series of classes about data visualization, just because there's really only so much you can do with a bunch of beginners in one hour... but there's not time to really get into those tools. (DoS M&E practitioner, #56)

In my head I was like, "Well, I probably know enough about this". Whereas if it was maybe broken out to beginner or advanced, that might help people better choose a session and then have it be more engaging. (ECA program staff, #33)

Respondents generally visited the ECA website to access past evaluation reports, find current information about ECA, such as the MODE Framework, and share posted tools and guidance. But several stakeholders wanted more from the website and thought there was potential for making it more useful. Suggestions included:

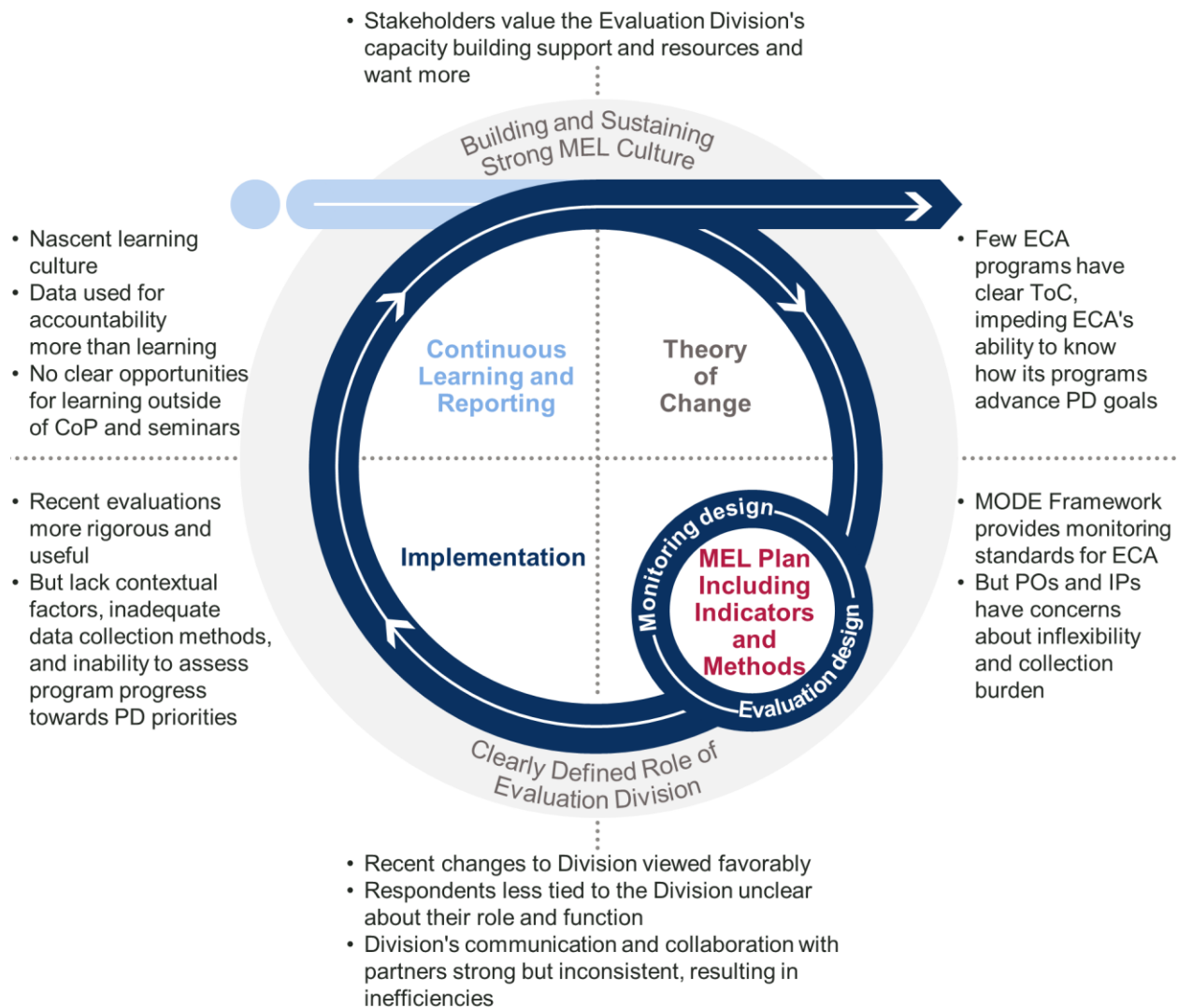
1. Posting information about the purpose of the Evaluation Division, including who the team members are and how the Division is approaching ECA priorities.
2. Including M&E templates of commonly used products beyond what is already on the website
3. Providing more context around how certain resources and web links should be used. For example, who is the target audience for the webinars?
4. Linking the site to additional useful resources since many currently exist

Several M&E practitioners inside and outside the DoS also suggested the Evaluation Division find additional ways to build MEL capacity to posts either directly to embassies or through the regional bureaus since most PD programs operate in other countries and are monitored by the posts. However, respondents might not be aware that R/PPR already has the formal mandate to support PD MEL capacity-building within the Agency, and efforts to support MEL capacity building in the field would need to be coordinated. MEL practitioners also identified low MEL capacity, resources, and lack of infrastructure as contributing to low MEL technical skills.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented below are mapped onto a general MEL process visual representing best practices in evaluation extracted from the literature and interview data. We have annotated the MEL process to illustrate the Evaluation Division's strengths and opportunities for growth (Exhibit 2). The individual conclusions are presented in greater detail below.

Exhibit 2: Annotated MEL Process



Conclusion 1: While the overall perspective was the Evaluation Division had improved under the new leadership, the opacity and inefficiency of some processes impaired the Division's potential.

The Evaluation Division has undergone some key changes in the past two years starting with a new Division Chief in 2018 followed by additional personnel and funding for evaluation efforts. Overall, respondents viewed these staffing and management changes as a positive development within ECA and provided examples of how the Division has helped to elevate ECA's evaluation

practice. Recent evaluations were perceived to be more realistic, utilization-focused, and rigorous. However, some respondents noted some variance in the MEL skills and expertise within the Division.

In addition, the Evaluation Division was described as collaborative, communicative, and flexible by program staff and EPs throughout the evaluation lifecycle – from design to implementation. ECA staff and IPs similarly appreciated the Division’s inclusive and participatory approach during the development of the MODE Framework.

However, the assessment found some obstacles to effective communication, as well as inefficiencies in some processes, suggesting room for improvement. ECA evaluations which had clearly defined roles and responsibilities among the Evaluation Division, program team, and external evaluation team tended to operate more smoothly compared to evaluations where roles and responsibilities were not well established at the beginning. Also, sometimes the Evaluation Division’s efforts to streamline the lines of communications had the unintended effect of creating inefficacious processes. Although program teams and IPs were involved in the evaluation design, for some evaluations, they, especially IPs, were involved at a later stage of the design process. The evaluation design, from drafting the SOW to finalizing the evaluation approach and methods and developing data collection tools, would have benefited from the IPs’ perspective and insight during an earlier point in time in the design process to ensure it reflected the programmatic and contextual realities, because sometimes the evaluation approach or data collection tool would miss important specificities and complexities of the program. With respect to the MODE Framework, some communication gaps were identified during its rollout, which has led to questions from the ECA program staff and IPs regarding its implementation. More specifics about these concerns are detailed in the MODE Framework conclusion section.

Conclusions 2: The general absence of clear programmatic TOCs and limited use of systems-thinking approaches influences the Evaluation Division’s ability to assess how ECA programs advance PD priorities.

Stakeholders inside and outside of ECA stated that recent evaluations were more rigorous and utilization-focused compared to the past. Several ECA staff noted evaluation reports are published more quickly and provide more timely recommendations. However, ECA evaluations fell short in their ability to assess how effectively programs are able to advance PD priorities due to the lack of a theory of change.

First, robust TOC are seen as a key component of current evaluation practice (Coffman 2007; Louie and Guthrie 2007; Organizational Research Services 2009; ORS Impact 2007; Stachowiak 2013). RAND Corporation’s report on the DoD’s information, influence, and persuasion programs stated, “Articulated at the outset, during planning, a theory of change/logic of the effort can help clarify goals, explicitly connect planned activities to those goals, and support the assessment process. A good theory of change will also capture possible unintended consequences or provide indicators of failure, things to help you identify where links in the logical chain have been broken by faulty assumptions, inadequate execution, or factors outside your control (disruptors)” (Paul, et al 2015, p. 8). For ECA, this means its programs’ TOCs articulate how the programs are advancing PD priorities, including identifying short and medium-term outcomes. Although ECA programs did have a logic model or a TOC, this assessment found many did not

clearly articulate the pathways and intermediary steps towards achieving PD objectives. Sommerfeldt and Buhmann (2019) found similar results in their study of PD efforts across the State Department. Lack of a clear TOC makes it difficult to understand the specific ways that ECA programs advance PD priorities.

Second, more recent evaluations are applying a systems-thinking evaluation approach and using methods such as Most Significant Change and Outcome Harvesting. However, in general, ECA evaluations reviewed did not apply a complexity-aware approach, and contextual factors were not sufficiently taken into account. Many ECA programs are complex and are one of many tools used by the DoS to advance PD priorities. They also operate in dynamic environments where multiple political, economic, and contextual factors drive actions and influence outcomes. Evaluations aimed at understanding ECA program outcomes and progress towards achieving PD objectives would benefit from a systems-thinking approach that can identify project results while also taking into account the contextual factors influencing program activities and its direct beneficiaries. A complexity-aware, whole-systems approach can capture system dynamics, interdependencies, and emerging interconnections to produce context-specific program results (Preskill, Parkhurst, and Splansky Juster 2014; Tsui, Hearn, and Young 2014; Younis 2017). Larson (2018) presents a thorough detailing of how to apply complexity-awareness to evaluations, especially retrospective ones, by focusing on asking the right questions, which, in turn, guide the selection of appropriate methodologies to answer those questions. The questions she poses that may be most relevant to public diplomacy interventions are:

- Was the program grounded in history and current priorities?
- Was the program informed by dynamic relationships between implementers and beneficiaries and within and between units who have different functions?
- Was the program effective in influencing those dynamics to enable the intended change to occur, such as by introducing extrinsic or intrinsic incentives?
- Was the program responsive to external shocks, such as new policies, program funding, process changes, or new stakeholders?
- Was the program monitoring, reviewing, and taking action based on regular information to ensure that over time the program was having the intended effect?
- Was the program aware of and supportive of self-organizing and emergent behaviors relevant to the intervention?
- Was the program engaged in what would happen when the program ended?

Third, more rigorous evaluation designs use multiple data streams to triangulate evidence of outcomes and key contributing actions (Paul et al 2015). While more recent ECA evaluations have expanded their methods, they tended to collect data at a singular point in time using self-reported measures of interviews, focus groups, and surveys. This makes it difficult to objectively capture changes in “hearts and minds” over time. However, many IPs have a robust monitoring system and have established baseline data from its beneficiaries. It was perceived to be a missed opportunity to not more systematically integrate available monitoring data into the evaluation design.

Conclusion 3: The MODE Framework addressed inconsistencies with current monitoring practices of ECA programs, but its implementation presented some key challenges.

One theme that emerged from the assessment was that the monitoring systems of ECA programs varied across the bureau due to the decentralized, grant-based system of PD programs. Several stakeholders felt greater standardization would help improve PD monitoring practices. In addition, some respondents noted an interest in having more outcome indicators, though even external MEL experts recognized the difficulties with assessing PD programs at the outcome level. The literature and external MEL respondents suggested selecting indicators during program design, linking the indicators to the TOC, and focusing on a small number of high-value indicators could address some of the challenges associated with identifying quality outcome indicators (Coffman 2007; Louie and Guthrie 2007; ORS Impact 2007; ORS Impact 2010; Stachowiak 2013).

In addition, many respondents appreciated the development of the MODE Framework because it addressed both aforementioned issues: demonstrating progress towards a standardized monitoring system and increasing the focus on outcome indicators directly tied to PD priorities. In general, respondents had a positive impression of the MODE Framework and supported the purpose behind its establishment. The Evaluation Division was also commended for its inclusive and participatory approach to developing the Framework.

However, several respondents had some questions and issues about how the MODE Framework will be rolled out and implemented. Respondents had concerns about the flexibility and adaptability of the Framework to program specificity, methodological ability to measure change consistently and reliably over time, additional burdens on IPs (for example adding more questions into an already extensive participant survey), and also for ECA program staff if they have low capacity IPs, and general bureaucracy and slow pace of change and its effect on the MODE's implementation. These concerns stemmed from the MODE Framework being unfamiliar as the Framework is still in its pilot phase and has not been widely rolled out.

Conclusion 4: The Evaluation Division has taken steps towards being a learning partner within a nascent learning culture, but some major institutional challenges impede further progress.

According to the literature and external MEL experts, a strong learning culture supports an adaptive program management approach that allows for tight and rapid improvement cycles (Coffman and Beers 2011; ORS Impact 2010; Younis 2017). Specifically, relevant and timely data informs programmatic decisions, and space is provided for programs to reflect on program data and to pivot as necessary. Organizations with a robust learning culture have support from leadership and management with appropriate budget, staff, and resources dedicated to learning activities (Morariu and Brennan 2009; ORS Impact 2007; Younis 2017).

In the past few years, the Evaluation Division has taken noticeable steps towards establishing itself as a learning partner inside and outside of ECA. The Division was commended for creating a community of practice with IPs and ECA program staff, and offering seminars and webinars on different MEL topics for those looking to build their own MEL capacity, though one area that could be strengthened was its website. Stakeholders provided a number of recommendations for how the Evaluation Division can continue to strengthen the MEL skills and expertise of the

program teams, IPs, and partners through the various resources and support the Division provides.

However, the evaluation found several institutional barriers hampering the Evaluation Division's efforts to further build ECA's reputation as a strong learning partner. The MEL skills and expertise varied within ECA and IPs with several respondents demonstrating some MEL illiteracy, and thus additional MEL capacity building is needed. Also, while IPs appreciated having a community of practice, they reported being reticent to share too much information about their program information to other IPs because they were also their competitors. Finally, ECA's MEL culture tended to emphasize use of data for accountability rather than learning. ECA program staff and IPs stated they predominantly used MEL data to document program achievements as a means to justify program funding to leadership and Congress. While MEL data was frequently used to inform how program activities could be improved to better meet the needs of its beneficiaries, it was rarely used to understand how the program could modify or strengthen its approach to advance broader PD goals. Buhmann and Sommerfeldt (2019) found similar results in their interviews with DoS PD practitioners. These challenges will make it more difficult for ECA to fully embrace a robust learning practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Evaluation Division should clearly define its role and relationship with stakeholder groups across all four areas of its work.

All stakeholders should have a shared understanding of the Evaluation Division's role, how it functions in relation to other actors (ECA program offices, IPs, and EPs), and the specific processes it uses to conduct its work in monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building. This could take the form of establishing externally-facing SOPs for each of its four work areas that describe the role and relationship between the Evaluation Division and ECA program staff. The Evaluation Division SOP dated April 2020 made available to the assessment team was crafted with the Evaluation Division staff as the intended user; a complementary SOP or other similar product that delineates roles and responsibilities for the ECA program staff could support: (1) communication and expectations and clarifying processes for conducting evaluations, including the evaluation selection process (which is described in the ECA Evaluation Division Products and Services document), (2) communication and feedback processes between stakeholders during evaluations, and (3) evaluation review and dissemination processes. The Evaluation Division should also get creative in how the content of the Products and Services document is communicated to relevant stakeholders (see Recommendation 7 on the Evaluation Division website).

