



Washington Evaluators Board Meeting 9/16/2020 – MINUTES

In attendance:

Patricia Moore Shaffer, President
Beeta Tahmassebi, President-Elect
Melissa Chiu, Secretary
Natalie Donohue, Membership Chair
Katie Pitts, Program Chair
Katherine Braga Communications Chair
Emily Bango, Community Engagement Chair
Bryce Leary, Mentor Minutes
Sue Cottrell, New Professional Scholarship Coordinator
Laura O'Brien, Evaluation Without Borders Coordinator
Mindelyn Anderson, Special Initiatives Coordinator

Guests:

Esther Nolton
Fanni Farago
Kelly Feltault

Not in attendance:

Josh Joseph, Treasurer
Erin Murrock, Deputy Program Chair
Giovanni Dazzo, Past President
Charles Gilman, Deputy Membership Chair
Val Caracelli, New Professional and Student Coordinator

Agenda:

1. Welcome & Agenda Review

Patricia acknowledged the work Mindelyn did on the Panel. Nice job pulling together speakers. At one point had 170 people signed up-- lots of interest.

Thank you to the Natalie and Esther for membership survey- we'll hear the results tonight.

Task Force on antiracism.

Katherine – for AEA 360 WE blog week.

Election work is underway too.

2. Approval of August meeting minutes [August meeting minutes](#)

Melissa motioned to approve the August meeting minutes. Natalie seconded.

VOTE: all Ayes. Approved.

3. Guest presentation by Bryce Leary, 2020 New Professional Scholarship Recipient

Requirement: How has the scholarship affected you?

Bryce took a course with Michael Quinn Patton. Getting into evaluation theories and ideas. Working with Mercy Corps US to help them review the evaluation project plan, made sure to be community focused.

On the personal front: this helped in job search when he graduated in May. People respond positively when he uses it to show how invested he is in evaluation and bringing his knowledge to the field. He's made it to final round because of the scholarship, pushing into the field.

He's supporting Evaluation Without Borders and looking forward to building DMV community via in Mentor Minutes.

Q: How did you hear about it? Want to do outreach, even to community colleges, people who didn't know they might be interested in it. They're lesser known but have Monitor and Evaluation programs.

A: More personal connections and word of mouth, but time consuming.

Fanni: Heard about it through professor at George Mason, in applied and public sociology. Work in clinical sociology. An idea: interest among her colleagues, hard to hear about it. Make links to professional organizations.

Q: Was there a tip or epiphany moment from the class, or interesting tidbit?

A: UFE course talked about end use of that evaluation. Often piles up on a desk and doesn't go anywhere, maybe it filled a grant requirement. Evaluation can unlock a lot of learning whether for own organization or shared more widely. This was missed in his graduate degree (international development, SIS- USAID requires you to do this.). **Make it useful even if you have to meet a requirement.** Also think about who is reading the evaluation. What does that person want to know?

Susan: Connect with the public and applied anthropology programs especially at AU and the international development programs like at AU. Society of Applied Anthropology.

Beeta will let MQP know it was a good experience for you! We were so glad to have two WE scholars with us! Yes- Bryce keeps talking about the course will all of my classmates and colleagues.

4. Old Business:

a. Membership survey presentation (Natalie, Esther)

Should do a panel- maybe for members only or everyone – in January.

This is a preview of the survey results, will send slides to Board to go through and make revisions. Want to be thoughtful about timing, wanted to better serve members, inform decisions.

207 (53%) of 389 members responded.

Demographics- first time we've ever asked for these questions with this level of granularity. We will share why we asked: to help us understand diversity of our membership and opportunities to ensure inclusivity.

Why did you join? Member motivation – to learn more about evaluation theories and practices, professional connections and contributions. Not all reasons are related to evaluation.

Proposed Board Response: WE builds community period. Not just a community of evaluators. We share resources related to inform evaluation, sponsor activities on diverse topics that are interesting and beneficial. Will Inform the strategic plan.

