



## **Washington Evaluators Board Meeting 1/22/2020 – MINUTES**

In attendance:

Patricia Moore Shaffer, President; Laura O'Brien, Evaluation Without Borders Coordinator; Erin Murrock, Deputy Program Chair; Katherine Braga Communications Chair; Natalie Donohue, Membership Chair; Melissa Chiu, Secretary; Charles Gilman, Deputy Membership Chair; Beeta Tahmassebi, President-Elect; Josh Joseph, Treasurer; Val Caracelli, New Professional and Student Coordinator; Katie Pitts, Program Chair; Mindelyn Anderson, Special Initiatives Coordinator; Melissa Chiu, Secretary; Sue Cottrell, Scholarship Coordinator.

Not in attendance:

Emily Bango, Community Engagement Chair, out of town. Giovanni Dazzo, Past President, is teaching a class on Wednesday nights.

### **Introductions**

Diverse backgrounds of Board members

### **2019 Reflections**

Patricia initiated discussion: What happened, what was successful, and what can we improve upon? Build on the success of last year-- What to keep on our docket?

#### Discussion:

Programs-- increased membership quite a bit last year due to the number of events, but also the types of events: book club, field trips, then hikes, both social and evaluation focused programs. Continue to build on that. A second to that- the programs felt comfortable and it made all the difference.

Weekly newsletter was helpful, board member would send to students. Keep folks linked in to own program and other things going on in the area.

Student conference-- the students do the conference and we mentor them. We haven't gotten one this year. There may be an opportunity to do a roundtable career fair.

People who participated in Evaluation without Borders found it meaningful, and Mentoring program.

Dinners-- nice to talk to colleagues.

Liked combination of the variety of the kinds of activities and different ways to participate in them and take part.

Depending on your interests-- if you wanted a small group discussion or go on a hike, there was an opportunity to do that. Five years ago, it was always a brown bag at 12 noon and always at GWU.

Webinar topics were interesting, and webinar options were helpful because not everyone could get downtown during the day.

### Improvements discussion:

Starting with a thought from Giovanni: Attrition to events.

About 1/3 of registrants show up to TEI events, but if charge even a tiny bit, they are more likely to show up. WE events have 40-70% attrition.

Last year, Program chair and President felt not showing up without notification was rude, especially if there is a waitlist. Nine of 25 people didn't show up for the Pathways to Housing field trip, which WE catered and took dietary preferences and restrictions into account when ordering. Discussed solutions like charging a deposit for event, or charging no-shows afterward, but this felt very punitive.

Are there repeat offenders? A: Yes.

\*Can we exercise the guilt factor, like send a special note to people who don't show up. Note that the event reminders ask people to cancel if they think they can't make it. Last year, people could cancel up to 1 day in advance. After that, the Program chair wanted people to email personally (to reach the Chair faster to email waitlisted people).

\*WE should have a blog post on cancelling registration.

Can we oversubscribe events? - We do. Deep Dive/book clubs register 15 and attrition can be 50%. Still, it's intentionally smaller because it's harder to discuss with too many people.

\*Perhaps personally reach out to people via phone or text. Or do Whatsapp or Groupme (don't have to share phone number). Include people who are waitlisted so they can get in promptly when there's a cancellation, and people wouldn't feel as bad about cancelling late. \*Charlie Gilman to look into how to automate. [Note the WE Wild Apricot site can export registrants to an Excel file.]

Board meetings were a black box until attended a Board meeting. Can we spotlight some things going on in the Board- this has worked in other organizations before.

Secretary: Plans to start posting Board minutes.

\*Could also link to the minutes on the weekly newsletter. Feature or highlight a couple things, contact so and so for specific things/issues, to allow people to take the next step if they wanted to. To open up, not just posting the Board minutes-- Make it personal, make it about the members.

\*WEval Forum-- can add a link to it and add a dedicated discussion stream.

Diversity of members-- Spotlight members in the newsletter. Can we query who has been members longest or participated in a lot of events, etc.

\*\*Spotlight member benefits?

\*Last year, WE did not have a dedicated Communications Chair. There are not enough blog posts or communication about what we do, like Evaluation Without Borders. We weren't feeding our community a lot of information last year. Tell people how to get involved.