Recommendation 2: The Evaluation Division should work closely with ECA program teams to strengthen capacity on developing and using program TOCs.

It would be important for the Evaluation Division to take steps to remedy the current absence of clear TOCs in many ECA programs. The Evaluation Division did conduct a seminar on TOCs in early 2020; further capacity building activities on how and why to develop and continuously update TOCs may be useful. Depending on the program, this could take many forms. The Evaluation Division could work across all ECA programs to build capacity with program staff on what a TOC is, and the valuable role a TOC plays in all phases of a program. For existing programs, the Evaluation Division could work with program teams to review and refine existing TOCs and/or to create TOCs where there are none. In all cases, it is important to note the assessment's recommendation is for TOCs specifically, which are distinct from logic models or logical frameworks: while logic models⁶ are a helpful tool in program design and MEL planning, they often do not adequately capture the complexity and nuance of change pathways, and a TOC is needed to capture these elements. As TOCs can be developed at any point during program implementation, building their development or refinement into evaluation contracts as a key deliverable for the EP to carry out as part of their work plan. This process of developing clear TOCs would have a twofold benefit: first, it would increase the quality of monitoring and evaluation design; and second, it would provide an opportunity for the Evaluation Division to build increased understanding of the complexity, nuance, and contextual factors of ECA programs.

⁶ 18 FAM 301.4 Department of State Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation does state that at the program/project design phase, bureaus and independent offices must include a logic model which will inform monitoring efforts. This does not, however, preclude a TOC.

Recommendation 3: The Evaluation Division should continue to employ a range of methods to answer evaluation questions.

Key informant interviews and surveys are very common methods for evaluations managed or conducted by the Evaluation Division. The Evaluation Division should continue including a wider range of methods which may be better suited to answer different types of evaluation questions, including questions which seek to examine contribution. Some possible tools include Social Network Analysis, Most Significant Change, and outcome harvesting (all of which the Evaluation Division has used), outcome mapping, and contribution analysis⁷. The Evaluation Division should also consider more systematically and strategically incorporating monitoring data into its evaluations: most of the evaluations reviewed in this assessment only captured information at one point in time, but there is often a rich set of monitoring data which could be drawn on to enhance the data available for an evaluation. Further, the Evaluation Division should employ other methods which would facilitate robust examination of contextual factors which aid or impede PD goals. While ECA programs are implemented in many countries, only a handful tend to be selected for inclusion in an evaluation. Applying a country case study approach where individual country contexts and Post-specific implementation plans can be examined and then doing cross-country comparison to see if there are any observable trends, lessons, or findings that can apply across settings is one approach.

There was also an epistemological divide between some respondents who favor the RCT approach to evaluating PD efforts and other respondents supporting the Evaluation Division's use of other evaluation designs and methodologies. In these instances, the Evaluation Division's energies may be more useful focusing on furthering the body of evidence that supports the utility of methodological approaches they employed.

Recommendation 4: The Evaluation Division should continue to play a leadership role in developing and refining outcome indicators for PD programs, taking into account guidance from the literature and other stakeholders in the field.

Given the complexity of PD programs and challenges in measuring their outcomes, the Evaluation Division should continue staying up to date on the evaluation literature for PD and related fields, such as advocacy, and democracy and governance. The Evaluation Division should also keep in regular conversation with other M&E practitioners within and outside the DoS, to continually learn and position itself as a thought leader on PD evaluation. The learning from the MODE Framework implementation on the development and refinement of outcome indicators is a particularly important area of PD monitoring and evaluation in which the Evaluation Division should play a leadership role.

Recommendation 5: The Evaluation Division should invest time and effort in clarifying and clearly articulating how programs will integrate the MODE Framework into their work.

The Evaluation Division is currently in the piloting phase for the MODE Framework and should take the opportunity to review pilot data and collect feedback from stakeholders – such as IPs

⁷ The Evaluation Division has or is in the process of employing all methods on this list, except outcome mapping and contribution analysis, in recent or ongoing evaluations.

and ECA program staff – about the pilot process. This data and feedback should be used to refine and inform future MODE Framework implementation processes to ensure they are best suited to meet the needs of all stakeholders. The Evaluation Division should then take steps to clearly articulate to ECA program staff and IPs the next steps for MODE Framework implementation. This should include timeline, contracting procedures, information-sharing and capacity building processes, and other implementation details, which may be included as part of the SOPs described above. Suggestions include having Evaluation Division staff participate in regular ECA program staff meetings, continuing to be active at All Hands and other larger meetings, and utilizing other communication platforms more effectively (see Recommendation 7).

Recommendation 6: The Evaluation Division, in conjunction with the rest of ECA, should work to define a clear vision for the purpose and use of data in ECA.

As part of its learning area of work, the Evaluation Division should focus on the current lack of clarity within ECA about the purpose and use of data. Specifically, the Evaluation Division should identify and communicate whether data should be understood as a tool for *accountability* (such as for reporting to Congress and justifying use of funds), for *learning* (such as for identifying lessons from programming to inform future program designs and decisions), or for a combination of the two. A clear vision for the purpose and use of data would help clarify the role of the Evaluation Division – and of MEL more generally – within ECA, and set the tone for the development of a more robust learning culture within the Bureau. This vision could be articulated as part of the clarification of the Evaluation Division’s role and accompanying SOPs discussed above.

To counter possible resistance to negative findings, ECA, both the Evaluation Division and its leadership, could borrow from USAID’s Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approach, with specific focus on the learning and adapting components. Learning, in this approach, asks whether we are asking the most important questions and generating insight relevant and useful for decision making. Adapting asks whether this information is being used to make better decisions in program implementation and management. Evidence indicates adaptive management does contribute to more sustainable development outcomes, especially when supported by leadership and there is adequate investment of time (Akhtar et al 2016). Drawing on literature outside of the PD space, leaders have been found to be critical to creating an effective learning culture (Schein 1992; Hailey & James 2002; Lencioni 2002; Hovland, 2003; Faustino & Booth 2014; Byrne et al 2016). The Evaluation Division should seek opportunities to influence leadership to support and foster a learning culture, recognizing the presence of factors outside of their control to shift from a culture of accountability to one of learning.

Recommendation 7: The Evaluation Division should continue their work on capacity building webinars, seminars, and the community of practice, but should consider tailoring the content on their website to be more engaging.

The Evaluation Division’s capacity building activities – particularly the webinars, seminars, and Community of Practice sessions – have been very well-received and should be continued as part of the Evaluation Division’s capacity building area of work. Based on participant feedback, the Evaluation Division should continue to focus these sessions around practical examples of how MEL concepts and tools can and have been applied, rather than focusing only on the

theoretical elements. The Evaluation Division may also want to consider offering different session options for participants who are relatively new to MEL versus those who are more advanced in their MEL capacity, to better tailor the content to different audiences. The Evaluation Division should also consider going more in-depth on topics of interest to the audience, such as having a series on a specific topic. The following topics for future capacity building sessions recommended by participants included: social network analysis, data visualization, and survey design.

The Evaluation Division should consider revising its capacity building website to be more engaging by tailoring content specifically to what would be most useful to its intended audiences. This begins with more clearly identifying who are the intended website users and what information they need to access – ECA program staff, IPs, EPs, or all of the above. Having clarity on who needs to access what information on the website provides the groundwork for improving usability through navigation and search functions. It also guides strategic thinking in how to best drive users to the website. It may be worthwhile to conduct a rapid assessment to identify and align its intended audiences, content, and communications goals to develop a refined dissemination strategy for the Evaluation Division. The Evaluation Division should also consider other platforms, such as internal ECA or DoS platforms/systems to disseminate its resources and services. Engaging a communications specialist team, such as ECA's Public Affairs Strategic Communications team, could generate creative and effective ways to utilize existing ECA or DoS communications tools.

ANNEX I: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Assessment Approach

This assessment was guided by a complexity-aware and whole-systems approach⁸ that captures system dynamics, interdependencies, and emerging interconnections to produce context-specific observations that can inform learning. This assessment will also be informed by a participatory and appreciative approach.⁹

On July 7, 2020, the assessment team facilitated a participatory design workshop with Evaluation Division staff, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, and the Government Technical Monitor. The purpose was to develop a shared understanding of the assessment's goals and gain insight into the Evaluation Division's concerns, hopes, and expectations for the process we are undertaking. The design session had three specific objectives:

- Obtain additional input into the goals of the assessment and the assessment questions
- Refine the assessment questions and data collection methods
- Collect input on theory-based criteria or measures of success for the work of ECA Evaluation Division

The assessment plan includes four primary components:

- Literature review for standards and best practices for public diplomacy, advocacy, and exchange program M&E, learning, and capacity building
- Document review of Evaluation Division portfolio documents related to its past evaluations, M&E, learning, and capacity-building practices, procedures and resource use
- In-depth key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with Evaluation Division and ECA staff and other stakeholders

Data Collection

Document and Literature Review. The assessment team conducted a systematic, iterative document and literature review throughout the assessment period to provide evidence-informed review of best practices in M&E, learning, and capacity building for public diplomacy (assessment questions 1a, 2a, 3a) and examine and assess the monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building efforts of the Evaluation Division against these best practices (assessment questions 1b, 2b, 3b, 3c).

In-Depth Interviews. The assessment team conducted 43 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 6 group key informant interviews (GKIIs) with a purposive sample of respondents. The interviews

⁸ Complexity-aware and whole-systems approach recognizes the complexity and unpredictability that can often come with programs aimed at social transformation.

⁹ Participatory evaluation aims to involve all key actors involved in the program, including implementing partners and targeted communities and beneficiaries, in the evaluation. An appreciative approach deliberately focuses attention on what is working well and how interventions could be made even better, while simultaneously gathering insight into what could be improved and how to improve it.

explored respondents' experiences with and perceptions of the Evaluation Division and its activities (assessment questions 1b, 2b, 3b, 3c), garnered their opinions and perception of the overall public diplomacy M&E landscape (assessment questions 1a, 2a, 3a), and elucidated insights from the document review. As the assessment team learned more about the Evaluation Division's offerings and efforts, the interview guides were adjusted to ensure the assessment systematically built on what has been learned.

FGDs. These semi-structured and moderated discussions were conducted virtually with small groups of four to six participants to explore a few key topics in depth. FGDs allow interaction among respondents and can generate rich discussion as respondents react to each other's ideas. Two FGDs were held with ECA Evaluation Division staff, allowing a smaller group to discuss and reflect on the Division's work (assessment questions 1b, 2b, 3b, 3c).

Data Sources and Sampling

Document review. Documents, provided by the Evaluation Division, included the following:

- Ad hoc requests for M&E assistance (both from within ECA and Posts)
- Evaluations
- Guidance, templates, and other resources developed by the Evaluation Division
- Documentation around the MODE Framework and E-GOALS
- Strategy documents
- Marketing documents
- Learning documents
- Documentation around the evaluation seminars and community of practice (including attendance sheets)
- Documentation around Evaluation Division staffing

Final versions of the above documents were included in the document review.

The ECA Evaluation Division website categorizes evaluations as “ongoing,” “recently completed,” and “earlier evaluations”; the last category includes the years 1997 to 2012. For the purpose of this assessment, however, we categorized ongoing and recently completed evaluations into a “post-2018” category and a “pre-2018” category when ECA experienced notable staffing changes. Because so many contextual factors have changed since 2012, earlier evaluations were excluded from the sampling frame.

We applied a case study approach and randomly selected evaluations, stratified by category (Exhibit 4), for inclusion in the document review and interviews. This allowed us to conduct a deep dive of individual evaluations and allowed for comparison across selected evaluations. We included design documents for the ongoing evaluations and the final report for completed evaluations.

Exhibit 1: ECA Evaluation Division Evaluation Sample

ECA Assessment Category	Total N	Sample
2018–present	10 (8 ongoing, excluding this assessment; 2 completed)	8
Pre-2018	7	4

Literature review. The literature review consisted of external public diplomacy, advocacy, and exchange literature as well as external M&E, learning, and capacity-building documents and literature from relevant sectors, including the following:

- Literature from across DoS public diplomacy offices and bureaus, other agency units (e.g., the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs; U.S. Department of Education International Affairs Office, Peace Corps, and Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs)
- Non-governmental institutions (e.g., National Council for International Visitors, Institute of International Education, World Learning, Friendship Force International, AMIDEAST, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, The Public Diplomacy Council, Youth Leaders International)
- Public educational institutions, (e.g., the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, University of Leeds International Communication program, Syracuse University, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Georgetown University)
- Private sector (e.g., Kettering Foundation, Institute of World Affairs)
- Other peer-reviewed literature in public diplomacy, in other relevant sectors (e.g., exchange programs, advocacy and policy influence, democracy and governance), and on evaluation approaches (e.g. utilization-focused, complexity-aware, whole-systems).

Interview respondents and focus group participants were asked whether there were documents or literature we should include in our review.

IIIs. The Evaluation Division provided the assessment team with an initial list of potential respondents as well as attendance sheets for the assessment team to randomly select from. Building on this list, we developed the following respondent categories and sub-categories (Exhibit 5). As discussed above, evaluations were randomly selected for inclusion in the document review. The relevant ECA program staff, IPs, and/or EPs involved in those randomly selected evaluations were invited to participate in interviews to gather more detailed insight into the evaluation process and their reflections on the Evaluation Division. Of the 12 selected evaluations, 6 had complete contact information (names and email addresses for at least one representative from ECA program staff, IPs, and EP), 2 had partially complete contact information (names and email addresses for one or more individuals for one but not all categories of respondents), and 4 had incomplete information (names and email addresses missing for all categories of respondents). The most recent evaluations all had complete contact information, and the missing information was primarily in issues that took place several years

ago. There were comments left by the ECA ED with recommendations for who to contact to get in touch with some of the missing POCs, which we followed-up with to the best of our ability and filled in some, but not all, gaps.

External M&E experts were identified through the PD, advocacy, and exchange evaluation literature.

We periodically reviewed our sample to ensure that all work areas (evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building) were addressed. While some of the respondents included through the abovementioned approaches participated in capacity building activities held by the Evaluation Division, we wanted to expand that sample to ensure we had sufficient data. We carried out purposive sampling to do this, starting with compiling and collating the attendance lists available on the Box for the community of practice, seminar, and webinar sessions. We identified which stakeholder group each attendee listed belonged to (DOS/ECA, DOS-Non ECA, IP). Those with insufficient information (no last name and/or no organizational affiliation listed) were removed from the list. We marked those who were already in our sample for other reasons (8 total; DOS/ECA-6, DOS/non-ECA-2, IP-0). We selected an additional 9 attendees to add to the sample using purposive sampling that took into account the following factors: representation of different types of capacity building activities, range of units/organizational affiliations, and stakeholder type. The 9 additional added included:

- DOS/ECA: 0 (as the 6 already included from this category were deemed sufficient)
- DOS/non-ECA: 5
- IP: 4 (Selected those IPs who were not already represented in interview list)

Our final sample of those who had participated in some type of capacity building activity was 17:

- DOS/ECA: 6
- DOS/non-ECA: 7
- IP: 4

When broken down by type of activity, the sample was as follows:

- Seminar only: 3
- COP only: 3
- Webinar only: 5
- Seminar/COP: 2
- Webinar/COP: 5
- Webinar/seminar: 0
- All 3: 0

In addition to identifying key informants with specific knowledge of the Evaluation Division's activities and/or M&E, learning, and capacity-building practices in public diplomacy, we applied a snowball sampling approach in which all respondents were asked who else could provide insight into the assessment questions. The assessment team designed and maintained an interview tracker to ensure diversity in representation across the categories and sub-categories.