Programs – top 4: Brown bags 88%, deep dives 44%, Skills building 72%, Social 47%.

Board Response: want monthly events of varying types. Only 10% interested in 'other activities' not necessarily related to evaluation (field trips and non-evaluation-specific, things not suited to Virtual programs). Preferred times: on demand (Skills building). Next: 12-2 pm (Brown Bags/Deep Dives), and 5:30-6 (social events).

Communications – Member digest: member events, evaluation events, jobs and opportunities. Want to know more about how to stay current on their knowledge. Timing: weekly.

Response: M&E training/certificate opportunities desired.

There were no comments on website (do people use the website as a resource?)

Individual emails about events not necessary (for members).

Dues – 82% ok with increase to \$30.

Most ok with auto renew if it's opt in, not opt out. Two-year memberships: 69.

Lapsed memberships: most people moved away from DC area but love WE programs and resources!

Response: might increase AFTER the pandemic. Offer 2-year discounted option. Auto-renew with opt-in.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Generally satisfied. Acknowledge diversity of DC area. Expect WE to implement, not lead DEI.

Response: task force, statement, incorporate in programs, engagement, communications, etc. Should refer back to why we asked the questions.

Volunteer opportunities – Yes 77, Maybe 136.

Response: WE is thrilled to see so many interested members. Look out for emails from Board for more info.

Board commitments for 2021.

Panel QnA.

The survey presentation is on the 15th.

Discussion:

Have a volunteer event in Nov/Dec as move into 2021?

Can we use the website more effectively? As a resource? Open ended question, and people really loved the digest. Even in Lapsed member survey. If there was something they could hold onto, it is that.

Esther is on the AEA Website committee- why do people come to the site and how use it as a resource? Can help share ideas.

Program frequency: monthly. Did you collect feedback on frequency? We've varied from monthly to multiple events a month. –No, didn't ask about frequency, could do in future. Or carve out specific day of the week or month to have consistent event on calendar.

Communications asked about frequency: no more than once a week. (Note that non-members only learn about events via the website or event emails, which go to the entire contact list in Wild Apricot, i.e., if we want to send individual event emails, then members must receive them too.)

People may have said monthly because of virtual environment. There's Zoom fatigue, but after COVID, maybe change this.

We like that people see real value in WE membership.

There were a lot of open-ended comments: largely positive, appreciative, thanked the board. We should acknowledge that, we have a great community, people are thriving. Encouraging.

One thing not mentioned in any detail (it's on the last slide) is that once COVID is over, it would be great to perhaps create a "virtual membership" option. That way we might be able to keep some of the members and even get back some of those lapsed members who only opted out of WE because they moved. However, in the past there was some sensitivity to taking away from other Local Affiliates, especially if it is a lower price than non-virtual membership.

One person noted that WE is the closest affiliate, but DC is hours away, so it's great to have virtual events.

Someone attended the Hawaii/Pacific Conference for \$30. Someone else took Indiana's inclusion training. So people have multiple memberships and it doesn't take away from WE membership.

Someone else noted she's happy that we've moved to a virtual format. She'd had a years-long membership and happy to see these virtual events.

For students: it's a steal. JEDI- best way to learn about jobs. People signed up.

Did people respond based on working from home? Would their preferred times change if they had to physically meet somewhere? Did we ask a question about whether they would be open to Zoom meetings even after the COVID crisis is over?

One person suggested even when we are able to do face to face again, we will want to keep some virtual events for some time. It will be a very long time before some people feel comfortable convening in physical spaces again so a mixed bag makes a lot of sense.

b. Antiracism Ad-hoc Task Force update (Emily) [Updated Antiracism Commitments](#)

Comments on the commitments we published in August. It's a nice opportunity to share these Commitments more broadly.

There were questions on the definition.

