Theory of Change: Translating Study Abroad Program Goals and Priorities into Assessments

Session 1 of a 4-part Series
From Theory to Practice: Assessment and Evaluation for Study Abroad Programs
#LaunchIDEASabroad
IDEAS Program

A program of the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, USA Study Abroad branch

Seeking to expand higher education institutions’ capacity to grow and diversify study abroad programs for U.S. students

- Increase number of students studying abroad from underrepresented groups
- Increase the number of U.S. higher education institutions offering study abroad programs
- Expand study abroad to new overseas destinations, particularly those that are less common

Grant Competition

- Approx. 20 grants of up to $35,000

Capacity Building Initiatives

- Virtual and in-person, open to everyone

StudyAbroadCapacityBuilding.org
USA Study Abroad

Mission:
To advance U.S. foreign policy goals by increasing and diversifying U.S. study abroad through programs for both individuals and institutions and to support the next generation of diverse American leaders to gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a globalizing world.

Rebecca Johnson
Program Officer
USA Study Abroad
U.S. Department of State
IDEAS Program 2021
Study Abroad
Needs Assessment

Priorities for Training

- Recruiting and supporting underrepresented students in study abroad: 45%
- Developing institutional financial strategies for expanding study abroad: 40%
- Faculty-led study abroad best practices / preparing program leaders: 39%
- Assessment and evaluation: 30%
Theory of Change
IDEAS Program

**IF**
- If we provide the study abroad community at large with capacity building support, training, and networking opportunities...

**AND**
- ... and promote the sharing of best practices on expanding and diversifying U.S. study abroad...

**THEN**
- ... then U.S. institutions will increase the number and diversity of U.S. students studying and interning abroad and the destinations to which they travel.
Today’s Facilitators

Tiffany Espinosa
Executive Director
Professional and Graduate Education
Mount Holyoke College

Roberto Mugnani
Director of New Programs
Professional and Graduate Education
Mount Holyoke College

Amy Asadoorian

Need help?
Send Amy a message in chat.
Goals and Agenda

Today we will explore how to:

Create a Theory of Change and Logic Model

Use a Theory of Change to:

1. Clearly connect your program goals and activities.
2. Translate goals into areas of focus for assessment.
3. Identify key performance indicators.
4. Identify assumptions and conditions for success.
Theory of Change Models
“If…… Then”

Your mental model of how change happens:

• More knowledge reduces anxiety and intimidation
• Developing personal relationships increases comfort
• Talking with someone safe helps people be vulnerable and open
• Doing new things can be scary, and we avoid scary things
• Firsthand experience helps people develop nuanced insights
• People feel happy to share, it makes them feel valued and engaged
If we pair study abroad alum with first gen students/families (activities)...

Then, first gen families will better understand the value and be less intimidated by it (outputs)

Which should lead to more first gen students participating in study abroad (outcomes).

**Inputs**
- Time, energy, money

**Activities**
- What you do

**Outputs**
- Direct results

**Outcomes and Impacts**
- Immediate, measurable changes
- Long term & downstream changes
Logic Model Example

**Inputs**
- Time, energy, money

**Activities**
- What you do

**Outputs**
- Direct results

**Outcomes and Impacts**
- Immediate, measurable changes
- Long term & downstream changes

Which should lead to more first gen students participating in study abroad (outcomes).

Prerequisite indicators are... (outputs)

If we do... (activities)

To do that we need... (inputs)
Your Turn! Speed round

Working backward, identify as many different ways you could achieve this outcome with different “threads”

Which should lead to more first gen students participating in study abroad (outcomes).

Inputs
- Time, energy, money

Activities
- What you do

Outputs
- Direct results

Outcomes and Impacts
- Immediate, measurable changes
- Long term & downstream changes

To do that we need...
- (inputs)

If we do...
- (activities)

Prerequisite indicators are...
- (outputs)
Context & Assumptions

What is unique about this moment and this place?
How will this affect your model?

