



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade

Promoting a Culture of Evaluation in DFAT

Susan Huggins- D/FAT

Elaine Kennedy-D/FAT



Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Service

Why?

- In 2016 DFAT was emerging from a period of reflection and change
 - *Key foreign and development policy documents published*
 - *Finalised a statement of strategy*
 - *8 new Missions opened*
- In order to support the Management Board's decision-making and accountability obligations, credible analyses of the Department's performance is needed
 - *A culture of evaluative thinking is needed*
 - *Buy-in across the department is essential*

What we did

- Conducted an Evaluation Needs Assessment of the Department
- Developed Evaluation Criteria
- Developed a Strategic Plan 2016-2019
- Developed a Communication Policy
- Initiated a Lunchtime Seminar Series

Those are good numbers.
Don't just throw them away.



The Evaluation Needs Assessment

- What does the Department need to know from its current and past operations in order to make properly informed strategic and operational decisions in the future?
- Held Consultations
 - *Conducted interviews across a range of functions and levels at HQ and abroad.*
 - *Mapped the future learning needs of DFAT*

So...What did we learn from the Assessment?

- Varying degrees of understanding and appetite for evaluation
 - Some confusion between evaluation/inspection/audit/research
 - Different expectations around the role of evaluation
- The need for new and improved ways of communicating evaluation work
- Balancing the need for both accountability and learning

Evaluation Criteria

- A tool to prioritise and test the feasibility of evaluation within Business Units

Importance to Senior Management
Importance to Business Unit
Contribution to Evidence Base
Financial scale
Inherent Risk
Innovation
Feasibility
Timeliness
Accountability
Complementarity

Strategic Plan 2016-2019

- The plan was developed following the Evaluation Needs Assessment
- Ensuring evaluative work is strategic
- Endeavouring to respond to key information needs
- Plan resource allocation
- Ensure that evaluative work is timely and of utility eg Irish Aid Mission Strategies
- Balanced the plan to ensure it meets the accountability needs of the department, senior management, and the learning needs
- Long list was refined using evaluation criteria



“Enough with all the strategic planning. Just get out there and kill something.”

