

Australian Volunteers Program

**Australian
Volunteers**
FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Front-end loading: the value of formative evaluation in setting program focus

An Australian Volunteers Program case study

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The Australian Volunteers Program
is an Australian Government initiative.

Presentation Team

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Overview of our presentation

- Who we are
- Why we value formative evaluation
- Our case study experience
- Good practice for formative evaluation

The Formative Evaluation

Australian Volunteers Program



Request for Quote (RFQ) – Terms of Reference
Formative evaluation of the Australian Volunteers Program's thematic 'impact areas'

1. Introduction

The Australian Volunteers Program seeks qualified candidates for the evaluation of the program's three thematic impact areas and to support the longer-term measurement of outcomes. This RFQ is for the first phase of research only, relating to the intention of the program that this research be conducted in evaluations in each of the impact areas, and that the findings be the preferred suppliers for later work.

2. Background and Context

2.1. About the Program

Since the 1960s, the Australian Government has supported international volunteering programs in developing countries. International volunteering programs are a means of promoting both public diplomacy and economic development. The latest chapter of the Australian Volunteers Program is the Australian Government investment in 26 countries, managed by AVI, in a consortium with Cardno Employment Solutions. AVI continues to match skilled Australians from all walks of life to deliver on their own objectives. The program uses capacity development.¹

Over the next five years, the Australian Volunteers Program will:

1. Partner organisations (POs) are supported by the program to deliver on their own objectives.
2. Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally from their experience.
3. The public and governments in Australia and overseas benefit from the program's activities.

By successfully achieving these outcomes, the Australian Volunteers Program will contribute to the broader development and diplomacy goals:

1. The Australian Government is achieving its international development and diplomacy goals.
2. Australians becoming more globally literate and engaged.

¹ Capacity development is "a process of increasing and strengthening the capabilities of individuals, organisations and communities in order to achieve a range of positive outcomes."

Why do we value formative evaluation?

- For the purpose of program improvement

Emphasis is on forming, shaping, and improving

- For program managers learning
- To support strategy, program or product development
- To discover insights and shape future directions



Why do we value formative evaluation?

Summative Evaluation



Formative Evaluation



Forming

Shaping

Improving

Image: Lysy, C. (2018) Summative Formative Developmental Evaluation [online] Available: https://www.redbubble.com/people/cplysy/works/17421561-summative-formative-developmental-evaluation?carousel_pos=3&p=spiral-notebook&ref=work_carousel_work_recommendation&ref_id=17421770

Purpose and focus of the evaluation

The Australian Volunteers Program supports a wide range of development initiatives through its people to people approach to capacity development



Our thematic impact areas are:

Inclusive economic growth

Human Rights

Climate Change/Disaster Resilience/Food Security

Provide a lenses through which the program can have a more focused view on developmental outcomes achieved by partner organisations

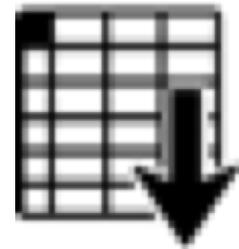
How we have used the evaluation findings

Use of evaluation benefit overall program and various internal teams:

- Understand the thematic scope of the existing portfolio and its alignment with the impact areas
- Consider options for recruiting and supporting partners working in a range of thematic areas to achieve end of program outcomes
- Inform use of impact areas as lenses to assess program effectiveness (future summative evaluations)
- More in-depth over subsequent years of the program, moving from a formative evaluation to a series of summative evaluations.
- Illustrative case studies of partners working in the impact areas.

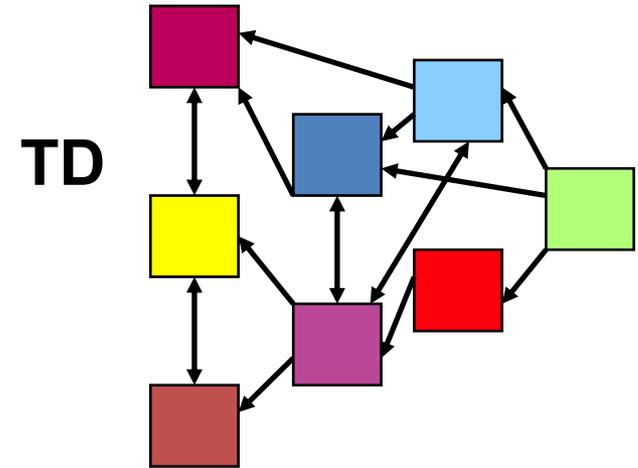
Scope of the evaluation

- Three domains of inquiry and key evaluation questions under each
- The mixed method approach added nuance of understanding
- Multiple sources of data with analytical frameworks developed for qualitative and quantitative data



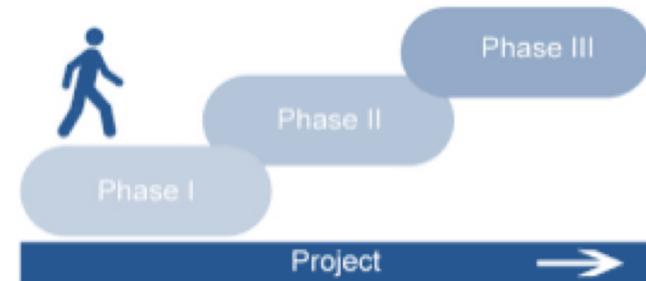
Scope of the evaluation

- The transdisciplinary team added multiple perspectives and value to the inquiry
- Use of range of measures to form and shape the definitions of thematic impact areas



Working in partnership: Australian Volunteers Program and UTS

- **Agreed and intentional approach to partnership** established in the early phase of the evaluation
- **Regular contact** between ISF and Australian Volunteer Program
- **Phased approach of deliverables** meant that we could ‘frame together’



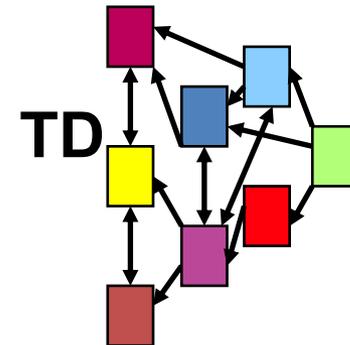
Working in partnership: Australian Volunteers Program and UTS

- **Evaluation Reference Group:** valuable to engage with multiple parts of the organisation – to provide insights into practice of the evaluation and also to generate interest in take up of findings
- **Coordination and Input from DFAT:** valuable to liaison closely with DFAT to get input on ToRs, review of findings / recommendations, management response, continued support for subsequent years, potentially the study to be published on DFAT website
- **Inception and sense making workshops:** valuable to engage with multiple parts of the organisation – valuable insights from different parts of the organisation at start and end



Key messages for good practice

- Formative evaluation provides rich learning to inform strategy/program design – invest **[front load]** to establish strong foundation for your work
- Prioritise partnership approach to maximise organisational learning + connect the evaluation to multiple parts of the organisation during the evaluation to maximise engagement in the evaluation learning
- Employ a transdisciplinary team to maximise learning across different disciplines



Key messages for good practice

- Use multiple data sources – internal and external to the organisation to inform and form your evidence and strengthen your findings
- Formative evaluation can be a critical step in program design to ensure learning from past programming as well as broader context is incorporated into and informs your ongoing work
- Connect formative and summative evaluations – recognise links to program design and evaluation, learning and inquiry



Thanks

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<https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures>

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