Washington Evaluators

Evaluation Without Borders

Giving back to the Washington, DC community and beyond

PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Background:
The first round of Evaluation Without Borders took place during the 2016 American Evaluation Association conference in Washington, D.C., when Washington Evaluators created the initiative to provide conference-goers with a way where they can meaningfully connect and give back to the Washington, DC non-profit community. The pilot initiative connected program evaluators attending the conference with local community-based organizations in need of program planning, measurement and evaluation services for short-term projects. The project was replicated during the 2017 AEA conference in Cleveland, and in 2018 WE decided to make the initiative a permanent part of WE’s programming. The first round of projects was completed in 2019, with 2020 marking the second official year of the program.

Purpose:
Evaluation without Borders was created in the spirit of evaluation as a public good. Our goals are to:

- Create opportunities for local, national and international non-profits to engage in evaluation.
- Create opportunities for evaluators to learn about and give back to their communities.
- Create opportunities for volunteers to learn from each other and strengthen the WE community.

How it works:
For each pro bono project, the EWB Coordinator brings together a team of local evaluators interested in providing services. Teams will work on projects that vary based on the needs and assets of each nonprofit and community-based organization. The timeframe of each project will vary; however, memoranda of understanding will be developed to establish expectations between evaluation teams and clients. After each project has been completed, Washington Evaluators will follow up with evaluation teams and clients in order to learn how the program can continue to be improved.

FAQ’s

What kind of skills are needed from volunteers?
- Program design and planning (theories of change, logic model development)
- Performance measurement (indicator design, developing tracking systems)
- Program evaluation research (research design, developing surveys, conducting research)
- Data analysis (quantitative, qualitative, GIS mapping) and data visualization (dashboards, infographics)
- Strategic planning (mission and goal setting)
- Training in evaluation fundamentals

How does the matching work?
1. Non-profits complete client interest form by March 31.
2. Volunteers complete pro bono evaluator interest form by March 31.
3. EWB matches clients and volunteers based on needs and skills. We will seek to create teams of 3-4 volunteers per project, made up of volunteers with diverse skill sets, experience, and desired time commitments.
4. EWB will contact volunteers with information about the potential match and confirm the volunteers’ participation in early April. We will host a kickoff session around then to provide a more detailed overview of the process and allow volunteers to meet their team.
5. EWB will connect the volunteer teams and the client organization by email.
6 Volunteers will reach out to the organization to set up an initial meeting and co-develop the MOU.
7. Volunteers will provide EWB with a copy of the signed MOU before beginning work.

When will matching happen?
EWB will be matching projects in rounds, with the next round beginning in April 2020. Subsequent rounds are TBD but volunteers and organizations can submit interest forms at any time.

What will help the project be a success?
- Establish lines of communication. Decide how you will communicate as a team, and how the team will communicate with the client organization.
- Set goals and expectations. Determine overall goals for the project together with the client, and spell out what the roles and responsibilities of the team and the clients will be. Use the MOU to record the decisions and refer back to it during the project as needed.
- Set up a structure for the team. Select a team leader, and make time to learn about each others’ skills, backgrounds, and interests. Discuss how each member will participate, including time and scheduling considerations.
- Don't promise more than you can deliver. We would like clients to set realistic expectations about evaluation services.
- Projects should be time-bound, but it's OK if you need to shift deadlines if both team and client agree.
- Communicate with the EWB Coordinator if you have any questions or need additional volunteer support. Other pro bono evaluators may be available or they may be able to offer different skills.

Can I participate remotely/virtually as a volunteer?
In the interest forms, we ask volunteers to indicate if they prefer to support a DC-based organization vs a non-DC US-based organization vs an international organization. If working with a DC-based client, we encourage teams to meet in person with clients initially and periodically thereafter. If supporting a non-DC based organization, it is expected that communication will take place virtually, and EWB will work with the teams to ensure that the appropriate tech solution (Skype, Zoom, etc.) is available to allow for optimized participation.

Any other questions?
Please reach out to Laura O’Brien, the 2020 EWB Coordinator, at communityengagement@washingtonevaluators.org