

program, is a sobering challenge. Small wonder then, that program evaluation varies in methodologies, is irregular, and often misleading.

Program Evaluation in the Future: There is little question about the necessity of program evaluation. Shrinking government resources demand justification of budget allocations and evaluation of their impact. As more is learned about company exporting behaviour and decision-making, including the use of trade fairs and missions, there is a need to bring this knowledge to government: namely to program design, program delivery, and program evaluation. So far we know that governments periodically evaluate programs and their impact on users; and that companies rarely assess a program's effects formally. A small budget component (relative to the cost of programs) should be devoted to evaluation, so as to make regular evaluation part of each program. This will allow for the development of yardsticks, continuity, as well as the improvement of measurement. Evaluation results may become a program management tool for the continual assessment of relevance and justification of such expenditure.

Past attempts to disseminate *good practice* in evaluation have focused on program, event, and user⁵². What then are the basic requirements of good practice? First, one seeks to identify those key impacts a program intends to produce in the user. Second, one wishes to capture the effects of lesser importance but still worth knowing. Third, which impacts resulted outside of program goals and objectives, but are being noted? It is not possible to fully pre-specify such situations, but impact on the program user is the proving ground based on the assumptions that:⁵³

- preconditions are appropriate
- a match of user need and program output exists
- program implementation is as desired
- evaluation methodology and measures are reliable and valid

If there is any question about the need for regular, comprehensive program evaluation, then observations for improved practice from a recent evaluation of the fairs and missions program should remove such doubts⁵⁴. Clearer program criteria, objectives and procedures would benefit both provider and user. This includes more effective targeting of programs, better communication with target groups through more extensive planning and training, as well as viewing users in the context of the exporting process and the role of events within it. Monitoring of outcomes (post-event results) needs to be more extensive, systematic and regular. Stronger information systems with high quality information on participants, events and results, are essential to effective program management and goal achievement⁵⁵.