Washington Evaluators (WE) understands anti-racism to be an "active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably."¹ WE also understands that evaluation training and practice are privileges that are not exempt from systemic oppression—that oppression pervades our environments, hides beneath data, and emerges in biases. We are committed to upholding the principles and practices of

anti-racism through diversity, inclusion, representation, justice, and equity in our programs, marketing, events, membership, and community engagement.

We put this definition at the top and included a footnote with link: Cited from the [National Action Committee on the Status of Women \(NAC\)](#) International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity as referenced on the [Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre webpage – ‘Anti-Racism Defined’](#).

The way that it makes sense to integrate these into WE’s practices will change over time and we want to be flexible enough to accommodate the changes. This source was chosen because in searching, the group found this definition coming up frequently. Comment: need to be transparent about where and whom we’re citing. We adapted it from Dr. I. Kendi's definition of antiracist. Original language: all races equal and none need developing. Received a comment that no one needs help, we’re post-racial, color-blind mentality. Looked for something else.

Motion to accept these changes. VOTE: YES, approved.

Next Steps

Recommendation 1: send it out with the Digest. Create a section that has DEI updates, maybe panels or other events from broader community, to request feedback on the Commitments and to let people know we’re starting strategic planning process. And integrating these principles into programming moving forward.

Recommendation 2: Programming- not just integrating, but also having separate events- so people interested have a designated place to go.

Could be either a pop up section or a permanent section, CREA Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment. Like being able to highlight events we feel strongly about or someone in WE participating in some way. May not need to be there every digest. Can we integrate them through, rather than segregate, and call them out in a special way?

Someone suggested threading resources and events throughout. Anti-racism threaded through the work not siloed.

Maybe an icon next to events and reads? An icon for emerging evaluators? And other icons, e.g., for social events. People seemed to like the idea of having icons as a quick signal of the content.

Recommendation 3 for this week: start RFP process to identify a facilitator. Impact on the strategic planning process? Continued outreach to community, town halls. Identify a consultant to facilitate discussions. Integrate decisions into strategic plan.

Longer term: have other feedback sessions.

We don’t need an official vote of approval on the RFP tonight. Patricia and other will start writing it and come back with something to review and approve. People noted support to hire a contractor. We have the money and desire to bring in a specialist and learn from them.

What would the budget be so we can scope the work? **Let the Task Force know.**

There are funds we’ve accumulated over the years. This is an important issue and other LA’s have invested in this kind of work. We might speak to Josh about what is good, to get good work, but not break us financially.

Also, for this year and next, is this consistent with Beeta’s vision? Yes, that’s why she’s on the Task Force. Make sure it gets follow through. Where it makes the most sense, then get the RFP out there. We’re already starting the strategic plan. Boston evaluators hired externally. Maybe Chicago area affiliate as well. Beeta may ask what other affiliates did, share their RFPs, what did they do and how much did it cost. **If you know of other efforts, let Beeta know.**

AEA lists all area affiliates so we can start there with emails to leadership. Beeta has an email list for all the local affiliates and can put out a call.

Tentatively: Need one month for draft RFP, budget, and written plan on moving forward for the Board to see ahead of time and vote on it. Could vote by email.

We’re not in a rush for strategic planning. Do we rush now or go through a board process? Some prefer to be expedient. Depends on outreach to other Affiliates. Can start now and aim for it.

c. Strategic Planning Process (Patricia, Beeta, Emily) [Strategic Planning Process](#)

Board will discuss for half a day. Then provide opportunity for draft feedback, comments period, then Board approves the plan. We want more engagement with membership in a much deeper way that is aligned with our anti-racism principles.