All interviews were held virtually using Zoom. All but one interview was audio recorded; the interview that was not recorded was documented via notes. All interviews were conducted in English and no translation was required.

Exhibit 2: Qualitative Data Sample

Respondent Category	Respondent Sub-Category	Sample (individuals)
DoS	ECA Evaluation Division	6
DoS	ECA leadership	5
DoS	ECA program staff (affiliated with 8 evaluations); Embassy staff who have engaged ECA Evaluation Division in ad hoc activities; other DoS staff outside of ECA who have worked with ECA in some capacity; DoS staff who participated in the Evaluation Division's capacity building activities	16
DoS	Staff of the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy; staff from other research and evaluation units within DoS Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs	7
External	ECA IPs (Affiliated with 6 evaluations and representing 8 IPs)	15
External	ECA evaluation partners (Affiliated with 8 evaluations and representing 5 EPs)	8
External	Other public diplomacy M&E practitioners	4
Total		61

FGDs. Two discussions were held with ECA Evaluation Division staff via Zoom using a moderator's guide that included topics along ECA Evaluation Division's four key areas of work (evaluation, monitoring, learning and capacity building). The FGDs were moderated by one assessment team member; another participated as observer and notetaker. Discussions were digitally audio recorded, transcribed, and cleaned for analysis.

Data Analysis

Document review. Following a thorough review of the public diplomacy, advocacy, and exchanges evaluation literature, the evaluation team identified best practices that aligned with the evaluation life cycle (design, implementation, dissemination and learning). These best practices formed the coding scheme which was applied to the selected evaluations. We then created a rating scale to assess the extent to which there was evidence of the better practice in the evaluation. The ratings were as follows:

- Yes: the better practice is fully addressed in the document
- No: the better practice is not referenced in the document
- Somewhat: the better practice is acknowledged but not fully incorporated into the document
- Unclear: a clear determination about whether the better practice has been applied is not included in the report (e.g. disaggregation of alumni by recent/long term is not described so responsiveness to the long-term alumni best practice is not discernable)
- N/A: the better practice is not pertinent (e.g., use of contribution analysis when the evaluation question did not inquire about programmatic contribution to intended outcomes)

A matrix was created for each evaluation, displaying the best practice and the score for that evaluation, drawing on documentation evidence and qualitative data. These were then aggregated into a single matrix to anonymize the data and protect the confidentiality of respondents.

Qualitative data. A coding scheme was developed that reflected the Evaluation Division's four key service areas (evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building), as well as contextual factors that influenced the environment in which the Division operated. The scheme was tested with a sample of transcripts and revised for clarity. Audio recordings were transcribed and uploaded to Dedoose for analysis.

Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis. Following coding, analysis summaries were produced in which analysts generated emerging themes, supported by evidence for each assessment question and relevant lines of inquiry (see Appendix III for lines of inquiry matrix). The evaluation team convened in two half-day Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis (DAIS) sessions in which the emerging findings across data sources and streams were presented and affinity mapped. Through this participatory process, key findings statements and conclusions were generated. A follow-up session was held to formulate initial recommendations.

The assessment team then facilitated a participatory discussion with the ECA Evaluation Division to review the findings and conclusions, ensuring they were grounded in the contextual reality of the Division, and to collaboratively generate recommendations.

Data Management and Security

All data collected for this assessment was securely stored and segregated from other company data on a private project space on SharePoint that only assessment team members could access.

Limitations

As with all carefully planned assessments, there are some limitations to the design and implementation of this assessment, which are listed below along with the team's mitigation strategies:

- **Remote data collection due to COVID-19.** Due to safety concerns of COVID-19 transmission from physical contact, the entire assessment (including data collection) was conducted remotely. The assessment team brought its deep experience conducting virtual interviews and focus groups, applying our best practices for remote data collection in this assessment (e.g., clear and detailed data collection protocols, virtual interviews under one hour, and using video).
- **Response bias** is the risk that respondents might be motivated to provide the assessment team with responses that would be considered socially desirable. To reduce the potential for bias, the assessment team conducted preliminary analysis of the data throughout the data collection period to feed into subsequent data collection efforts, and conducted systematic integration of data sources and appropriate selection of a range of stakeholders to strengthen the reliability of findings.
- **Recall bias** is the risk that respondents do not accurately remember events that have taken place in the past. Recall bias appeared most clearly in the discussions around monitoring and respondents' reflections on the MODE Framework and E-GOALS. To mitigate this bias, interviewers probed on the timing of their perceptions.
- **Selection bias in the KIIs and FGDs.** The Evaluation Division provided the assessment team with a list of potential respondents, which may have include some selection bias. It is possible that those invited were the most committed or most willing to participate, or those with the most favorable opinions of the Evaluation Division and ECA in general. Although this list provided a starting point for recruiting participants, the assessment team did not limit recruitment to those on the list. The snowball sampling method provided access to other individuals who were able to contribute.
- **Assessment team bias as evaluation professionals.** A significant number of EnCompass' evaluations are oriented toward a systems-thinking approach that primarily applies non-experimental and process-based evaluation designs. The assessment team continuously checked its own internal biases toward process-based evaluations to ensure we were not unduly influenced by our own work. Through weekly internal team meetings and our team-based DAIS approach to analysis, interpretation, and synthesis, the assessment team was able to raise observations and learnings gained through data collection and interrogate whether our interpretation was based on the evidence or our own experiences. This type of check was performed throughout the data collection and analysis phases to ensure findings were evidence-based.
- **Generalizability.** Qualitative methods in evaluation offer depth in exploration into key areas of interest, but do not facilitate examination by breadth. Because this assessment is applying a case study approach and will draw heavily on qualitative data, generalizability

of findings across all of ECA Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building will not be possible.

Ethical Considerations

EnCompass' Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the design, data collection instruments, recruitment materials, and informed consent forms and determine this study to be exempt from review. All invited participants were sent, via email, an informed consent form (see Annex V for forms) which they signed and returned. Emailed consent was also acceptable. Recognizing that consent is a process, at the start of each interview, the interviewer reviewed that participation was voluntary and confidentiality would be maintained. The interviewer also requested participation to record the discussion; when consent was affirmed, the recording was turned on. There was one group interview in which the participants did not consent to being recorded; a second data collector joined the discussion to take notes.

All data were housed on a project-specific area of EnCompass' SharePoint which was only accessible by evaluation team members. No data were shared via email to minimize potential security risks. All raw data will be destroyed in January 2021.

ANNEX II: ASSESSMENT DESIGN MATRIX

Assessment Question	Methods	Data Source Categories	Lines of Inquiry
1. When designing and conducting evaluations, is the Evaluation Division applying best practices for assessing public diplomacy programming, including exchange programs?			
1a. What are best practices for assessing public diplomacy programming, in particular for increasing the scientific and methodological rigor of public diplomacy evaluations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External public diplomacy–related M&E, learning, and capacity-building documents and literature ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What evaluation practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, methods, and internal versus subcontracting implementation approaches) are recommended in the literature? ▪ What evaluation practices have other M&E units in DoS employed?
1b. Does the Evaluation Division use best practices and have sufficient resources to successfully assess public diplomacy programming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews ▪ FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation Division documents ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the Evaluation Division’s evaluation practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, methods, and internal versus subcontracting implementation approaches) compare with those used by other M&E units in DoS? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division’s evaluation practices compare with models recommended in the literature? ▪ How does the Evaluation Division’s current use of evaluation practices compare with its past practice?

Assessment Question	Methods	Data Source Categories	Lines of Inquiry
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the benefits and drawbacks of different evaluation practices for assessing public diplomacy programming? ▪ How feasible are different evaluation methods for the Evaluation Division? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's structure and resources (financial, organizational, and human resources) hinder or support its work in evaluation?
2. To what extent is the Evaluation Division's monitoring framework structured to provide timely and useful data to inform ECA programing?			
2a. What are best practices for monitoring public diplomacy programming, in particular for successfully measuring difficult concepts present in public diplomacy, such as mutual understanding and the ripple/multiplier effect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External PD-related M&E, learning, and capacity-building documents and literature ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What monitoring practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, and methods) are recommended in the literature? ▪ What monitoring practices have other M&E units in the DoS employed?
2b. Does the Evaluation Division use best practices and have sufficient resources to successfully guide and manage ECA program monitoring?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews ▪ FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation Division documents ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's monitoring practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, and methods, in particular the recently developed MODE Framework) compare with those used by other M&E units in DoS?

Assessment Question	Methods	Data Source Categories	Lines of Inquiry
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's monitoring practices compare with models recommended in the literature? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's current monitoring practices compare with its past practice? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's structure and resources (financial, organizational, and human resources) hinder or support its work in effective monitoring?
3. How does the Evaluation Division ensure efficient and effective use, learning, and capacity building for M&E?			
3a. What are best practices for ensuring effective distribution and use of M&E data and results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External PD-related M&E, learning, and capacity building ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders, documents, and literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What learning and capacity-building practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, and methods) are recommended in the literature? ▪ What learning and capacity-building practices have other M&E units in the DoS employed?
3b. Does the Evaluation Division use best practices and have sufficient resources to successfully ensure use of and learning from M&E data and results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews ▪ FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation Division documents ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, and methods) to ensure use and learning compare with those used by other M&E units in the DoS?

Assessment Question	Methods	Data Source Categories	Lines of Inquiry
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's practices to ensure use and learning compare with those recommended in the literature? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's current practices to ensure use and learning compare with its past practice? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's structure and resources (financial, organizational, and human resources) hinder or support its work in ensuring use and learning?
3c. How has Evaluation Division training increased the M&E capacity of ECA staff and other participants? Are there additional resources the Evaluation Division should create, leverage, or make available to better facilitate learning and capacity building in the bureau and/or externally?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document and literature review ▪ In-depth interviews ▪ FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation Division documents ▪ DoS staff ▪ External stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's practices (theory, models, frameworks, design, and methods) in capacity building compare with those used by other M&E units in the DoS? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's practices in capacity building compare with models recommended in the literature? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's current practices in capacity building compare with its past practice? ▪ How do the Evaluation Division's structure and resources (financial, organizational, and human resources) hinder or support its work in capacity building?

ANNEX III: AGGREGATED EVALUATION MATRIX

***Shaded boxes are pre-2018 (n = 4); unshaded boxes are 2018-present (n = 8)

Evaluation Better Practices	Evidence from Evaluation Document(s)	Evidence from Primary Data Collection
Design		
Clear Theory of Change included in evaluation design process	Yes (2), No (0), Somewhat (1), Unclear (1), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (0), No (5), Somewhat (3), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (1), Unclear (5), N/A (0)
Stated evaluation objectives	Yes (3), No (0), Somewhat (1), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (7), No (0), Somewhat (1), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (2), No (0), Somewhat (6), Unclear (0), N/A (0)
Contextual factors described	Yes (0), No (4), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (1), No (5), Somewhat (2), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (1), Somewhat (0), Unclear (7), N/A (0)
Rationale for evaluation methodology	Yes (0), No (4), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (3), No (4), Somewhat (1), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (1), Somewhat (1), Unclear (6), N/A (0)
Use of mixed methods	Yes (4), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (8), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (3), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (5), N/A (0)
Contribution analysis	Yes (0), No (4), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (0), No (6), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (2)	Yes (0), No (1), Somewhat (0), Unclear (5), N/A (2)

Evaluation Better Practices	Evidence from Evaluation Document(s)	Evidence from Primary Data Collection
Pre/post surveys	Yes (0), No (4), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (0), No (8), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (6), N/A (0)
Plans to mitigate/address pre-test reactivity	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (2), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (6)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (2), N/A (6)
Plans to mitigate/address post-test desirability bias	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (2), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (1), No (5), Somewhat (1), Unclear (0), N/A (1)	Yes (0), No (1), Somewhat (1), Unclear (6), N/A (0)
Plans to mitigate/address sampling bias	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (2), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (1), No (6), Somewhat (1), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (1), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (5), N/A (0)
Observational data	Yes (0), No (3), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (1)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (0), No (3), Somewhat (2), Unclear (1), N/A (2)	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (1), Unclear (5), N/A (0)
Qualitative examination	Yes (4), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (8), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (4), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
Long-term alumni follow-up	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (5), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (5), No (1), Somewhat (0), Unclear (2), N/A (0)	Yes (3), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (5), N/A (0)
Ethical considerations (do no harm)	Yes (0), No (4), Somewhat (0), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)

Evaluation Better Practices	Evidence from Evaluation Document(s)	Evidence from Primary Data Collection
	Yes (1), No (4), Somewhat (3), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (1), No (1), Somewhat (0), Unclear (6), N/A (0)
Limitations described	Yes (1), No (1), Somewhat (2), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (6), No (1), Somewhat (1), Unclear (0), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (1), Somewhat (0), Unclear (7), N/A (0)
Implementation		
Flexible evaluation implementation	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (1), No (1), Somewhat (1), Unclear (4), N/A (1)	Yes (3), No (0), Somewhat (1), Unclear (3), N/A (1)
Conclusions		
Theory of Change updated/revised	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (0), No (4), Somewhat (0), Unclear (1), N/A (3)	Yes (0), No (2), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (2)
Key findings/learnings shared with stakeholders	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (1), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (5), N/A (2)	Yes (1), No (0), Somewhat (1), Unclear (4), N/A (2)
Evaluation addresses key evaluation objectives	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (3), Unclear (2), N/A (0)	Yes (0), No (0), Somewhat (0), Unclear (4), N/A (0)
	Yes (3), No (0), Somewhat (1), Unclear (2), N/A (2)	Yes (1), No (0), Somewhat (2), Unclear (3), N/A (2)

ANNEX IV: FINAL DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

FGD Guide // ECA Evaluation Division Staff

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	DoS – ECA Evaluation Division Staff
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Moderator:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the participants have already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the discussion to be recorded. Be sure to get a verbal OK from all participants.*
- *When you have reached 75 minutes, inform the participants about how many questions remain and check if you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Provide space for the participants to discuss with each other.*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for joining this session. My name is <> and I will be moderating our conversation today. I am joined by <> who will be observing and taking notes. As you are all aware, EnCompass has been contracted to conduct an assessment of the ECA Evaluation Division. We have invited you to participate in this group discussion to gather insights into the Division's work across the four key areas: monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building. We are here to learn from you and gather information.

Just a few ground rules to cover before we begin:

- Everyone should participate and speak one at a time.
- It is ok if you have different opinions and ideas from others in the group. Please be respectful of differing views.
- Please do not share the content of our conversations with others not in this virtual room.
- Finally, we hope you will enjoy the discussion!