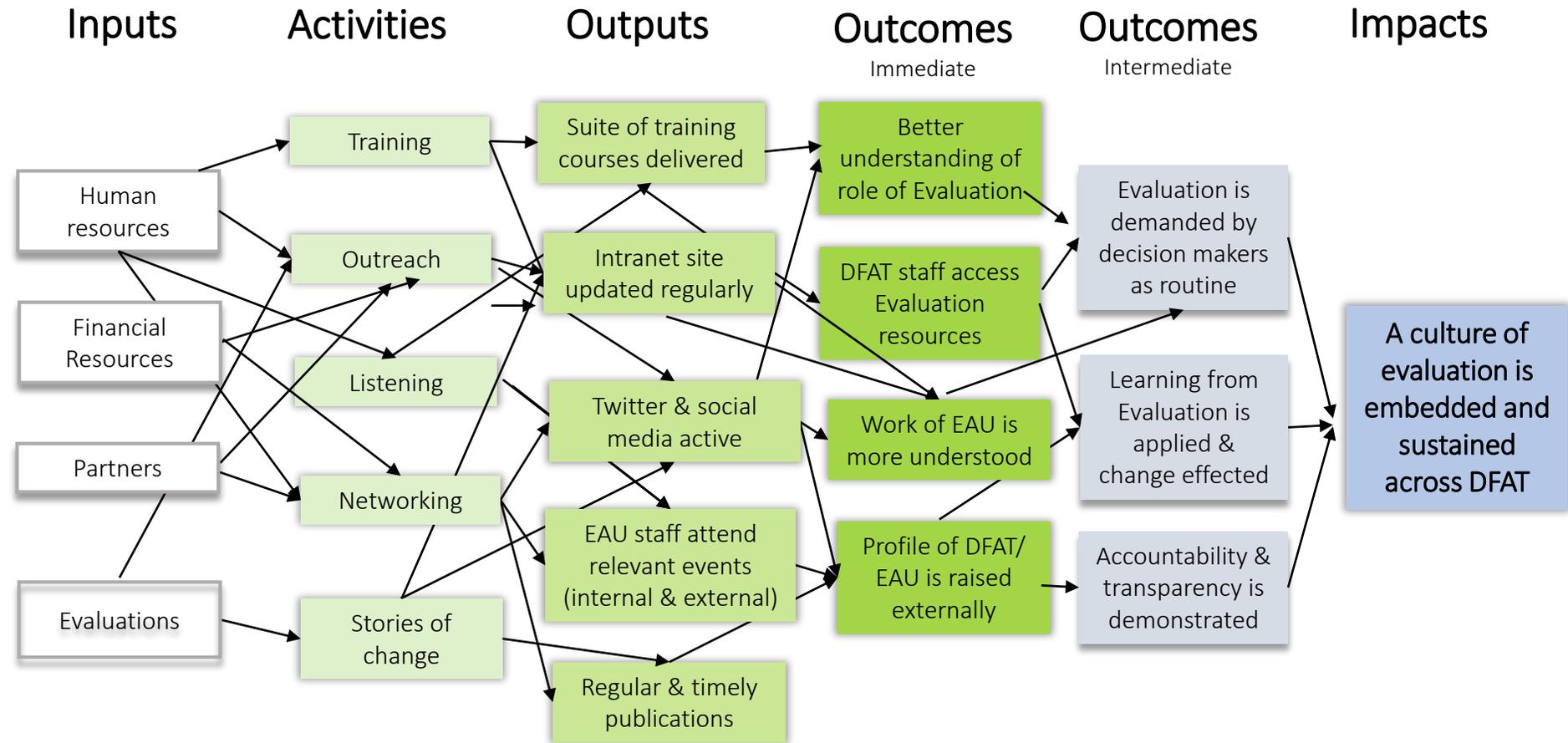
Communication and Outreach Strategy

- The strategy is informed by the Evaluation Needs Assessment
- Generating interest in and engagement with evaluation across all levels, particularly management is key to the effectiveness of evaluative work
- Identified areas for improvement of our outreach and communication both within and beyond DFAT in order to:
 - *Enhance understanding of our work;*
 - *Engage more effectively with our stakeholders;*
 - *Promote a Culture of Evaluation across the department*

What we are doing to improve outreach

- Making better use of the Intranet
- Offering more training
- Planning for Seminars and learning events
- Presenting our work in different ways
- Participating in international evaluation networks

Context: Increasingly complex and dynamic aid modalities; perceived increase in irregularities; acknowledgement of limits of evaluation in demonstrating impact/outcome; DFAT more focussed on evaluation for accountability than learning.



- Reach assumptions:**
- Officers open to participating in training and seminars;
 - External stakeholders see value in cooperating with us..

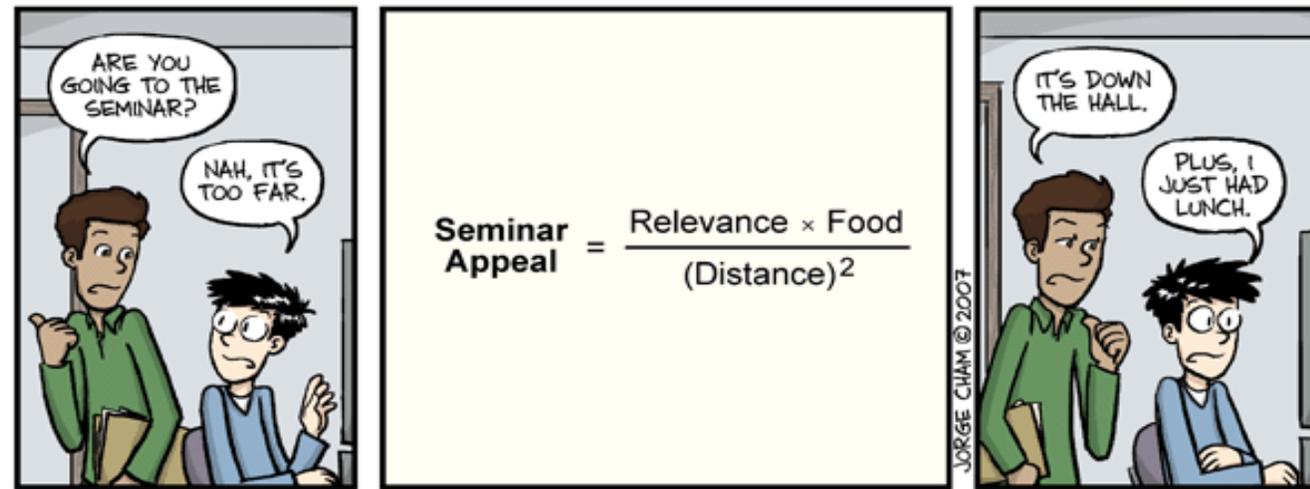
- Capacity change assumptions:**
- DFAT staff have time to participate in training;
 - EAU has time to network;
 - Technology & resources to support outreach and communication are available.

- Behavior change assumptions:**
- Programme managers open to learning;
 - DFAT staff willing to internalize learning;
 - EAU staff more proactive in external engagement.

- Direct benefit assumptions:**
- Managers see decision making is enhanced by Evaluation;
 - EAU experiences tangible returns on increased investment in communication.

Lunchtime Seminar Series

- Brings together experts and practitioners from academia, civil society, the private sector and government
- Aims to inform colleagues, spark discussion and encourage networking and collaboration in the wider civil service and with civil society organisations
- Our first Seminar ‘Innovative approaches to interdisciplinary evaluations: new and emerging fields’ was held in March
- Our next seminar on June 23rd will explore the theme of ‘Measuring Policy Influence’



Challenges for Evaluators in DFAT

- Ensuring management buy-in- to create a culture of evaluation in a department, it needs to be championed by management
- Ensuring our work has utility and is timely
- Managing Expectations
- Ensuring our ways of working remain relevant to our evaluation challenges
- Addressing information gaps
- Balancing the need for both accountability and learning
- Communicating work effectively
- International dimension



What does success look like?

- Management and business units are thinking about evaluation from the beginning of a strategy or intervention
- Appropriate data is collected
- Management engage with evaluations throughout the process
- Results and findings are incorporated into planning and strategy development

**WOO HOO! PRESENTATION
OVER**



ANY QUESTIONS?