WE Strategic Planning Process (Draft, Sept. 16, 2020)

WE Board Meeting: Present draft plan for strategic planning to Board for feedback	Sept. 16, 2020
Post plan for strategic planning on website with links to materials, including organizational history, previous strategic plans, and antiracism guiding principles and practices	Sept. 30, 2020
WE Program: WE membership survey presentation and panel discussion <i>*Preview town hall event and introduce pathways for members to engage with strategic planning</i>	Oct. 16, 2020 <i>(Post meeting note: event cancelled due to low registration)</i>
WE Board Meeting: Vision and future direction discussion	Oct. 21, 2020
Member/Community Engagement activities	TBD
WE Board Virtual Retreat: Finalize strategic framework (i.e., strategic goals and objectives), followed by goal team meetings to finalize strategies <i>Invite 2021 board members to participate (optional)</i>	TBD
WE Board Meeting: Initial strategic plan draft for discussion/review	TBD
WE Board Meeting: Strategic plan draft for board review Opportunity for member comments following board meeting	TBD
WE Board Meeting: Strategic plan for board vote	TBD
WE Board Meeting: 2021 action plan development for discussion	TBD
WE Board Meeting: 2021 action plan draft for approval	TBD

We will have a needs assessment process to understand what members want from us. Establish dialogue. At the October Board meeting, we’ll begin to engage the Board for visioning, broader goals.

Community engagement activities: the facilitator would help and give us feedback. This is a powerful process for us that could take a couple months. Then the hard work of the Board begins. We'll do a virtual retreat to establish goals and objectives. Break it up into goal teams, according to interests and competencies.

We are not voting tonight – this is just an initial briefing as we are ok on time. We want to do this right.

Do we need more engagement peppered throughout? Need multiple ways and venues for engagement: anonymously, public meeting, email, etc. Consultant could provide guidance to us on what are those engagement activities, give an outline using our initial ideas, and help us take it across the finish line.

d. 2021 Officers Election (Melissa)

This year we need to elect a Treasurer and the President-Elect. The Nominations Form was opened on September 1 (<https://washingtonevaluators.org/sys/website/?pageId=1816513>). Natalie provided a list of members for Board members to suggest nominees. Beeta has been reaching out, Not just limited to Beeta to reach out; Anyone can encourage anyone to reach out. We put into the Weekly Digest multiple weeks to advertise.

The nominations deadline is September 30. The schedule for the remainder of the election cycle is:

Meet the Candidates event	October 6	Secretary and Programs Chair
Ballot prepared, voting opens (link sent to membership)	October 7	Secretary
Voting concludes; votes tallied	October 26	Secretary, Membership Chair (validates results)
Notification of results to candidates	October 29	President-Elect
Announcement of election results	October 30	Secretary, Communications Chair

For the Meet the Candidates event – will we promote it? YES. We want transparency, engagement, and democracy. Last year no members attended the event and one candidate couldn't attend, so it became an impromptu Board meeting. Last year 57 people voted in the election. It was a low percentage (but higher than AEA's voting rate!). Also, this year's vote will be held open for a shorter period of time and won't have bylaw changes. So, we'd like more engagement.

The event date is added to the Nominations Form so that nominees are aware they are expected to attend the event. The Nominees statements will be added to the webpage temporarily. Someone suggested that candidates who can't make it could submit a recorded message. Someone suggested that if people could submit questions ahead of time, that might increase participation. Finally, record the event to make it available afterwards.

e. AEA 365 week update (Katherine, Laura) <https://aea365.org/blog/>

Every year, WE has one week on the AEA blog. We post every day for 6 days that week, providing “hot tips”, “rad resources”, “lessons learned,” and “cool tricks.” This year, WE is focusing on EWB as a rad resource. Our week starts Oct 18. The plan for authors:

Giovanni: founded the EWB program.

Next 2: former evaluators

Next 2: client perspective, working with resources the team developed.

Laura: final day, reflecting on the experience this year.

We don't need support. Will get a backup blog from Atlanta- they have a similar program, but they posted in January. Thank you to Laura to corral all these blogs!

Patricia thanked everyone for being super engaged and raising questions, making change happen.

Did not discuss New Business or 6. Other Committee Updates.

7. Adjournment: **8:13 pm.**