Opening

1. Tell me what you like about your job the most. What excites you about your work with the Evaluation Division? (**background**)
2. Thinking about monitoring and evaluation in the public diplomacy space generally, how would you describe the current state of M&E in public diplomacy and exchanges? (**AQ1a, AQ2a**)

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, best practices, models/frameworks, appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring, data streams, best practices

Probe: Where do you think the field of M&E in public diplomacy and exchanges is going?

Evaluation

3. Since there are many programs ECA is involved with, what has been your approach to keeping up to date on ECA programming?
4. Turning now to your team's work on evaluation in particular, how would you describe the evaluation theory and approaches you apply to your work? What kind of evaluation do you do in your work? (**AQ1b**)

Probe: What does communication between ED and program offices look like?

Probe for: evaluation type, design, examples

Probe: What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division?

e.g. evaluation design and implementation, dissemination and learning from findings, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018, human resources/staff, consultants, leadership involvement, financial resources, tools, etc.

5. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division? (**AQ1a, AQ1b**)

Note to interviewer: last FGD focused on “success” or what makes a “successful” evaluation. Note if respondents respond to “quality” or other words.

Probe for: rigor, communication

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids

Monitoring

6. What are your perspectives on the quality of monitoring that ECA Evaluation Division is undertaking, including the MODE Framework? (AQ2b)

Probe for: kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; how have they communicated this to other stakeholders

MODE probes: why was it needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

7. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of monitoring conducted by ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ2a, AQ2b)

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids

Learning

8. Turning now to learning, in your experience, how have stakeholders in public diplomacy been able to use the learning generated from monitoring and evaluation activities? (AQ3b)

Probe: As M&E practitioners in this space, what best practices do you employ to promote learning and data use?

Probe for: concrete examples, including who, context, evidence of learning/data use, resources available or needed

9. Tell me a bit about the Evaluation Division’s learning agenda. How did it come about? How is it meeting the Division’s needs? (AQ3b)

Probe for: how have they communicated this to other stakeholders?

Capacity Building

10. Finally, I would like to ask you about building capacity for M&E in public diplomacy. The Division seems to have recently started the Seminars and Community of Practice. How did those come about? How do you think they are working? (AQ3b, AQ3c)
11. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of capacity building work carried out by ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids

Probe: In your experience, what are the best practices in building this capacity? (AQ3a)

Closing

12. *[TIME PERMITTING]* What are you looking forward to or excited about in the next few years of ED's work?

Probe: changes, improvements, new initiatives, new methods

Note to Interviewer: take the appreciative approach here!

13. *[TIME PERMITTING]* Is there anything you would like to share that we didn't have a chance to discuss today?

14. What questions do you have for me?

This concludes the focus group. Thank you all so much for your time and for sharing your thoughts.

Interview Guide // ECA Evaluation Division Users (ECA Program staff; Embassy staff)

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	DoS – ECA Evaluation Division Users
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check if you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your work with ECA's Evaluation Division. Can you tell me a bit about your program(s), your role, and how you have engaged the ECA Evaluation Division? **(background)**

Evaluation

2. I'd like to hear a bit about an evaluation you were a part of with the Evaluation Division. Can you first describe the program that was evaluated? **(background)**

Probe for: program name, dates of implementation, other distinguishing factors

3. How did the evaluation come about? (AQ1b)

Probe for: Who proposed the evaluation? Who was involved in the decision making? How did you feel about the prospect of an evaluation? What were the evaluation questions and why were they important? What was the purpose of the evaluation?

4. Tell me a bit about the design process. What methods were used in the evaluation? (AQ1b)

Probe for: How were you engaged in the design process (including determining staff, resources to be utilized)? What stakeholders/partners, if any, were involved with the design phase? How was the TOC developed; what about the M&E plan? How were they updated through the course of the evaluation? What outcome areas (any social or policy change) were included? How did you feel about the appropriateness of the methods?

5. How were you, as a program officer/person responsible for programmatic oversight, able to use the findings from the evaluation? (AQ1b, AQ3b)

Probe for: Were they timely? Relevant? Responsive? Who was involved in the dissemination of the findings (I.e. key partners or stakeholders)? How were the answers/findings to the evaluation questions utilized? What data streams were used as evidence of outcomes?

Monitoring

6. I'd like to hear a bit about the performance monitoring you do for your program under ECA. Can you describe the program that is being monitored? (background)

Probe for: program name, dates of implementation, other distinguishing factors

7. What kind of monitoring data are being collected? (AQ2b)

Probe for: frequency, data sources/streams, who is doing the data collection, M&E plan

8. Have you engaged with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Note for interviewer: The MODE Framework also went by the name "Program Families", so if the respondent is unfamiliar with the MODE, ask them about Program Families to see if they were involved before the name change.

- a. If yes, tell me how you were introduced to it? How have you found it? What is working well? What do you think could be improved?
- b. If no, have you heard about the MODE Framework? What are your thoughts on it?

- c. Are you familiar with the E-GOALS approach to monitoring? How did you find it? *If respondent is aware of the MODE Framework:* How would you compare it with the MODE framework?
- 9. What kind of direction and guidance did ECA Evaluation Division provide on monitoring? What kind of support have they provided? (AQ2b, AQ3c)

Probe for: How do you feel about the quality of support (including resources (tools, guidance, staff/personnel, involvement of leadership, etc.) available to you, staff/personnel) you have been provided? What additional support would you like to see? Would you have wanted?

- 10. How are you, as a program officer/person responsible for programmatic oversight, able to use the insights gleaned from monitoring data? (AQ2b, AQ3b)

Learning

- 11. Does your program office/Embassy have a learning agenda?
 - a. If yes, how has the evaluation and monitoring data produced by ECA Evaluation Division contributed to the learning agenda? (AQ3b)
- 12. Are you aware of ECA's Learning Agenda? (AQ3b)

Note to interviewer: be prepared to answer questions from respondents about what a Learning Agenda is in the event that they are not familiar.

- a. If yes, can you describe how the data from either evaluations or monitoring you have engaged in have contributed to the learning agenda? What kind of relationship have you had with the ECA Evaluation Division on the learning agenda? What has worked well? What could be improved? How does the ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda intersect with your office's learning agenda?
- b. If no, do you think an ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda could be valuable? What would an ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda look like for you?

Capacity Building

- 13. Have you participated in any of the ECA Evaluation Division seminars? (AQ3b, AQ3c)
 - a. If yes, tell me about your experience with these seminars? What was useful to you in your work? What could be improved?
 - b. If no, were you aware that the Division put on seminars? Would you consider participating?

Probe for: specific topics of interest (intro to M&E, program design and logic models, indicator basics, creating baselines and targets, creating and evaluating surveys, survey data cleaning and analysis). Note for interviewer: if respondent asks about getting onto the list for these seminars, they may email ecaevaluation@state.gov.

- 14. Have you participated in the ECA Evaluation Division Community of Practice? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

- a. If yes, tell me about your experience with the COP? What was useful? What could be improved?
- b. If no, were you aware that the Division hosted a COP? Would you consider participating?

Probe for: specific topics of interest (Evaluation Matters: How AEIF and AFCP have incorporated evaluation findings; Evaluation of American Corner in Cape Town; Social Network Analysis; MODE Framework)

- 15. Are you familiar with the resources on the ECA Evaluation Division's capacity building website? (AQ3bm AQ3c)
 - a. If yes, tell me about your experience with these resources. Have you used them? Were they useful? What could be improved?
 - b. If no, do you have an interest in monitoring and evaluation capacity building resources from the Evaluation Division? What sorts of resources would be most useful? In your view, what would be the best way for the Evaluation Division to disseminate resources like these?

Closing

- 16. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?
- 17. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?
- 18. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // ECA Leadership (Other Deputy Assistant Secretaries)

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	DoS – ECA Leadership
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your role at ECA? (**background**)
Probe for: tenure, previous employment
2. I'd like to hear a bit about to what extent and in what ways you and/or your team has engaged with the ECA Evaluation Division? (**background**)

Note to interviewer: Listen carefully to this response, and tailor the remainder of the interview according to the extent and types of engagement described. Some questions will be more, less, or not relevant based on the answer to this question.

Evaluation

3. What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ1b)

Probe for: comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; evaluation design, evaluation implementation; dissemination and learning from findings; availability and utilization of resources (such as human resources, software, tools, guidance, consultants, involvement of leadership, etc.)

4. How are you, as someone responsible for programmatic and strategic oversight, able to use the findings generated from evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division? (AQ1b, AQ3b)
5. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division? (AQ1a, AQ1b)

Probe for financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids, evaluation design and implementation

Monitoring

6. Have you engaged with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Note for interviewer: The MODE Framework also went by the name “Program Families”, so if the respondent is unfamiliar with the MODE, ask them about Program Families to see if they were involved before the name change.

- a. If yes, tell me how you were introduced to it? How have you found it? What is working well? What do you think could be improved?
 - b. If no, have you heard about the MODE Framework? What are your thoughts on it?
 - c. Are you familiar with the E-GOALS approach to monitoring? How did you find it? *If respondent is aware of the MODE Framework:* How would you compare it with the MODE framework?
7. How are you, as someone responsible for programmatic and strategic oversight, able to use the insights gleaned from monitoring data? (AQ2b, AQ3b)
 8. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of performance monitoring conducted by ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ2a, AQ2b)

Note to interviewer: This is regarding the MODE Framework and indicator reporting (including the Functional Bureau Strategy (FBS) reporting

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids, M&E plan, data streams

Learning

9. Let's discuss the ECA Evaluation Division's learning agenda. What are your thoughts on it? (AQ3b)

Probe for: How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

Capacity Building

10. Finally, I'd like to hear, from your perspective, about the Evaluation Division's capacity building efforts. These seem to be relatively new. What are your thoughts on the seminars, Community of Practice, and other capacity building efforts (templates and recorded webinars)? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs? What other topics do you feel would be most useful to you and your offices?

11. What other capacity building activities do you think would benefit program staff, implementing partners, and other ECA stakeholders? (AQ3c)

General

12. What needs do you and your teams have related to M&E?

Probe for needs related to each area (monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building)

Closing

13. Is there anyone else from your Neighborhood you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?
14. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // ECA Leadership (Aleisha Woodward Only)

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	DoS – ECA Leadership
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.
- Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.
- When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.
- Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your role at ECA? (**background**)

Probe for: tenure, previous employment

2. I'd like to hear a bit about how you envision the role of the Evaluation Division? (**background**)

Probe for: Evaluation Division history and evolution, current role, future of the Evaluation Division

Evaluation

3. I'd like to turn now to talking about evaluation in the public diplomacy space. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in public diplomacy? (AQ1a)

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility

4. What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ1b)

Probe for: kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018 availability; evaluation design, evaluation implementation; dissemination and learning from findings; availability and utilization of resources (such as human resources, software, tools, guidance, consultants, involvement of leadership, etc.)

5. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division? (AQ1a, AQ1b)

Probe for financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids, evaluation design and implementation

6. How are you, as someone responsible for programmatic and strategic oversight, able to use the findings generated from evaluations? (AQ1b, AQ3b)
7. How does the Evaluation Division interact with other monitoring, evaluation, or research units in the DoS? (AQ1b, AQ3b)

Probe for R/PPR, ACPD, in what ways do they interact?

Monitoring

8. Turning now to monitoring, how would you describe the state of monitoring in public diplomacy? (AQ2a)

Probe for: appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring

9. Can you describe the origins and process of developing the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

10. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of performance monitoring conducted by ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ2a, AQ2b)

Note to interviewer: This is regarding the MODE Framework and indicator reporting (including the Functional Bureau Strategy (FBS) reporting

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids, M&E plan, data streams

11. How are you, as someone responsible for programmatic and strategic oversight, able to use the insights gleaned from monitoring data? (AQ2b, AQ3b)

Learning

12. Let's discuss the ECA Evaluation Division's learning agenda. Can you describe the origins and process of developing the learning agenda? (AQ3b)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

Capacity Building

13. Finally, I'd like to hear, from your perspective, about the Evaluation Division's capacity building efforts. These seem to be relatively new. Can you describe the origins and processes of establishing the seminars, Community of Practice, and other capacity building efforts (templates and recorded webinars)? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs? What other topics do you feel would be most useful to you and your offices?

14. What other capacity building activities do you think would benefit program staff, implementing partners, and other ECA stakeholders? (AQ3c)

General

15. What needs do you and your teams have related to M&E?

Probe for needs related to each area (monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building)

Closing

16. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?
17. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // M&E Practitioners – Internal

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	DoS – M&E Practitioners
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your role at the Department of State?
(background)

Probe for: tenure, work in evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building, previous employment

2. Can you tell be a bit about your interaction with the ECA Evaluation Division?
(background)

Probe for: monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity building

Evaluation

3. I'd like to turn now to talking about evaluation in the public diplomacy space. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in public diplomacy? (AQ1a)

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, evaluation implementation, involvement of key partners, dissemination and learning from findings

4. What kind of evaluation do you do in your work? (AQ1a)

Probe for: evaluation type, design, examples

5. What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ1b)

Probe for: evaluation design and implementation, dissemination and learning from findings, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources utilized or available (human resources/skills, tools/software, etc.)

6. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division? (AQ1a, AQ1b)

Probe for: human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids necessary for quality evaluation

Monitoring

7. Turning now to monitoring, how would you describe the current state of monitoring in public diplomacy? (AQ2a)

Probe for: appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring, data streams, best practices

8. What kind of monitoring do you in your work? (AQ2a)
9. What are your perspectives on the quality of monitoring that ECA Evaluation Division is undertaking? (AQ2b)

Probe for: M&E plans, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources utilized or available (human resources/skills, tools/software, etc.)

10. Are you familiar with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

11. What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of monitoring conducted by ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ2a, AQ2b)

Probe for: human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids necessary for quality monitoring

Learning

12. Turning now to learning, in your experience, how have stakeholders in public diplomacy been able to use the learning generated from monitoring and evaluation activities? (AQ3b)

Probe for: concrete examples, including who, context, evidence of learning/data use, resources available or needed

13. As a M&E practitioner in this space, what best practices do you employ to promote learning and data use? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples

14. In your unit or division, do you have a learning agenda? (AQ3a)
- a. If yes, can you describe how it was developed? How do you interact with the learning agenda?
 - b. If no, do you feel a learning agenda would be a useful addition to your work?
15. Let's discuss the ECA Evaluation Division's learning agenda. Are you familiar with it? If yes, what are your perspectives on it? (AQ3b)

Probe for: what were the origins and process of developing the learning agenda? why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

Capacity Building

16. In your unit or division, do you carry out any efforts to build the capacity of program staff or others in M&E? Can you describe them? (AQ3a)
17. Finally, I'd like to hear, from your perspective, about the Evaluation Division's capacity building efforts. These seem to be relatively new. What is your impression of the seminars, resources on the Evaluation Division's capacity-building page of their website, Community of Practice, and other capacity building efforts? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

18. What other capacity building activities do you think would benefit program staff, implementing partners, and other ECA stakeholders? (AQ3c)

Closing

19. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA ED assessment?
20. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?
21. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // Evaluation Partners

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	External – Evaluation Partner
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your work with ECA's Evaluation Division. Can you tell me a bit about your work with the Division and your role? (**background**)

Evaluation

2. I'd like to hear a bit about an evaluation you conducted of an ECA program. Can you first describe the ECA program that was evaluated? (**background**)

Probe for: program name, dates of implementation, other distinguishing factors

3. Tell me a bit about the evaluation design process. What methods were used in the evaluation? (AQ1b)

Probe for: Were the Evaluation Division/program staff/implementing partner/other stakeholders involved in the design process? If so, how? How were the methods used in the evaluation selected? What resources (human resources/skillset, tools/instruments, job aids, etc.) were utilized for the evaluation? How did this compare to resource utilization and availability of other stakeholders you have worked with?