### **2020 Plans**

Build on last year's goals.

Build a rich community of practice, interact with each other, experience professional development. Outward facing-- positioning evaluation as a public good, work with organizations so they can build their own capacity to do evaluation.

Strategic plan- instead of doing an offsite, want to use the braintrust tonight to generate ideas. Lay out what we do throughout the year, historically. This is a draft, a conversation starter.

Programs-- high bar set last year, and trying to spread out the work. Membership/Charlie- social events, get people talking with each other. Programs- professional development, Deep Dives, brown bags, webinars, etc.

Ideas: Membership: in May, hold a new members reception. Reach out to new members, meet Board members, etc.

Programs: 2 a month, but can skip a few months too.

\*Communications: WE is scheduled in October to do AEA365 week (a blog a day on AEA's site). A chance to highlight Evaluation Without Borders- One of WE's strongest programs and nationally known.

Students and Young Professionals: If we're not doing a student conference, let's do a career fair. We already do a new professional scholarship competition. What else can we do to engage them?

Crosses into mentorship as well. JEDI group (Rodney). First generation professionals group.

Mentor program: mid-career people who want to make a career transition. Put a panel together about getting into M&E for students, and switching, if mid-career.

Mindelyn did a skill builder at the AEA conference, Finding your Evaluation Identify- a lot of people were career changers, not just students in the audience.

\*Maybe in the fall, build on do an informational/career builder, and then promote joining up, Sept/Oct.

Virtual career fairs. One organization logs in for 10 minutes, and another organization gets the next 10 minutes, etc. Chat, ask questions. This is easier logistically, and better for international development folks to attend.

\*Do we have strategic partnerships for outreach?

Ideas: AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science)- sell science, use science skills for evaluation, people may not know they have evaluation skills. Society for International Development (SID) has a young professionals network. Go to a young professionals meeting. AU teaches short courses on International Development that includes Evaluation- maybe they would let us come in to talk. There's one professor there who is looking for people to do the M&E piece. Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI).

\*Strategy: What do we want to do and offer? And how do we find the communities?

Theme: build evaluation capacity in organizations. If we reach out to org's, we're really selling evaluation to those groups.

**\*Next Steps**

Think about what it looks like, major events and initiatives.

Membership- get the member survey out.

Community Engagement- Laura, Sue- talk over email to condense ideas.

Communications- Couldn't find a Deputy Chair, Reach out to Tameka, who has been a mainstay.

Programs-

Committee chairs to talk about what want to do, test ideas, sounding board. We can vote, get approval to move forward.

Students- not for one committee alone. Anyone who wants to work on the student initiative.

\*Val, Mindelyn, Beeta, Volunteered.

Organizational sponsors:

We used to have joint meetings with other groups, like DC Sociological Society, etc. get ideas from people of different disciplines, which was interesting because we are an interdisciplinary field.

\*Tap into organizational members- they joined for a reason- how do we engage them and be useful to them.

Last year, Natalie took all contacts, sent blast emails, reached out to 70 and only 2-3 joined from that. People seem to join through word of mouth. They get a blurb on the website. We haven't engaged them, but did think we could do that with the career fair.

\*Volunteers: Charlie interested, Mindelyn interested for career fairs.

Membership survey- it's fixing typos, but otherwise ready to launch. But if there's something we want to learn from organizational members?

Or if there's only 15 organizational members, then maybe we do a phone call interview and explore it. \*Beeta, Josh interested.

Once we get the minutes, Natalie will send out survey in Word format.

Reflect and come back next month.

For the student initiative- encourage you to get together before the next meeting to sketch out ideas and bring next month. There may be options to get student volunteers. \*Tap into the University Ambassadors to get student volunteers? Last year, we discussed how we haven't been asking them to do much. \*Also next year AEA will be in DC and we need the University Ambassadors for that.

Mindelyn can brainstorm topics for the newsletter.

Wild Apricot demo for those interested- mainly programs and membership. Melissa wrote a quick start guide, and plans to add more detail, as well as revise the Standard Operating Procedures for Programs.

[END OF MEETING]