What assumptions are you making that must be true for this to work?
### Areas of Focus
*(What you want to assess)*

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**To do that we need…**
*(inputs)*

- Resource intensity

**If we do…**
*(activities)*

- Logistics & organization

**Prerequisite indicators are…**
*(outputs)*

- Effectiveness of outreach
- Quality of experience
- Knowledge gain

**Which should lead to what we hope to achieve…**
*(outcomes)*

- Program interest
- Personal growth
- Academic engagement
Performance Indicators
(How you could measure it)

To do that we need…
(inputs)

- Cost per person
- Cost to advertise
- On budget?

If we do…
(activities)

- # of events
- On schedule?
- Involved staff evaluation of the activity

Prerequisite indicators are…
(outputs)

- # of attendees
  - New?
  - Returning?
- Attendee satisfaction
- Demonstrated ability to ____.

Which should lead to what we hope to achieve…
(outcomes)

- # of new study abroad applicants
- Increased tolerance for ambiguity
- Participation in co-curriculars
- Graduation rate

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Your Turn! Speed round

Develop one thread fully for your program.

** Inputs  
Time, energy, money

** Activities  
What you do

** Outputs  
Direct results

** Outcomes and Impacts  
Immediate, measurable changes  
Long term & downstream changes

To do that we need…

If we do…

Prerequisite indicators are…

Which should lead to what we hope to achieve…

Step 1  
Step 2  
Step 3  
Step 4

Areas of Focus we are interested in assessing: (Step 5)

Performance Indicators to measure our success would be: (Step 6)

Assumptions and Context Considerations  
This is iterative and might be updated at each step
Reflections & Questions

**Inputs**
Time, energy, money

**Activities**
What you do

**Outputs**
Direct results

**Outcomes and Impacts**
Immediate, measurable changes
Long term & downstream changes

To do that we need…
If we do…
Prerequisite indicators are…
Which should lead to what we hope to achieve…

- **Step 4**
- **Step 3**
- **Step 2**
- **Step 1**

**Areas of Focus we are interested in assessing:** (Step 5)

**Performance Indicators to measure our success would be:** (Step 6)

Assumptions and Context Considerations

This is iterative and might be updated at each step.
Assessment Process

Make Modifications
- Identifying interventions
- Implementation planning
- Communication planning

Articulate Goals and Objectives
- Why is this important?
- What do you hope to achieve?
- Who cares and why do they care?
- What are the implications?

Interpret the Data
- Statistical analysis
- Qualitative data analysis
- Trends
- Criteria for success
- Context considerations
- What does it mean?

Develop an Assessment Strategy
- Goals
- Logic Model
- Assessment Methods
- Criteria/Standards
- Use of Information
- Implementation Plan
- Communications Plan

Collect Data & Evidence
- Direct Measures: Coursework, Capstone projects, Portfolios, Participation
- Indirect Measures: Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups
  Data that allows you to make inferences
Logic Modeling as a Team Sport

How is it connected to institutional strategic priorities?

Does it reflect your institutional mission?

Who are your key stakeholders?

What are your feedback mechanisms?
  During development?
  During implementation?
From Theory to Practice: Assessment and Evaluation for Study Abroad Programs

Upcoming Training Sessions

Assessing Student Growth and Development Abroad
December 15, 2021, 3:00-4:30pm EST

When One Size Doesn't Fit All: Analyzing Data for Diverse Student Populations
February 2, 2022, 3:00-4:30pm EST

Incubator Session: When One Size Doesn't Fit All: Analyzing Data for Diverse Student Populations
March 9, 2022, 3:00-4:30pm EST
IDEAS PROGRAM
FUTURE INITIATIVES

- FY21 Grant Competition
- Webinars
- Workshops
The IDEAS (Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students) Program, formerly known as the Capacity Building Program for U.S. Study Abroad, is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by World Learning.