4. Tell me a bit about implementation of the evaluation. (AQ1b)

Probe for: Were the Evaluation Division/program staff/implementing partner/other stakeholders involved? If so, how?

5. Can you tell me about the working relationship, in general, between your team and the Evaluation Division for carrying out this evaluation? (AQ1b)

Probe for: What was the mechanism for the EP's engagement (e.g. contract)? What was the structure and division of labor between the EP and the Evaluation Division? What went well in this arrangement? What could have been improved?

6. To your knowledge, what was the relationship between the Evaluation Division and the ECA program staff? (AQ1b)

Probe for: level of collaborative, was it more of a partnership or was one team more involved and leading the evaluation?

7. What was the approach to dissemination and use of the evaluation findings? (AQ1b, AQ3b)

Probe for: specific examples of dissemination approaches/activities that took place; the roles that the EP and ECA Evaluation Division played in planning for and contributing to evaluation dissemination and use; how this compares to the dissemination approaches of other stakeholders they have worked with.

Learning

8. *For ongoing evaluations only:* Were you aware of ECA's Learning Agenda at the time of conducting the evaluation? (AQ3b)
 - a. If yes, can you describe how the learning agenda was integrated into the evaluation process?

Probe for: ways in which the Learning Agenda informed the evaluation design; ways in which the evaluation was meant to contribute to the Learning Agenda. Note for interviewer: the ECA Learning Agenda was only created in spring of 2020, so only current evaluations will have had the opportunity to integrate the Learning Agenda.

Capacity Building

9. Are you familiar with the resources on the ECA Evaluation Division's capacity building website? (AQ3bm AQ3c)
- If yes, tell me about your experience with these resources. Have you used them? Were they useful? What could be improved?
 - If no, do you have an interest in monitoring and evaluation capacity building resources from the Evaluation Division? What sorts of resources would be most useful? In your view, what would be the best way for the Evaluation Division to disseminate resources like these?

[Time permitting]

10. What is your experience with evaluations of other public diplomacy programs?
11. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in public diplomacy? (AQ1a)

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, best practices, evaluation implementation, involvement of key partners, dissemination and learning from findings

12. Where do you think the field of evaluation in public diplomacy is going? (AQ1a)

Probe for: trends in evaluation, needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

13. How familiar are you with other evaluations from the Evaluation Division?
14. *If appropriate:* What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ1b)

Probe for: evaluation design and implementation, dissemination and learning from findings, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources utilized or available (human resources/skills, tools/software, etc.)

Closing

15. Do you have any final thoughts about the Evaluation Division that you would like to share?

Probe for: what do they like most about working with the Division? What could be improved? What they would like to see more of?

16. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?
17. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?
18. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // External – Capacity Building Stakeholder

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	External – Capacity Building Stakeholder
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.
- Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.
- When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.
- Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your work. Can you tell me a bit about your current role?

Note: probe for M&E experience/expertise

2. I'd like to hear a bit about to what extent and in what ways you and/or your team has engaged with the ECA Evaluation Division? **(background)**

Note to interviewer: Listen carefully to these first two responses, and tailor the remainder of the interview according to their experience with M&E and the extent and types of

engagement with the ED described. If participant is not an M&E practitioner and has not worked with the ED at all aside from the capacity building activities, skip to Capacity Building section.

Evaluation

3. **[IF M&E Practitioner:]** I'd like to turn now to focusing on evaluation in the public diplomacy space. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in public diplomacy? (AQ1a)

Note to Interviewer: Ask question even if it's not clear the level of experience/expertise participant has with M&E. Based on their response and input, ask or skip the next question.

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, best practices, evaluation implementation, involvement of key partners, dissemination and learning from findings

4. **[IF M&E Practitioner:]** Where do you think the field of evaluation in public diplomacy is going? (AQ1a)

Probe for: trends in evaluation, needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

5. How familiar are you with evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division?

Note: base the next questions on evaluation quality on the response to this question.

6. **[IF worked with ED on evaluation(s):]** I'd like to hear a bit about an evaluation you were a part of with the Evaluation Division. Can you first describe the program that was evaluated? (background)

Probe for: program name, dates of implementation, other distinguishing factors: How did the evaluation come about? Who proposed it? Who was involved in decision making? Design process, methods used; how were you able to use the findings from the evaluation?

7. What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ1b)

Probe for: evaluation design and implementation, dissemination and learning from findings, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources utilized or available (human resources/skills, tools/software, etc.)

Monitoring

8. **[IF M&E Practitioner:]** Turning now to monitoring, how would you describe the current state of monitoring in public diplomacy? (AQ2a)

Note to Interviewer: Ask question even if it's not clear the level of experience/expertise participant has with M&E. Based on their response and input, ask or skip the next question.

Probe for: appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring, data streams, best practices

9. **[IF M&E Practitioner:]** Where do you think the field of monitoring in public diplomacy is going? (AQ2a)

Probe for: trends in monitoring needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

10. What kind of monitoring do you do in your work? (background)

Note: if they have worked on any ED programs, ask about the monitoring component (program, distinguishing factors, data collected, etc.)

11. **[IF worked with ED:]** Are you familiar or have you engaged with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Note for interviewer: The MODE Framework also went by the name "Program Families", so if the respondent is unfamiliar with the MODE, ask them about Program Families to see if they were involved before the name change.

- a. If yes, tell me how you were introduced to it? How have you found it? What is working well? What do you think could be improved?
 - b. If no, have you heard about the MODE Framework? What are your thoughts on it?
 - c. Are you familiar with the E-GOALS approach to monitoring? How did you find it? *If respondent is aware of the MODE Framework:* How would you compare it with the MODE framework?
12. What are your perspectives on the quality of monitoring that ECA Evaluation Division is undertaking? (AQ2b)

Probe for: M&E plans, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources they are utilizing for monitoring (human resources, data collection tools, software, etc.)

Learning

13. Turning now to learning, in your experience, how have stakeholders in public diplomacy been able to use the learning generated from monitoring and evaluation activities? (AQ3b)

Probe for: concrete examples, including who, context, evidence of learning/data use, resources available or needed

14. **[IF M&E Practitioner]** As a M&E practitioner in this space, what best practices do you employ to promote learning and data use? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples

15. [IF worked with ED] Are you aware of ECA's Learning Agenda? (AQ3b)

Note to interviewer: be prepared to answer questions from respondents about what a Learning Agenda is in the event that they are not familiar.

Definition of a Learning Agenda: A learning agenda includes (1) a set of questions addressing critical knowledge gaps (2) a set of associated activities to answer them and (3) products aimed at disseminating findings and designed with usage and application in mind. A learning agenda can help you:

- *Test and explore assumptions and hypotheses throughout implementation;*
- *Fill knowledge gaps that remain during implementation start-up;*
- *Make more informed decisions.*
- a. If yes, can you describe how the data from either evaluations or monitoring you have engaged in have contributed to the learning agenda? What kind of relationship have you had with the ECA Evaluation Division on the learning agenda? What has worked well? What could be improved? How does the ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda intersect with your office's learning agenda?
- b. If no, do you think an ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda could be valuable? What would an ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda look like for you?

Capacity Building

16. [IF M&E Practitioner:] Finally, I would like to ask you about building capacity for M&E in public diplomacy. In your experience, what are the best practices in building this capacity? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples, resources needed to be effective, approaches

17. [SKIP IF NON-DOS] Have you participated in any of the ECA Evaluation Division seminars? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

- a. If yes, tell me about your experience with these seminars? What was useful to you in your work? What could be improved?
- b. If no, were you aware that the Division put on seminars? Would you consider participating?

Probe for: specific topics of interest (intro to M&E, program design and logic models, indicator basics, creating baselines and targets, creating and evaluating surveys, survey data cleaning and analysis). Note for interviewer: if respondent asks about getting onto the list for these seminars, they may email ecaevaluation@state.gov.

18. [SKIP IF EVALUATION PARTNER] Have you participated in the ECA Evaluation Division Community of Practice? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

- c. If yes, tell me about your experience with the COP? What was useful? What could be improved?
- d. If no, were you aware that the Division hosted a COP? Would you consider participating?

Probe for: specific topics of interest

19. Have you participated in any other ECA Evaluation Division Webinars? (AQ3b, AQ3c)

- e. If yes, tell me about your experience with the webinar? What was useful? What could be improved?
- f. If no, were you aware that the Division hosted webinars? Would you consider participating?

Probe for: specific topics of interest

20. Are you familiar with the resources on the ECA Evaluation Division's capacity building website? (AQ3bm AQ3c)

Note to interviewer: Resources include program design and M&E, creating baselines and targets, survey design and data cleaning, and qualitative data analysis. You can share this website if they are interested: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>.

- a. If yes, tell me about your experience with these resources. Have you used them? Were they useful? What could be improved?
- b. If no, do you have an interest in monitoring and evaluation capacity building resources from the Evaluation Division? What sorts of resources would be most useful? In your view, what would be the best way for the Evaluation Division to disseminate resources like these?

Closing

21. **[IF worked ED:]** Do you have any final thoughts about the Evaluation Division that you would like to share that we haven't covered today?

Probe for: what do they like most about the Division? What could be improved? What they would like to see more of?

22. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?

23. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?

24. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // M&E Practitioners- External (non-PD)

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	External – M&E Practitioners (non-PD)
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your role in public diplomacy monitoring and evaluation? **(background)**

Probe for: tenure, work in evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building, previous employment

2. Having you be involved with or are you familiar with public diplomacy monitoring and evaluation? **(background)**

Probe for: work in evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building

3. Have you engaged much with the ECA Evaluation Division? Can you describe your interaction with them? **(background)**

Evaluation

4. I'd like to turn now to talking about evaluation in the [their specified field of work, e.g., advocacy, policy influence] space. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in [their specified field]? **(AQ1a)**

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, best practices, evaluation implementation, involvement of key partners, dissemination and learning from findings

5. *If appropriate:* I'd like to turn now to talking about evaluation in the public diplomacy space. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in public diplomacy? **(AQ1a)**

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, best practices, evaluation implementation, involvement of key partners, dissemination and learning from findings

6. *If appropriate:* Where **do** you think the field of evaluation in public diplomacy is going? **(AQ1a)**

Probe for: trends in evaluation, needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

7. What kind of evaluation do you do in your work? **(background)**

Probe for: evaluation type, design, examples

8. *If appropriate:* What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA ED? **(AQ1b)**

Probe for: kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources utilized or available (human resources/skills, tools/software, etc.)

9. *If appropriate:* What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of evaluations produced by the ED? **(AQ1a, AQ1b)**

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids

Monitoring

10. Turning now to monitoring, how would you describe the state of monitoring in [their specified field]? **(AQ2a)**

Probe for: appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring, data streams, best practices

11. If appropriate: Turning now to monitoring, how would you describe the state of monitoring in public diplomacy? (AQ2a)

Probe for: appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring, data streams best practices

12. If appropriate: Where do you think the field of monitoring in public diplomacy is going? (AQ2a)

Probe for: trends in evaluation, needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

13. What kind of monitoring do you in your work? (background)

14. If appropriate: What are your perspectives on the quality of monitoring that ECA ED is undertaking? (AQ2b)

Probe for: kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources they are utilizing for monitoring (human resources, data collection tools, softwares/programs, etc.)

15. If appropriate: Are you familiar with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

16. If appropriate: What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of monitoring conducted by ECA ED? (AQ2a, AQ2b)

Probe for: financial resources, human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids

Learning

17. Turning now to learning, in your experience, how have stakeholders in [your field] been able to use the learning generated from monitoring and evaluation activities? (AQ3b)

Probe for: concrete examples, including who, context, evidence of learning/data use, resources available or needed

18. If appropriate: How have stakeholders in public diplomacy been able to use the learning generated from monitoring and evaluation activities? (AQ3b)

Probe for: concrete examples, including who, context, evidence of learning/data use, resources available or needed

19. As a M&E practitioner, what best practices do you employ to promote learning and data use? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples

Capacity Building

20. Finally, I would like to ask you about building capacity for M&E in [your field]. In your experience, what are the best practices in building this capacity? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples, resources needed to be effective, approaches

21. *If appropriate:* What are the best practices in building this capacity? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples, resources needed to be effective, approaches

Closing

22. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA ED assessment?

23. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?

24. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // M&E Practitioners – External

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	External – M&E Practitioners
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your role in public diplomacy monitoring and evaluation? (**background**)

Probe for: tenure, work in evaluation, monitoring, learning, and capacity building, previous employment

2. Have you engaged much with the ECA Evaluation Division? Can you describe your interaction with them? (**background**)

Evaluation

3. I'd like to turn now to talking about evaluation in the public diplomacy space. How would you describe the current state of evaluation in public diplomacy? (AQ1a)

Probe for: evaluative practice and theory, quality of evaluations, complexity of design, flexibility, best practices, evaluation implementation, involvement of key partners, dissemination and learning from findings

4. Where do you think the field of evaluation in public diplomacy is going? (AQ1a)

Probe for: trends in evaluation, needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

5. What kind of evaluation do you do in your work? (background)

Probe for: evaluation type, design, examples

6. *If appropriate:* What are your perspectives on the quality of evaluations produced by the ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ1b)

Probe for: evaluation design and implementation, dissemination and learning from findings, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources utilized or available (human resources/skills, tools/software, etc.)

7. *If appropriate:* What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of evaluations produced by the Evaluation Division? (AQ1a, AQ1b)

Probe for: human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids necessary for quality evaluation

Monitoring

8. Turning now to monitoring, how would you describe the current state of monitoring in public diplomacy? (AQ2a)

Probe for: appropriateness of indicators, context monitoring, data streams, best practices

9. Where do you think the field of monitoring in public diplomacy is going? (AQ2a)

Probe for: trends in monitoring, needs to build capacity, to build methods and approaches

10. What kind of monitoring do you do in your work? (background)

11. *If appropriate:* What are your perspectives on the quality of monitoring that ECA Evaluation Division is undertaking? (AQ2b)

Probe for: M&E plans, kind of metrics they are using to determine quality; comparison of quality over time, especially in light of staffing changes in 2018; resources they are utilizing for monitoring (human resources, data collection tools, software, etc.)

12. Are you familiar with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Probe for: why it was needed? How it was developed? Who was involved? How has it been received? Do you feel it is meeting the needs?

