



Evaluation 2014 Press Kit

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AEA Mission, Vision, and Values

The American Evaluation Association seeks to act in ways that embody our mission, vision, and values in pursuit of our defined policies and goals.

Mission

The American Evaluation Association's mission is to improve evaluation practices and methods, increase evaluation use, promote evaluation as a profession, and support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human action.

Vision

The American Evaluation Association's vision is to foster an inclusive, diverse, and international community of practice positioned as a respected source of information for and about the field of evaluation.

Values

The American Evaluation Association values excellence in evaluation practice, utilization of evaluation findings, and inclusion and diversity in the evaluation community.

- i. We value high quality, ethically defensible, culturally responsive evaluation practices that lead to effective and humane organizations and ultimately to the enhancement of the public good.
- ii. We value high quality, ethically defensible, culturally responsive evaluation practices that contribute to decision-making processes, program improvement, and policy formulation.
- iii. We value a global and international evaluation community and understanding of evaluation practices.
- iv. We value the continual development of evaluation professionals and the development of evaluators from under-represented groups.
- v. We value inclusiveness and diversity, welcoming members at any point in their career, from any context, and representing a range of thought and approaches.
- vi. We value efficient, effective, responsive, transparent, and socially responsible association operations.

Frequently Asked Questions About AEA

What is AEA? The American Evaluation Association is an international professional association of evaluators devoted to the application and exploration of program evaluation, personnel evaluation, technology, and many other forms of evaluation. Evaluation involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, personnel, products, and organizations to improve their effectiveness.

How long has AEA been around? The American Evaluation Association (AEA) came into being in 1986 out of the merger of two existing evaluation groups: The Evaluation Network and the Evaluation Research Society.

How many members does AEA have? AEA has approximately 7,700 members representing all 50 states in the United States as well as over 60 foreign countries.

How is AEA organized? AEA is led by a Board, advised by Task Forces and Working Groups, structured around Topical Interest Groups (TIGs), and aligned with recognized regional affiliate associations. Hundreds of volunteers and a dedicated staff undertake the work of the association. Key players include:

AEA's Board of Directors: Comprised of 13 voting members, the Board of Directors makes all strategic, policy, and large-scale programmatic decisions for the association.

AEA's Topical Interest Groups: AEA's 50+ Topical Interest Groups (TIGs) are subgroups that provide networking and conference program development among members with similar interests.

AEA's Local Affiliates: AEA's local or regional affiliates are independent, regionally-defined professional associations that are recognized by AEA as sharing a mission consonant with our own.

What is a TIG? AEA's 53 Topical Interest Groups (TIGs) span the methodological, disciplinary, and ideological gamut. These subgroups of the Association allow members to connect with others who share their interests as well as provide a forum for sharing knowledge and skills during the annual conference. Some TIGs are very active and produce a newsletter, manage their own website, and solicit and develop special conference sessions. Other TIGs focus primarily on providing reviewers for topical presentations for the annual conference. AEA members may be members in up to five TIGs and may change their TIG choices at any time by contacting the AEA office or making the changes on their membership renewal form.

What is a Local Affiliate? AEA's Local Affiliates (LAs) are independent associations that provide a regional home to evaluators. You do not need to be a member of AEA to join an Affiliate, and you do not need to participate in an Affiliate to be a member of AEA. Affiliates provide their own programming and outreach activities, yet share with AEA a focus on serving evaluators and the evaluation community.

Where should I turn with questions outside of the conference? A good place to start is with Zachary Grays in our AEA office. Zachary can answer most administrative or member services questions and will point you in the right direction for other resources. He may be reached at info@eval.org or 1-202-367-1166.

Visionary Evaluation Education Sessions

Evaluation 2014: Visionary Evaluation for a Sustainable, Equitable Future, will use relationships and systems thinking to connect evaluation to the premier challenge of our time—nurturing a diverse and interconnected world with enough for generations to come. AEA encourages attendees to envision evaluation as fundamental to a sustainable, equitable future. Attendees will identify ways they can use visionary evaluation relevant to the context in which they work.

