

2.2 IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS

One of the first problems faced in the development of a departmental evaluation program is that of identifying an appropriate set of program components. These may be viewed as discrete evaluable units, or basic building blocks, which together form the framework of the plan.

Given the expressed intent to develop an evaluation plan that will encompass all programs and expenditures under the direct control of the Under Secretary, how does one go about constructing an appropriate set of program components? This problem, faced by all departments, is made particularly difficult in the case of External Affairs by its unique role and environment. Many alternative approaches were considered; none was viewed as being particularly good. Largely for reasons of expediency, yet adequacy, the approach finally adopted is essentially an organizational one. Each of the alternatives considered is discussed briefly below:

a) Work Downward from Foreign Policy Objectives:

Conceptually perhaps the most interesting approach to evaluating the effectiveness of External Affairs programs would be in terms of the extent to which they contribute to meeting Foreign Policy Objectives. Unfortunately this approach suffers from at least three very large practical handicaps. The first is the nature of the objectives and their related National Issues which, not surprisingly, tend to be very broadly stated, non-quantifiable, and often rather altruistic. The relationships between these macro objectives and specific departmental programs and activities is also quite complex and difficult to articulate. The second, seemingly insurmountable problem would be isolating the particular effects of an External Affairs program in a specific area (say economic growth) from those of complementary programs operated abroad by other departments (e.g. ITC). Lastly there are the overriding questions of mandate and jurisdiction discussed in the previous section. Such an approach should properly be interdepartmental in character, initiated by ICER, and not by External Affairs unilaterally.

b) Work Downward from Main Estimates Activities

This approach, which has been employed with some success in other departments, was also rejected as being impractical. External Affairs has only one Program identified in the Estimates, "Protection of Canadian