13. *If appropriate:* What do you think needs to happen to enhance or improve the quality of monitoring conducted by ECA Evaluation Division? (AQ2a, AQ2b)

Probe for: human resources/skills, guidance or other tools/job aids necessary for quality monitoring

Learning

14. Turning now to learning, in your experience, how have stakeholders in public diplomacy been able to use the learning generated from monitoring and evaluation activities? (AQ3b)

Probe for: concrete examples, including who, context, evidence of learning/data use, resources available or needed

15. As a M&E practitioner in this space, what best practices do you employ to promote learning and data use? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples

Capacity Building

16. Finally, I would like to ask you about building capacity for M&E in public diplomacy. In your experience, what are the best practices in building this capacity? (AQ3a)

Probe for: concrete examples, resources needed to be effective, approaches

17. Are you familiar with the resources on the ECA Evaluation Division's capacity building website? (AQ3bm AQ3c)

- a. If yes, tell me about your experience with these resources. Have you used them? Were they useful? What could be improved?
- b. If no, do you have an interest in monitoring and evaluation capacity building resources from the Evaluation Division? What sorts of resources would be most useful? In your view, what would be the best way for the Evaluation Division to disseminate resources like these?

Closing

18. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?
19. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?
20. What questions do you have for me?

Interview Guide // Implementing Partners

Interview date	
Respondent name	
Position	
Organization	
Respondent category	External – Implementing Partner
Additional information about the respondent	
Interviewer name	
Start time	
End time	

Notes for Interviewer:

- *Before asking the questions below, provide background on the assessment and go through the informed consent process. If the respondent has already signed and returned a completed consent form, provide a quick overview of the purpose of the assessment and the consent form.*
- *Ask if you have consent for the interview to be recorded.*
- *When you have reached 45 minutes, inform the respondent about how many questions remain and check you can complete the questions within the 15 minutes, or ask for additional time if necessary.*
- *Listen closely to the respondent's answers and only ask those questions that are relevant to their role and function (e.g., if the respondent doesn't engage in capacity building, those questions may not be relevant)*

BEGIN RECORDING

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your work with ECA's Evaluation Division. Can you tell me a bit about your program(s), your role, and how you have interacted with the ECA Evaluation Division? **(background)**

Evaluation

2. I'd like to hear a bit about an evaluation you were a part of with the Evaluation Division. Can you first describe the program that was evaluated? **(background)**

Probe for: program name, dates of implementation, other distinguishing factors

3. How did the evaluation come about? (AQ1b)

Probe for: Who proposed the evaluation? Who was involved in the decision making? How did you feel about the prospect of an evaluation? What were the evaluation questions and why were they important? What was the purpose of the evaluation?

4. Tell me a bit about the design process. What methods were used in the evaluation? (AQ1b)

Probe for: resources utilized (human resources/skills, guidance, tools, etc.); How were you engaged in the design process? How did you feel about the appropriateness of the methods? What stakeholders/partners, if any, were involved in the design phase? How was the TOC developed; what about the M&E plan? How were they updated through the course of the evaluation? What outcome areas (any social or policy change) were included?

5. How were you, as an implementing partner, able to use the findings from the evaluation? (AQ1b, AQ3b)

Probe for: Were they timely? Relevant? Responsive? Who was involved in the dissemination of the findings (I.e. key partners or stakeholders)? How were the answers/findings to the evaluation questions utilized? What data streams were used as evidence of outcomes?

Monitoring

6. I'd like to hear a bit about the monitoring you do of your program under ECA. Can you describe the program that is being monitored? (background)

Probe for: program name, dates of implementation, other distinguishing factors

7. What kind of monitoring data are you collecting? (AQ2b)

Probe for: frequency, data sources/streams

8. Have you engaged with the MODE Framework (Monitoring Data for ECA Framework)? (AQ2b)

Note for interviewer: The MODE Framework also went by the name "Program Families", so if the respondent is unfamiliar with the MODE, ask them about Program Families to see if they were involved before the name change.

- a. If yes, tell me how you were introduced to it? How have you found it? What is working well? What do you think could be improved?
- b. If no, have you heard about the MODE Framework? What are your thoughts on it?

- c. Are you familiar with the E-GOALS approach to monitoring? How did you find it? *If respondent is aware of the MODE Framework:* How would you compare it with the MODE framework?
9. What kind of direction and guidance did ECA Evaluation Division provide on monitoring? What kind of support have they provided? (AQ2b, AQ3c)

Probe for: How do you feel about the quality of support (including resources such as human resources/skills, guidance, tools, etc.) you have been provided? What additional support (including human resources/skills, guidance, tools, etc.) would you like to see? Would you have wanted?

10. How are you, as an implementing partner, able to use the insights gleaned from monitoring data? (AQ2b, AQ3b)

Learning

11. Does your program/organization have a learning agenda?
 - a. If yes, how has the evaluation and monitoring data produced by ECA Evaluation Division contributed to the learning agenda? (AQ3b)
12. Are you aware of ECA's Learning Agenda? (AQ3b)

Note to interviewer: be prepared to answer questions from respondents about what a Learning Agenda is in the event that they are not familiar.

Definition of a Learning Agenda: A learning agenda includes (1) a set of questions addressing critical knowledge gaps (2) a set of associated activities to answer them and (3) products aimed at disseminating findings and designed with usage and application in mind. A learning agenda can help you:

- *Test and explore assumptions and hypotheses throughout implementation;*
- *Fill knowledge gaps that remain during implementation start-up;*
- *Make more informed decisions.*
- a. If yes, can you describe how the data from either evaluations or monitoring you have engaged in have contributed to the learning agenda? What kind of relationship have you had with the ECA Evaluation Division on the learning agenda? What has worked well? What could be improved? How does the ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda intersect with your office's learning agenda?
- b. If no, do you think an ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda could be valuable? What would an ECA Evaluation Division learning agenda look like for you?

Capacity Building

13. Are you familiar with the resources on the ECA Evaluation Division's capacity building website? (AQ3bm AQ3c)

Note to interviewer: Resources include program design and M&E, creating baselines and targets, survey design and data cleaning, and qualitative data analysis. You can share

this website if they are interested: <https://eca.state.gov/impact/eca-evaluation-division/capacity-building>.

- a. If yes, tell me about your experience with these resources. Have you used them? Were they useful? What could be improved?
 - b. If no, do you have an interest in monitoring and evaluation capacity building resources from the Evaluation Division? What sorts of resources would be most useful? In your view, what would be the best way for the Evaluation Division to disseminate resources like these?
14. Have you participated in the ECA Evaluation Division Community of Practice? (AQ3b, AQ3c)
- c. If yes, tell me about your experience with the COP? What was useful? What could be improved?
 - d. If no, were you aware that the Division hosted a COP? Would you consider participating?

Probe for: specific topics of interest (Evaluation Matters: How AEIF and AFCP have incorporated evaluation findings; Evaluation of American Corner in Cape Town; Social Network Analysis; MODE Framework). Note for interviewer: if respondent inquires about getting onto the list for the COP, they may email ecaevaluation@state.gov.

Closing

15. Do you have any final thoughts about the Evaluation Division that you would like to share?

Probe for: what do they like most about the Division? What could be improved? What they would like to see more of?

16. Is there anyone else you would recommend we speak to as part of the ECA Evaluation Division assessment?
17. Are there any documents that we should include in our review?
18. What questions do you have for me?



ANNEX V: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

Adult Informed Consent Form – ECA Evaluation Division Staff

Principal Investigator: Sarah Smith Lunsford, PhD

Organization: EnCompass LLC

Sponsor: United States Department of State

Project: Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

This informed consent form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will receive a copy of the full informed consent form.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I work for EnCompass LLC, an independent evaluation firm contracted by the U.S. Department of State. We are assessing the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning and capacity-building processes across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

Before you decide, you may speak with anyone you feel comfortable with about whether or not to participate. As I go through this information with you, there may be words or ideas you are not familiar with. Please stop me at any time and ask questions. If you have questions later or in the future, you can ask me or another evaluator involved in this evaluation. Our contact information is included in this information sheet.

Purpose of the Assessment

The objectives of this assessment are to assess the Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building procedures in the context of the challenges posed to U.S. influence in global public diplomacy with respect to public diplomacy-oriented monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning challenges and best practices. EnCompass is conducting this assessment through various data collection methods including literature and document review, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This will be followed by data synthesis and a final report that will assist the Evaluation Division in ECA programming and M&E needs and strengthen their processes to facilitate data-driven decision making across the ECA Bureau.

We have permission and support from the U.S. Department of State and ECA's Evaluation Division to collect this information. We are not a part of the U.S. Department of State, but have been hired by them to collect this data.

Type of Data Collection

This assessment will involve review of documents, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Your participation in this assessment would involve a virtual focus group discussion that will take no more than 90 minutes. As we interview more participants and gather more data, we may want to contact you again for further information, clarity to your responses, or additional questions.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this interview because you have been identified as a staff member of the ECA Evaluation Division and can directly speak to the Evaluation Division processes.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this assessment is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, then we will destroy the contact information we have for you. You may also choose to withdraw from the assessment at any point if you change your mind. If you withdraw your participation, we will destroy your contact information and any other information that you provided up until that time.

Procedures

We are inviting you to take part in this assessment to help us learn more about the ECA Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the public diplomacy space as well as best practices, practicalities, challenges, and needs to support this work in public diplomacy. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion.

The questions will aim to address how Evaluation Division resources and structure allow ECA to fulfill its responsibilities, appropriateness of the Evaluation Division's methods for assessing public diplomacy programming, the Evaluation Division's monitoring framework design, and if it provides timely and useful data to inform ECA programming, and how Evaluation Division ensures efficient and effective deployment of information for learning and capacity strengthening. You do not have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing. The discussion will be recorded via the platform used to conduct the interview (e.g., Zoom), but you will not be identified by name and any mention of identifying information will be removed during transcription. The recording will be kept on EnCompass' secure SharePoint site for this assessment, which is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team conducting this evaluation. The information recorded is confidential. No one else except the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the information or the recording.

Duration

The assessment will take place over five months (June–October 2020). During that time, we will ask you to participate in a focus group discussion once. As we gather more data, we may contact you again to ask you to answer additional questions or provide additional feedback on the information shared.

Risks

The most significant risk from participating in the assessment is a breach of privacy protections and loss of confidentiality. You do not have to participate in this assessment if you do not wish to do so, and we will destroy your contact information if you choose not to participate. If you choose to

participate, you may skip or refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable without providing us with any reason for not responding to the question.

Benefits

The findings from this assessment may provide feedback and recommendations that ECA Evaluation Division may choose to incorporate into its internal monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes.

Reimbursements

You will not be reimbursed or provided any incentive to take part in this assessment.

Confidentiality

We will not share any of the information you provide with anyone who is not part of the EnCompass assessment team. We will store information collected electronically, such as transcripts, audio recordings, and interview notes, in a secure SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. The interview transcripts, notes, and audio recordings will be de-identified, with each participant assigned a number ID. The ID linked to each participant will only be available in a participant tracker, which is saved on the SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass evaluation team. We will destroy all of the information you provided three months after the final report is completed.

We will ask you and others in the group not to talk to people outside the group about what was said in the group. We will, in other words, ask each of you to keep what was said in the group confidential. However, we cannot stop or prevent participants who were in the group from sharing things that should be confidential.

Sharing the Results

The EnCompass assessment team will summarize the information you provide with information from other interview and focus group respondents and provide a final report to the U.S Department of State's ECA Evaluation Division. A PowerPoint presentation and briefing script will also be prepared for a briefing on the findings and recommendations with Evaluation Division and other stakeholders. The final report will not include your name or any other personally identifying information.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this assessment if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating in the interview at any time. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and I will ask you to modify or remove portions of those remarks if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Permission to Record

We would like to take notes and audio record our conversation. This is so we can have a record of what you say that will help us in analyzing the data. We will delete the audio recordings and destroy any written notes three months after the final report is completed. In the meantime, no one outside of the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the recordings or notes.

Whom to Contact

This assessment has been reviewed and deemed exempt by EnCompass' Institutional Review Board. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Jonathan Jones at jjones@encompassworld.com.

If you have any questions that come to mind after the focus group discussion is complete and wish to contact the assessment team to follow up, you may contact Sarah Smith Lunsford, 1451 Rockville Pike, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20852 USA, +1 617-784-9008, ssmith@encompassworld.com.

You may ask me more questions about any part of the assessment, if you wish. Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to participate in an assessment of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the context of public diplomacy and across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

I have read the information or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this assessment.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Day/Month/Year



Adult Informed Consent Form – DoS Staff

Principal Investigator: Sarah Smith Lunsford, PhD

Organization: EnCompass LLC

Sponsor: United States Department of State

Project: Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

This informed consent form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will receive a copy of the full informed consent form.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I work for EnCompass LLC, an independent evaluation firm contracted by the U.S. Department of State. We are assessing the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning and capacity-building processes across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

Before you decide, you may speak with anyone you feel comfortable with about whether or not to participate. As I go through this information with you, there may be words or ideas you are not familiar with. Please stop me at any time and ask questions. If you have questions later or in the future, you can ask me or another evaluator involved in this evaluation. Our contact information is included in this information sheet.

Purpose of the Assessment

The objectives of this assessment are to assess Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building procedures in the context of the challenges posed to U.S. influence in global public diplomacy with respect to public diplomacy-oriented monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning challenges and best practices. EnCompass is conducting this assessment through various data collection methods including literature and document review, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This will be followed by data synthesis and a final report that will assist the Evaluation Division in ECA programming and M&E needs and strengthen their processes to facilitate data-driven decision making across the ECA Bureau.

We have permission and support from the U.S. Department of State and ECA's Evaluation Division to collect this information. We are not a part of the U.S. Department of State, but have been hired by them to collect this data.

Type of Data Collection

This assessment will involve review of documents, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Your participation in this evaluation would involve a virtual interview that will take no more than 60 minutes. As we interview more participants and gather more data, we may want to contact you again for further information, clarity to your responses, or additional questions.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this interview because of your engagement with the ECA Evaluation Division.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this assessment is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, then we will destroy the contact information we have for you. You may also choose to withdraw from the assessment at any point if you change your mind. If you withdraw your participation, we will destroy your contact information and any other information that you provided up until that time.

Procedures

We are inviting you to take part in this assessment to help us learn more about the ECA Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the public diplomacy space as well as best practices, practicalities, challenges, and needs to support this work in public diplomacy. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview.

The questions will aim to address how Evaluation Division resources and structure allow ECA to fulfill its responsibilities, appropriateness of the Evaluation Division's methods for assessing public diplomacy programming, the Evaluation Division's monitoring framework design, and if it provides timely and useful data to inform ECA programming, and how Evaluation Division ensures efficient and effective deployment of information for learning and capacity strengthening. You do not have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing. The discussion will be recorded via the platform used to conduct the interview (e.g., Zoom), but you will not be identified by name and any mention of identifying information will be removed during transcription. The recording will be kept on EnCompass' secure SharePoint site for this assessment, which is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team conducting this evaluation. The information recorded is confidential. No one else except the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the information or the recording.

Duration

The assessment will take place over five months (June–October 2020). During that time, we will interview you once. As we gather more data, we may contact you again to ask you to answer additional questions or provide additional feedback on the information shared.

Risks

The most significant risk from participating in the assessment is a breach of privacy protections and loss of confidentiality. You do not have to participate in this assessment if you do not wish to do so, and we will destroy your contact information if you choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you may skip or refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable without providing us with any reason for not responding to the question.

Benefits

The findings from this assessment may not directly benefit you, but may provide insights that could be applied to strengthen other evaluation divisions within the Department of State.

Reimbursements

You will not be reimbursed or provided any incentive to take part in this assessment.