Areas of emphasis in Visionary Evaluation

Understanding sustainable and equitable living and what it means to evaluators and evaluation users.

Integrating systems thinking that brings systems orientation to evaluation and helps us understand the complexity of its multiple perspectives, diversity, and relationships.

Building relationships that enhance evaluation's theories and practices by connecting your experience with other spheres and sectors.

Session Title: Visionary Evaluation for a Sustainable, Equitable Future

Panel Session to be held in Centennial D-H on Wednesday, Oct 15, 3:15 PM to 4:15 PM

Plenary Leaders: Lovely Dhillon, Matt Keene, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, Beverly Parsons

Abstract: Visionary evaluation encourages us to focus on what we deeply want the world to look like whether or not we can envision it as possible or accessible from where we currently are. Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, 14-year-old youth director of Earth Guardians, joins Beverly Parsons (2014 AEA President), and Matt Keene and Lovely Dhillon (2014 AEA conference program chair and co-chair) to challenge your thinking about a sustainable, equitable future. They will engage you in creating your own version of visionary evaluation that contributes to a future that matters to you, those you serve through your evaluation work, and future generations.

Session Title: A Vision of Corporations Fit for the Future: Implications for Evaluation

General Session to be held in Centennial D-H on Thursday, Oct 16, 9:45 AM to 10:45 AM

Plenary Leader: Bob Willard

Abstract: Corporations are increasingly recognizing their place at the intersection of global economic, environmental, and equity issues. Bob Willard will bring us the business context for corporate social and environmental responsibility and help us see the connection to evaluation.

Bob will highlight the importance of standards and benchmarks as he links the corporate world with the field of evaluation. For example, many corporations are lulling themselves into thinking they are making sufficient progress if they keep nudging forward on their current course and at their current speed. Frequently used standards can easily celebrate progress toward anemic goals instead of goals that make a business fit for a sustainable future. Bob highlights standards that encourage organizations to create positive environmental, social, and economic value so that we have the possibility of sustaining a flourishing economy, society, and ecosystem on our finite planet.

Session Title: Sustainable Evaluation Capacity: A Necessary Foundation for Building an Evidence Base

Panel session to be held in Capitol 6 on Thursday, Oct 16, 3:00-4:30 PM

Session Leaders: Kate Smiles, Dale DeCesare, Holly Yettick, Meg Franko

Abstract: Mile High United Way won a federal Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant in 2011 to support promising early literacy programs in Colorado. The initiative requires all funded programs to reach a moderate to strong level of evidence over the course of the five year funding cycle. With most programs entering the initiative at a preliminary level of evidence, building to a moderate or strong evidence base has also meant building significant evaluation capacity. In this session, evaluation partners for several of the funded programs in this initiative will discuss how they have partnered with their clients to build the evaluation capacity needed to participate in the rigorous research required to reach a moderate or strong level of evidence. Mile High

United Way's cross-site evaluation partner will also discuss the role that the cross-site evaluation has played in fostering sustainable evaluation capacity while building collective evidence across the portfolio.

Session Title: The Significance of Social Impact Measurement for Visionary Evaluation

Panel Session to be held in Centennial D-H on Friday, Oct 17, 9:45 AM to 10:45 AM

Plenary Leaders: Tris Lumley, Nancy MacPherson, Georgette Wong

Panelist: Ian Davies, George Julnes, Thomas Kelly

Moderator: Jane Reisman

Abstract: While public, non-profit, and philanthropic sectors have always been focused on serving the public interest, businesses are increasingly and innovatively creating social impact goals. These businesses include social ventures, social enterprises, corporations, and social investment funds. The increasing number of businesses with social goals highlights a lack of consensus on how to measure or evaluate “social impact.”

