What works: how U.S. federal government agencies can evaluate their performance

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Using Performance Evidence in Program Decision Making

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Agenda

1. Introduction

2. Performance Management Plan (PMP)

3. Performance Monitoring

4. Performance Evaluations

5. Performance Evaluation Use

6. Learning from Performance Data

7. Conclusion

Introduction

- In terms of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), USAID is generally decentralized, but does have a centralized office for policy, guidance, and technical assistance

- The centralized Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (LER), within the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL), is relevant for building and maintaining MEL capacity

- Washington Bureaus help with developing processes for MEL coordination and evidence sharing (e.g. webinars, communities of practice, evaluation synthesis, etc.)

Performance Management Plan (PMP)

Mission-wide tool for planning and managing the process of:

- Monitoring strategic progress, program performance, programmatic assumptions, and operational context

- Evaluating performance and impact

- Learning and adapting from evidence

Performance Monitoring

- Ongoing and systematic collection of performance indicator data to oversee implementation and understand progress toward measurable results

- Performance monitoring data inform judgments about the outputs and outcomes of programs as a basis to improve effectiveness and/or inform decisions about current and future programming

- Performance is analyzed by comparing actual results achieved against the expected results and targets initially set at the beginning of a strategy, project, or activity.

Performance Evaluations

- USAID categorizes evaluations as impact or performance evaluations depending on the purpose, evaluation questions, and the corresponding design

- Performance Evaluations encompass a broad range of evaluation methods, including before-and-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual

- Performance evaluations are designed to identify accomplishments, performance issues, and constraints in activity implementation
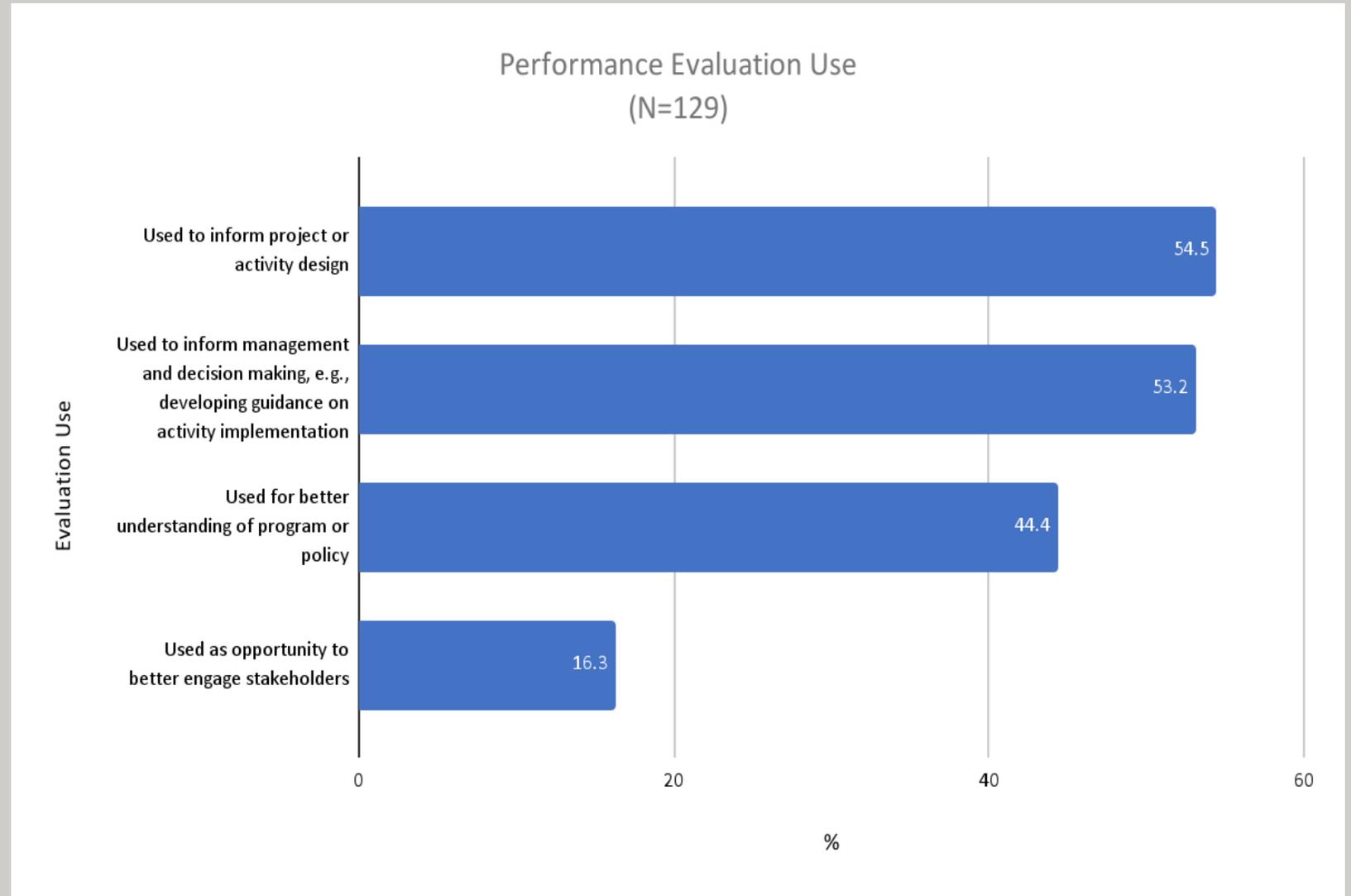
Performance Evaluations (Cont.)

- Performance evaluation focuses on measuring the process towards the achievement of results, and how inputs and outputs are producing outcomes

- As a result of performance evaluation, decisions are made on what program activities to continue, modify, or enhance

- Performance evaluation allow for a broader perspective on operations, and an effective decision-making tool to inform activity design and implementation

Performance Evaluation Use

A recent review of USAID performance evaluations showed that they are used primarily for the following:

Performance Evaluation Use (N=129)

Evaluation Use	%
Used to inform project or activity design	54.5
Used to inform management and decision making, e.g., developing guidance on activity implementation	53.2
Used for better understanding of program or policy	44.4
Used as opportunity to better engage stakeholders	16.3

Learning from Performance Data

- Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) is USAID's approach to organizational learning and adaptive management

- CLA includes learning from a variety of evidence sources, including information and data from performance monitoring, and evaluations

- Example of a CLA process is "pause and reflect"

- Pause and reflect sessions generate learning, knowledge, and data that contribute to evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management.

Conclusion

- For the use of performance evidence to be effective, USAID have established and institutionalized systems and process that are applied agency-wide

- Performance evidence is an important component in program management decision-making and activity design

- Performance evidence is central to Agency learning and adaptive management

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