Confidentiality

We will not share any of the information you provide with anyone who is not part of the EnCompass assessment team. We will store information collected electronically, such as transcripts, audio recordings, and interview notes, in a secure SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. The interview transcripts, notes, and audio recordings will be de-identified, with each participant assigned a number ID. The ID linked to each participant will only be available in a participant tracker, which is saved on the SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass evaluation team. We will destroy all of the information you provided three months after the final report is completed.

Sharing the Results

The EnCompass assessment team will summarize the information you provide with information from other interview, focus group, and survey respondents and provide a final report to the U.S Department of State's ECA Evaluation Division. A PowerPoint presentation and briefing script will also be prepared for a briefing on the findings and recommendations with Evaluation Division and other stakeholders. The final report will not include your name or any other personally identifying information.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this evaluation if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating in the interview at any time. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and I will ask you to modify or remove portions of those remarks if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Permission to Record

We would like to take notes and audio record our conversation. This is so we can have a record of what you say that will help us in analyzing the data. We will delete the audio recordings and destroy any written notes three months after the final report is completed. In the meantime, no one outside of the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the recordings or notes.

Whom to Contact

This assessment has been reviewed and deemed exempt by EnCompass' Institutional Review Board. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Jonathan Jones at jjones@encompassworld.com.

If you have any questions that come to mind after the interview is complete and wish to contact the assessment team to follow up, you may contact Sarah Smith Lunsford, 1451 Rockville Pike, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20852 USA, +1 617-784-9008, ssmith@encompassworld.com.

You may ask me more questions about any part of the assessment, if you wish. Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to participate in an assessment of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the context of public diplomacy and across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

I have read the information or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this evaluation.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Day/Month/Year



Adult Informed Consent Form – Implementing Partner

Principal Investigator: Sarah Smith Lunsford, PhD

Organization: EnCompass LLC

Sponsor: United States Department of State

Project: Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

This informed consent form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will receive a copy of the full informed consent form.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I work for EnCompass LLC, an independent evaluation firm contracted by the U.S. Department of State. We are assessing the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning and capacity-building processes across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

Before you decide, you may speak with anyone you feel comfortable with about whether or not to participate. As I go through this information with you, there may be words or ideas you are not familiar with. Please stop me at any time and ask questions. If you have questions later or in the future, you can ask me or another evaluator involved in this evaluation. Our contact information is included in this information sheet.

Purpose of the Assessment

The objectives of this assessment are to assess Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building procedures in the context of the challenges posed to U.S. influence in global public diplomacy with respect to public diplomacy-oriented monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning challenges and best practices. EnCompass is conducting this assessment through various data collection methods including literature and document review, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This will be followed by data synthesis and a final report that will assist the Evaluation Division in ECA programming and M&E needs and strengthen their processes to facilitate data-driven decision making across the ECA Bureau.

We have permission and support from the U.S. Department of State and ECA's Evaluation Division to collect this information. We are not a part of the U.S. Department of State, but have been hired by them to collect this data.

Type of Data Collection

This assessment will involve review of documents, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Your participation in this assessment would involve a virtual interview that will take no more than 60 minutes. As we interview more participants and gather more data, we may want to contact you again for further information, clarity to your responses, or additional questions.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this interview because of your engagement with ECA Evaluation Division.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this assessment is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, then we will destroy the contact information we have for you. You may also choose to withdraw from the assessment at any point if you change your mind. If you withdraw your participation, we will destroy your contact information and any other information that you provided up until that time.

Procedures

We are inviting you to take part in this assessment to help us learn more about the ECA Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the public diplomacy space as well as best practices, practicalities, challenges, and needs to support this work in public diplomacy. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview.

The questions will aim to address how Evaluation Division resources and structure allow ECA to fulfill its responsibilities, appropriateness of the Evaluation Division's methods for assessing public diplomacy programming, the Evaluation Division's monitoring framework design, and if it provides timely and useful data to inform ECA programming, and how Evaluation Division ensures efficient and effective deployment of information for learning and capacity strengthening. You do not have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing. The discussion will be recorded via the platform used to conduct the interview (e.g., Zoom), but you will not be identified by name and any mention of identifying information will be removed during transcription. The recording will be kept on EnCompass' secure SharePoint site for this assessment, which is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team conducting this evaluation. The information recorded is confidential. No one else except the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the information or the recording.

Duration

The assessment will take place over five months (June–October 2020). During that time, we will interview you once. As we gather more data, we may contact you again to ask you to answer additional questions or provide additional feedback on the information shared.

Risks

The most significant risk from participating in the study is a breach of privacy protections and loss of confidentiality. You do not have to participate in this assessment if you do not wish to do so, and we will destroy your contact information if you choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you may skip or refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable without providing us with any reason for not responding to the question.

Benefits

The findings from these interviews, focus group discussions, and survey may provide significant feedback and recommendations that ECA Evaluation Division may choose to incorporate into its internal monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes, which could affect the methodology implementing partners would use to conduct evaluations for ECA Evaluation Division.

Reimbursements

You will not be reimbursed or provided any incentive to take part in this evaluation.

Confidentiality

We will not share any of the information you provide with anyone who is not part of the EnCompass assessment team. We will store information collected electronically, such as transcripts, audio recordings, and interview notes, in a secure SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. The interview transcripts, notes, and audio recordings will be de-identified, with each participant assigned a number ID. The ID linked to each participant will only be available in a participant tracker, which is saved on the SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. We will destroy all of the information you provided three months after the final report is completed.

Sharing the Results

The EnCompass assessment team will summarize the information you provide with information from other interview, focus group, and survey respondents and provide a final report to the U.S Department of State's ECA Evaluation Division. A PowerPoint presentation and briefing script will also be prepared for a briefing on the findings and recommendations with Evaluation Division and other stakeholders. The final report will not include your name or any other personally identifying information.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this assessment if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating in the interview at any time. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and I will ask you to modify or remove portions of those remarks if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Permission to Record

We would like to take notes and audio record our conversation. This is so we can have a record of what you say that will help us in analyzing the data. We will delete the audio recordings and destroy any written notes three months after the final report is completed. In the meantime, no one outside of the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the recordings or notes.

Whom to Contact

This assessment has been reviewed and deemed exempt by EnCompass' Institutional Review Board. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Jonathan Jones at jjones@encompassworld.com.

If you have any questions that come to mind after the interview is complete and wish to contact the assessment team to follow up, you may contact Sarah Smith Lunsford, 1451 Rockville Pike, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20852 USA, +1 617-784-9008, ssmith@encompassworld.com.

You may ask me more questions about any part of the evaluation, if you wish. Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to participate in an assessment of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the context of public diplomacy and across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

I have read the information or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this evaluation.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Day/Month/Year



Adult Informed Consent Form – Evaluation Partner

Principal Investigator: Sarah Smith Lunsford, PhD

Organization: EnCompass LLC

Sponsor: United States Department of State

Project: Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

This informed consent form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will receive a copy of the full informed consent form.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I work for EnCompass LLC, an independent evaluation firm contracted by the U.S. Department of State. We are assessing the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning and capacity-building processes across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

Before you decide, you may speak with anyone you feel comfortable with about whether or not to participate. As I go through this information with you, there may be words or ideas you are not familiar with. Please stop me at any time and ask questions. If you have questions later or in the future, you can ask me or another evaluator involved in this evaluation. Our contact information is included in this information sheet.

Purpose of the Assessment

The objectives of this assessment are to assess Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building procedures in the context of the challenges posed to U.S. influence in global public diplomacy with respect to public diplomacy-oriented monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning challenges and best practices. EnCompass is conducting this assessment through various data collection methods including literature and document review, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This will be followed by data synthesis and a final report that will assist the Evaluation Division in ECA programming and M&E needs and strengthen their processes to facilitate data-driven decision making across the ECA Bureau.

We have permission and support from the U.S. Department of State and ECA's Evaluation Division to collect this information. We are not a part of the U.S. Department of State, but have been hired by them to collect this data.

Type of Data Collection

This assessment will involve review of documents, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Your participation in this assessment would involve a virtual interview that will take no more than 60 minutes. As we interview more participants and gather more data, we may want to contact you again for further information, clarity to your responses, or additional questions.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this interview because of your engagement with ECA Evaluation Division

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this assessment is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, then we will destroy the contact information we have for you. You may also choose to withdraw from the assessment at any point if you change your mind. If you withdraw your participation, we will destroy your contact information and any other information that you provided up until that time.

Procedures

We are inviting you to take part in this assessment to help us learn more about the ECA Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the public diplomacy space as well as best practices, practicalities, challenges, and needs to support this work in public diplomacy. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview.

The questions will aim to address how Evaluation Division resources and structure allow ECA to fulfill its responsibilities, appropriateness of the Evaluation Division's methods for assessing public diplomacy programming, the Evaluation Division's monitoring framework design, and if it provides timely and useful data to inform ECA programming, and how Evaluation Division ensures efficient and effective deployment of information for learning and capacity strengthening. You do not have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing. The discussion will be recorded via the platform used to conduct the interview (e.g., Zoom), but you will not be identified by name and any mention of identifying information will be removed during transcription. The recording will be kept on EnCompass' secure SharePoint site for this assessment, which is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team conducting this evaluation. The information recorded is confidential. No one else except the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the information or the recording.

Duration

The assessment will take place over five months (June–October 2020). During that time, we will interview you once. As we gather more data, we may contact you again to ask you to answer additional questions or provide additional feedback on the information shared.

Risks

The most significant risk from participating in the study is a breach of privacy protections and loss of confidentiality. You do not have to participate in this assessment if you do not wish to do so, and we will destroy your contact information if you choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you may skip or refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable without providing us with any reason for not responding to the question.

Benefits

The findings from these interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys may provide significant feedback and recommendations that ECA Evaluation Division may choose to incorporate into its internal monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes, which could affect the methodology used in conducting evaluations with evaluations partners.

Reimbursements

You will not be reimbursed or provided any incentive to take part in this evaluation.

Confidentiality

We will not share any of the information you provide with anyone who is not part of the EnCompass assessment team. We will store information collected electronically, such as transcripts, audio recordings, and interview notes, in a secure SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. The interview transcripts, notes, and audio recordings will be de-identified, with each participant assigned a number ID. The ID linked to each participant will only be available in a participant tracker, which is saved on the SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. We will destroy all of the information you provided three months after the final report is completed.

Sharing the Results

The EnCompass assessment team will summarize the information you provide with information from other interview, focus group, and survey respondents and provide a final report to the U.S Department of State's ECA Evaluation Division. A PowerPoint presentation and briefing script will also be prepared for a briefing on the findings and recommendations with Evaluation Division and other stakeholders. The final report will not include your name or any other personally identifying information.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this assessment if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating in the interview at any time. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and I will ask you to modify or remove portions of those remarks if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Permission to Record

We would like to take notes and audio record our conversation. This is so we can have a record of what you say that will help us in analyzing the data. We will delete the audio recordings and destroy any written notes three months after the final report is completed. In the meantime, no one outside of the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the recordings or notes.

Whom to Contact

This assessment has been reviewed and deemed exempt by EnCompass' Institutional Review Board. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Jonathan Jones at jjones@encompassworld.com.

If you have any questions that come to mind after the interview is complete and wish to contact the assessment team to follow up, you may contact Sarah Smith Lunsford, 1451 Rockville Pike, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20852 USA, +1 617-784-9008, ssmith@encompassworld.com.

You may ask me more questions about any part of the evaluation, if you wish. Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to participate in an assessment of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the context of public diplomacy and across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

I have read the information or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this evaluation.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Day/Month/Year



Adult Informed Consent Form – External M&E Practitioner

Principal Investigator: Sarah Smith Lunsford, PhD

Organization: EnCompass LLC

Sponsor: United States Department of State

Project: Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

This informed consent form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will receive a copy of the full informed consent form.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello, my name is [insert name] and I work for EnCompass LLC, an independent evaluation firm contracted by the U.S. Department of State. We are assessing the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning and capacity-building processes across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

Before you decide, you may speak with anyone you feel comfortable with about whether or not to participate. As I go through this information with you, there may be words or ideas you are not familiar with. Please stop me at any time and ask questions. If you have questions later or in the future, you can ask me or another evaluator involved in this evaluation. Our contact information is included in this information sheet.

Purpose of the Assessment

The objectives of this assessment are to assess Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building procedures in the context of the challenges posed to U.S. influence in global public diplomacy with respect to public diplomacy-oriented monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning challenges and best practices. EnCompass is conducting this assessment through various data collection methods including literature and document review, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This will be followed by data synthesis and a final report that will assist the Evaluation Division in ECA programming and M&E needs and strengthen their processes to facilitate data-driven decision making across the ECA Bureau.

We have permission and support from the U.S. Department of State and ECA's Evaluation Division to collect this information. We are not a part of the U.S. Department of State, but have been hired by them to collect this data.

Type of Data Collection

This assessment will involve review of documents, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Your participation in this assessment would involve a virtual interview that will take no more than 60 minutes. As we interview more participants and gather more data, we may want to contact you again for further information, clarity to your responses, or additional questions.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this interview because you have been identified as someone with key knowledge and experience in monitoring and assessment in the public diplomacy space.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this assessment is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, then we will destroy the contact information we have for you. You may also choose to withdraw from the assessment at any point if you change your mind. If you withdraw your participation, we will destroy your contact information and any other information that you provided up until that time.

Procedures

We are inviting you to take part in this assessment to help us learn more about the ECA Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the public diplomacy space as well as best practices, practicalities, challenges, and needs to support this work in public diplomacy. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview.

The questions will aim to gain insight into state of the field, best practices, future trends in monitoring and assessment in public diplomacy. You do not have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing. The discussion will be recorded via the platform used to conduct the interview (e.g., Zoom), but you will not be identified by name and any mention of identifying information will be removed during transcription. The recording will be kept on EnCompass' secure SharePoint site for this assessment, which is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team conducting this evaluation. The information recorded is confidential. No one else except the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the information or the recording.

Duration

The assessment will take place over five months (June–October 2020). During that time, we will ask you to participate in an interview once. As we gather more data, we may contact you again to ask you to answer additional questions or provide additional feedback on the information shared.

Risks

The most significant risk from participating in the study is a breach of privacy protections and loss of confidentiality. You do not have to participate in this assessment if you do not wish to do so, and we will destroy your contact information if you choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you may skip or refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable without providing us with any reason for not responding to the question.

Benefits

The findings from these interviews and focus group discussions may provide feedback and recommendations that ECA Evaluation Division may choose to incorporate into its internal monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes.

Reimbursements

You will not be reimbursed or provided any incentive to take part in this evaluation.

Confidentiality

We will not share any of the information you provide with anyone who is not part of the EnCompass assessment team. We will store information collected electronically, such as transcripts, audio recordings, and interview notes, in a secure SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. The interview transcripts, notes, and audio recordings will be de-identified, with each participant assigned a number ID. The ID linked to each participant will only be available in a participant tracker, which is saved on the SharePoint folder, specific to this assessment, that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. We will destroy all of the information you provided three months after the final report is completed.

Sharing the Results

The EnCompass assessment team will summarize the information you provide with information from other interview, focus group, and survey respondents and provide a final report to the U.S Department of State's ECA Evaluation Division. A PowerPoint presentation and briefing script will also be prepared for a briefing on the findings and recommendations with Evaluation Division and other stakeholders. The final report will not include your name or any other personally identifying information.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this assessment if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating in the interview at any time. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and I will ask you to modify or remove portions of those remarks if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Permission to Record

We would like to take notes and audio record our conversation. This is so we can have a record of what you say that will help us in analyzing the data. We will delete the audio recordings and destroy any written notes three months after the final report is completed. In the meantime, no one outside of the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the recordings or notes.