Three presenters involved in social impact investing will illuminate trends in the field of social impact measurement. They will then engage in a lively dialogue with three seasoned evaluators about the interplay of key evaluation issues and the trends in social impact measurement. The panel is designed to build our collective knowledge in order to move toward a set of guiding principles to inform both the evaluation and social impact communities.

The presenters are Georgette Wong (Correlation Consulting); Tris Lumley (New Philanthropy Capital and Social Impact Analysts Association); and Nancy McPherson (Rockefeller Foundation). Panelists Ian Davies, Tom Kelly, and George Julnes, will represent the evaluation field in addressing the presenters about how the social impact arena intersects with core principles in the evaluation field. Jane Reisman will moderate this plenary.

Session Title: The W.K. Kellogg Foundation: Building an Aligned Learning and Evaluation System Using Collaborative and Empowerment Approaches to Evaluation

Multipaper session to be held in Granite A on Friday, Oct 17, 1:45-3:15 PM

Session Leaders: David M Fetterman, Linh Nguyen, Pennie Foster-Fishman, Kimberly M James,

Abstract: The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is building an aligned learning and evaluation system. The foundation has a mix of projects and portfolios requiring a variety of evaluation approaches, including collaborative and empowerment evaluation approaches. These approaches are used to help build grantees' capacity and produce outcomes, benefiting vulnerable children and families. One component of the foundation's work includes place-based work. The foundation uses theories of change and action to embed these practices in place. In addition, the foundation is using CARE's Community Commons, and other tools, to help grantees establish baselines and monitor progress over time. Evaluation dashboards have contributed to this alignment by helping Program Officers refocus on overarching goals, as well as providing feedback on progress toward goals. Simultaneously, the foundation has embarked on an educational program to ensure the use of a common evaluation language, the availability of monitoring tools, and a program theory of their initiatives.

Session Title: From Visionary Evaluation to Exemplary Evaluations in a Multicultural World: Learning from Evaluation's Successes Around the Globe Part 1 and Part 2

Panel discussion to be held in Capitol 4 on Friday, Oct 17, 3:30 -4:15 PM (part 1) and 4:30-5:25 PM (part 2)

Session Leaders: Michael Quinn Patton, Stafford Hood, Beverly Parsons, Stewart Donaldson, Marco Segone, Claudine Voyadzis

Abstract: President Beverly Parsons summarizes some of the key findings and insights that have been gleaned about visionary evaluation during 2014. President-elect Stewart Donaldson will introduce AEA's 2015 conference theme, linking it to both Visionary Evaluation and the International Year of Evaluation. The 2015 theme, Exemplary Evaluations in a Multicultural World, aspires to promote sharing and learning from one another about exemplary evaluations and evaluation approaches across diverse cultures and national boundaries. A special emphasis will be placed on learning from extraordinary examples of influential evaluations and enabling environments for evaluation in both developed and developing countries across the globe.

Session Title: AEA's Role in A Sustainable, Equitable Future: A Community Conversation

Panel Session to be held in Centennial D-H on Saturday, Oct 18, 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Plenary Leaders: John A Gargani, Claudine Voyadzis, Michael Scriven, Stewart Donaldson, Rodney K Hopson, Beverly Parsons

Abstract: Join your conference colleagues for table discussions, chats, and tweets about Now What? What is the role of AEA in supporting a sustainable, equitable future for all? How can AEA support your plans for visionary evaluation? How should AEA contribute to the global evaluation community in a way that, as stated in the AEA Guiding Principles, takes into account “the diversity of general and public interests and values... going beyond analysis of particular stakeholder interests to consider the welfare of society as a whole.”

Following table conversations, past, present and future AEA presidents (Michael Scriven, Rodney Hopson, Beverly Parsons, Stewart Donaldson, and John Gargani) and the European Evaluation Society president (Claudine Voyadzis) engage in a conversation about AEA's role in a sustainable, equitable future.

The session ends with our 2014 AEA poem written and read by Susan Robbins based on the conference theme.