Whom to Contact

This assessment has been reviewed and deemed exempt by EnCompass' Institutional Review Board. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Jonathan Jones at jjones@encompassworld.com.

If you have any questions that come to mind after the interview is complete and wish to contact the assessment team to follow up, you may contact Sarah Smith Lunsford, 1451 Rockville Pike, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20852 USA, +1 617-784-9008, ssmith@encompassworld.com.

You may ask me more questions about any part of the assessment, if you wish. Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to participate in an assessment of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division's monitoring, evaluation, learning, and capacity-building processes in the context of public diplomacy and across the Evaluation Division portfolio.

I have read the information or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this assessment.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Day/Month/Year

ANNEX VI: SCOPE OF WORK

Statement of Work

Assessment of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division

Under Functional Area 6: Management Platform of the Department's Performance Management and Evaluation Services IDIQ, in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), in the U.S. Department of State (DOS), seeks assessment services for an independent assessment of ECA's Evaluation Division.

1. BACKGROUND AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE EFFORT

ECA's Evaluation Division (ED) has been at the forefront of the Department of State's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts since its creation in 1999. The ED is responsible for assessing effectiveness for programs that account for half of the Department of State's overall Public Diplomacy Budget. The ED manages this task through four mutually supporting mechanisms:

1. **Monitoring-** Through both implementing partners and internal data collection efforts, ECA collects data at multiple stages during a program's lifecycle to provide reliable, easily accessible data to ECA program teams to track performance against established goals and objectives. The ED also works closely with ECA program teams to create performance measures that inform strategic planning activities at the Bureau, division, and individual exchange program levels.
2. **Evaluation-** The ED conducts evaluations based on the best methods to generate the highest quality evidence for the information that stakeholders request, considering time, budget, and other constraints. These evaluations can take anywhere from 1 month to 2 years, focus on obtaining information on ECA's long-term results, and serve to inform ECA program teams and senior leadership as to the effectiveness of the Bureau's programs.
3. **Learning-** Following evaluations, the ED publicly posts all final reports and creates Action Plans to guide implementation of recommendations provided. The ED also manages a learning agenda to guide ECA in its research and evaluation processes.
4. **Capacity Building-** The ED serves as a resource to ECA program teams to learn from and apply evaluative thinking to enhance our programming and better serve our stakeholders. The Division builds internal capacity for ECA program officers through formal and informal training sessions, as well as creates tools and templates to guide program teams in various M&E related tasks.

New Monitoring Framework

Throughout 2019, the ED led an initiative to redesign the performance monitoring process across the Bureau. The ED worked closely with ECA program teams, senior leadership, and award recipients to create a framework that includes a Bureau wide results framework with indicators designed to track program performance, leading to strengthened feedback mechanisms resulting in more effective programs. Each performance indicator has corresponding data collection

questions defined to facilitate uniform data collection. The new performance monitoring framework will be implemented across the Bureau throughout 2020.

2. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

As recommended by the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy's 2019 Comprehensive Annual Report¹⁰, the ED seeks to review its monitoring and evaluation procedures. The report states: "This assessment will review ECA's research and evaluation procedures in the context of challenges to U.S. influence in the global public diplomacy space. Given the centrality of ECA's programs to the broader public diplomacy (PD) apparatus and the fact that ECA funding accounts for half of the State Department's overall PD budget, the Advisory Committee for Public Diplomacy recommends that ECA, as part of an overall review of PD evaluation practices, conduct an assessment of its research and evaluation procedures. This review will assess the efficacy of the research questions and instruments used and the level of resources deployed, as well as offer recommendations for improving the scientific approach of ECA's evaluations, especially given the need to address critical challenges to U.S. influence in the global public diplomacy space."

To be responsive to this, the assessment will review the ED's current approach to M&E including its methodologies, instruments, and resources. Additionally, the assessment will identify best practices from other public diplomacy entities, academia and the private sector that could be realistically adopted by the ED. Findings will assist the ED in its efforts to assess ECA programming and facilitate data-driven decision-making across the Bureau.

3. ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Drawing primarily from research, as well as discussions with key stakeholders, the assessment should answer the following overarching questions:

1. How do ED resources and structure allow ECA to fulfill its M&E responsibilities?
 - a. What are M&E best practices from across the public diplomacy community and private sector that ECA uses effectively? Are there practices ED can better incorporate?
 - b. Compared to other similarly sized M&E units (internal to DOS), what does the ED realistically have the capacity and funding to manage?
 - c. What skillsets and roles are present in a high functioning M&E unit?
2. When designing and conducting evaluations, is the ED using appropriate evaluation methods for assessing public diplomacy programming?
 - a. What evaluation models have been used to assess public diplomacy programming, in general? What are the benefits and drawbacks of these? How do these evaluation models compare to ECA's evaluation theory and practices?
 - b. What methods have been successfully used to increase the scientific

¹⁰ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2019-ACPD-Annual-Report.pdf>

- and methodological rigor of public diplomacy evaluations? What is the feasibility of use within ECA?
- c. What are best practices around the selection and prioritization of evaluations?
3. To what extent is the ED's monitoring framework structured to provide timely and useful data to inform ECA programing?
 - a. How do ECA's monitoring tools and relevant data collection questions take advantage of M&E best practices?
 - b. What monitoring methods have successfully measured difficult concepts present in public diplomacy like mutual understanding and the ripple/multiplier effect?
 - c. What are best practices in coordinating monitoring efforts between implementing partners and funders?
 4. How does the ED ensure efficient and effective deployment of information?
 - a. What methods does the ED use to ensure effective distribution and use of monitoring and evaluation data and results?
 - b. How have ED trainings increased the M&E capacity of ECA staff? Are there additional resources that the ED should create or make available to better facilitate learning and capacity-building in the Bureau and/or externally?

*Note: For questions 1a and 2a, please include a historical review of models and methods within ECA but also looking more broadly at such practices in other DoS Public Diplomacy offices and bureaus.

4. ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The Evaluation Division places a high value on assessment design and products that:

1. Integrate rigorous analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data;
2. Engage with a wide variety of stakeholders;
3. Help refine existing M&E models and components; and
4. Produce examples of effective M&E approaches.

Below are suggested methods for data collection that may be appropriate for this assessment. This should not be considered a final or complete list. It is expected that the contractor's proposal and eventual final assessment plan will carefully consider the appropriateness of all potential methodologies against their ability to both answer the assessment questions and meet the requirements outlined within this SOW.

Potential data collection methodologies:

- Document and records review
- Literature Review
- Surveys (web-based or in-person).

- In-depth, key informant semi-structured and structured interviews (remote and/or in-person)
- Focus groups (remote and/or in-person)

Key stakeholders that are considered relevant during data collection include the following:

- ECA Senior Leadership
- ECA Evaluation Division
- ECA Program Officers
- U.S. Embassies
- Contracting firms that have conducted work for the ECA Evaluation Division
- Department of State M&E practitioners (particularly in R/PPR and GPA)
- Public Diplomacy M&E practitioners (from diverse sectors: government, NGO, private, academia)
- ACPD Staff

In developing the final assessment plan, the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) will work closely with the contractor to determine the best methodologies and approaches required to meet the needs of this assessment.

5. ASSESSMENT TEAM

The offeror should propose a team with a combination of qualifications as outlined in this SOW to provide the best possible product. Requested skills of key and non-key personnel are outlined below.

5.1 Key Personnel

Key personnel will include:

Assessment Team Leader (1)

This person (can be senior- or mid-level) should have served as a team leader of an evaluation in the past (preferably with a USG agency), be comfortable with collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, and has research design expertise.

5.2 Non-Key Personnel

Assessment Team (multiple)

The team may also consist of mid-level and/or junior-level assessment consultant(s). Combined, these individuals should have knowledge of public diplomacy programming and evaluation best practices, ability to analyze quantitative data, and strong qualitative (with a preference for experience with virtual data collection) analytical capabilities.

It is expected that, for this assessment, some level of support staff will be required and either a Program Manager or Administrative Support person support this assessment. This person will assist in copy editing the report, designing and developing infographics, and support in

the overall management of the assessment. Alternatively, if these roles can be filled by the assessment personnel above for added cost savings, the ECA Bureau would find that acceptable (and preferable).

The assessment team will be expected to be available for the entire period of performance. **The Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) must approve any key personnel change in writing with copy sent to the Contracting Officer.**

5.3 Use of Sub-Contractors

If utilized, the contractor should include documentation of institutional capacity and staff experience for the potential sub-contractors and local consultants listed. ****Please Note: If the sub-contractors have worked with the ED or provided monitoring and evaluation services in any capacity to an ECA award recipient in the past 5 years, they are precluded from performing work on this assessment.****, they are precluded from performing work on this assessment.**

6. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The contractor will be expected to present a delivery timeline in their technical proposal based on the tasks and deliverables outlined in Section 7 below. Estimated period of performance: June 1, 2020 through October 30, 2020

7. WORK REQUIREMENTS – TASKS & DELIVERABLES

Below is a detailed summary of all tasks and deliverables required under this task order:

Description	
7.1	<p>Regular Communication with the Government Technical Monitor</p> <p>Provide status meeting notes that summarize discussions, decisions, and actionable items. Upon award, the COR and the contractor shall communicate on a regular basis (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly as deemed necessary).</p> <p>Monthly Reports: This regular communication also includes Monthly Progress Reports – which are to include status of on-going and completed tasks, brief summaries of significant meetings or briefings held during the month reported on, next steps to be undertaken by the contractor, and any pending actions to be taken by the COR. Monthly reports should also highlight any delays or expected delays based on the timeline (i.e. when a benchmark or deliverable was <u>not</u> met) as well as remedies or significant challenges which impede the timeline. The monthly report is expected to only be 1-2 pages.</p>
7.2	<p>Kick-off Meeting</p> <p>Meet with the ECA Evaluation Division and the COR to discuss the mechanics of the assessment before data collection begins. <i>The COR will provide direction in terms of meeting with other offices or outside agencies and grantees.</i></p>

Description	
7.3	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Upon award, the contractor will begin preliminary research and review of the ED's previous evaluations, available resources, monitoring framework and any other relevant background document to gain a better understanding of the division and begin developing the assessment plan. The ED will also assist the contractor with the identification and collection of program documents.</p>
7.4	<p>Assessment Plan</p> <p>The contractor will work in close collaboration with the COR to develop a final assessment plan that includes the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data collection methods 2. Quality Assurance Plan (which should consist of participant contact information management plan, plan for data collection instruments, translation plan, survey administration plan, and a quantitative and qualitative analysis plan) 3. Planned analysis techniques
	<p>4. Timeline</p> <p>NOTE: The COR must approve any changes in the assessment plan.</p>
7.5	<p>Literature Review</p> <p>The contractor will perform a literature review of M&E best practices and public diplomacy to assist in the development of data collection instruments.</p>
7.6	<p>Data Collection Instrument(s) Development and Administration</p> <p>Development: The contractor will draft and submit data collection instruments (e.g. survey questionnaires) to the COR for approval. <i>The contractor will revise all draft data collection instruments (e.g. survey questionnaires) in collaboration with the COR. All instruments must be approved by COR prior to finalization and use.</i> In some cases, the ED may want to review and approve data collection strategies and/or instruments.</p> <p>Data Map: The contractor will be required to submit a data map of the data collection questions (items on survey questionnaire or interview guides) to the research questions. This "map" can simply be a marker next to the question with the corresponding evaluation question. For example: "Were you satisfied with the networking opportunities provided by the program?" (Evaluation Question XX)</p> <p>Scripts: In addition, the contractor will draft and submit the initial introductory contact/cover letters/e-mails/scripts as well as any follow-up or reminder correspondence language related to all data collection instruments.</p>

Description	
	<p>Pre-Test: The contractor will conduct a pre-test(s) of data collection instrument(s). <i>Any subsequent revisions must be reviewed and approved by COR.</i></p> <p>Administration: Regarding quantitative data collection (survey administration), the contractor will provide the COR with a survey administration plan with detailed strategies to regularly monitor survey response rates and methods to increase response rates. Methods to reach survey respondents may include but are not limited to reminder e-mails, domain adjustments, phone calls, etc.</p>
7.7	<p>Domestic and Remote Fieldwork</p> <p>The Contractor will be required to conduct domestic and remote fieldwork. Domestic fieldwork will be performed in the Washington, D.C. region. Remote fieldwork will be performed with stakeholders located elsewhere – for instance, with Embassies or any out-of-state stakeholders.</p>
7.8	<p>Report Outline</p> <p>Prior to drafting the Assessment Report, the contractor will be required to first submit a detailed draft report outline for approval by the COR.</p>
7.9	<p>Initial Draft of Final Report</p> <p>As part of the report review process, the contractor should expect to produce multiple drafts of the Assessment Report, and adequate time shall be incorporated into the project schedule. Below is an outline of the expected review/approval process (which will happen in succession, not concurrently):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. COR review (allow two weeks for review) 2. ED review (allow two weeks for review) 3. ECA senior management (DAS level) final approval (allow two weeks for review) <p>The contractor must remain flexible should more or less time be required to gain the appropriate approvals.</p>
7.10	<p>Final Briefing</p> <p>After approval of the draft version of the Assessment Report, the contractor will be expected to present a briefing (most likely format will be 45-60 minutes of presentation; 30-45 minutes of questions) of the report findings to key stakeholders identified by the Evaluation Division. Stakeholders may include members of the Office of Policy and Evaluation, Program Offices in ECA, staff from other Offices in the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassies, or ECA senior leadership.</p> <p>NOTE: Prior to the briefing, the contractor will be required to submit the PowerPoint presentation and any associated materials to COR for review and approval. Briefing</p>

Description	
	materials should be a stand-alone presentation (i.e. with appropriate slide notes/script) which can be used by the ED after the completion of the assessment.
7.11	<p>Final Report</p> <p>The Final Assessment Report should include a review of the assessment and the ED, an Executive Summary that includes key findings, and a detailed analysis of the data collected, as well as any recommendations and/or lessons learned for the ED. As per DOS guidelines, the final report should be between 20-25 pages (not including appendices). Detailed information on analysis, data, or research instruments can be placed in appendices. DOS officials are usually not conversant with academic jargon and technical expressions; therefore, if they are used, they should be explained in the text. The report should be organized around assessment questions. For each major assessment question, the report should have a separate section presenting findings and conclusions.</p> <p>Language in the Final Report should be clear and easily understandable by a lay audience. The Assessment Report should follow the U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual (www.gpo.gov).</p>
7.12	<p>Assessment Summary</p> <p>Upon completion of an approved final Assessment Report the contractor will be expected to develop an assessment summary. The assessment summary should be brief, not more than two pages. The summary should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of the assessment • Date the report was submitted • Purpose of the assessment and questions addressed • Methodology • Key Findings • Recommendations/Lessons learned <p>Electronic copies in Microsoft Word and PDF of the approved final assessment summary will be submitted by e-mail to the Evaluation Division prior to the conclusion of the contract.</p>

ANNEX VII: WORKS CITED AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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