

Washington Evaluators 2021: A Year in Review

Dear Washington Evaluators,

As I look back on 2021, I am in awe of all that WE accomplished and I'm grateful to the board members who juggled their personal and professional commitments while still making space to serve. It was a year in which we were committed to building on the strengths of the past while also finding new ways of engaging and creating value for our membership and community. With a focus on inclusivity and access, we needed to develop a strategic plan that would help guide the affiliate in the years ahead. As such, we are proud of the progress made on all of our goals!

Strategic Planning

Washington Evaluators needed to develop the 2021-2024 strategic plan last year and we all felt that this was an ideal opportunity to imbed our 2020 antiracism commitments into our strategies and engage the evaluation community in a conversation about what WE needed to focus on moving forward. Recognizing that we might benefit from additional support, we hired Paragon Education Consulting to help us. The Paragon team facilitated a series of meetings on diversity, inclusion, equity, and antiracism within our local affiliate and field of practice. To allow for additional inputs from the community, a survey was also distributed through an asynchronous forum. 61 participants completed the survey and findings revealed a clear mandate for WE to center the advancement of equity and embodiment of antiracism throughout the organization. Paragon's report – [Planning Towards Equity: Integrating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Antiracism into Washington Evaluators](#) – was published on our website in the summer of 2021.

Using the input gleaned from our members in the sessions with Paragon, the WE Board worked collaboratively through online sessions to prepare the organization's strategic plan and posted the draft document for members' feedback prior to the Board reviewing and approving the final plan in late summer 2021. The final product – the [Washington Evaluators 2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#) – is available on our website, along with an accompanying [action plan](#).

Expanding our Reach

One of our goals for 2021 was to expand our reach by welcoming in new, emerging and experienced evaluators, increasing their engagement and sense of belonging. We started the year with 370 members and ended with 575 – an increase in membership of more than 60%. We doubled our student members, increased the number of [organizational sponsors](#) from 14 to 20, and saw our membership grow worldwide with members spanning 11 different countries on five continents. We are confident that our incredible programming, services and communications efforts all played a role in membership expansion. Their key functions are described below.



Powerful Programming

In 2021, due to the COVID pandemic, we decided to go virtual for all events and programs, and this allowed us to try new things and reach new people. We were able to invite speakers and welcome attendees from around the world. With some investments in technology upgrades and good planning procedures, we were able to transition to the virtual format with ease and deliver high quality programs for our members. We also increased access to the content by providing event materials and recordings to WE members afterwards, even if they did not register or attend. If you are a WE member, you can find those resources [here](#).

Incredibly, we were able to more than double our programming from 2020 resulting in about 47 virtual [events](#) in 2021. We are proud to say that all of our events had a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism - both in their content as well as invitees, audience members, and presenters. Overall, our conversations and connections through programming and events brought us closer together as a community.

Community Engagement

WE's Community Engagement Committee includes three programs: [Mentor Minutes](#), [Evaluation Without Borders](#), and the [New Professional Scholarship](#). A group of phenomenal volunteers execute the activities of these programs which are each led by a coordinator. WE also invites evaluation faculty in the DC region to serve as their institution's University Ambassador to enhance how WE engages students. In 2021, WE awarded four professional scholarships, had three Evaluation without Borders engagements, and matched 30 mentees with mentors in the WE community!

Open Lines of Communication

We knew that we wanted 2021 to be all about engagement and taking a hard look at all of our systems and processes, while working toward improvement. To this end, we started 2021 with [a call to members](#), laying out our priorities for the year and asking them to get involved and help. Throughout the year, we did a number of things to create space for engagement with members and non-members alike. These opportunities in turn presented us with inputs that were invaluable in our strategic planning process.

Regular communications through our social media channels and our weekly digest were greatly appreciated by our membership. Our incredible communications team worked hard to share the latest resources, information on upcoming programs and training events as well as jobs and other opportunities.



Strong Stewardship of Financial Resources

We began 2021 with \$21,333.01 and ended the year with \$26,085.20. We brought in \$13,510.65 after fees and spent \$8,953.21, which left us with an excess of \$4,557.44. Our biggest expenses in 2021 were the \$3500 we spent on hiring Paragon Consulting to support our DEIA discussions, and \$2,297.25 in insurance expenses. Significant differences in budgeting for 2021 as compared to other years was the absence of WE's contributions or funding of in-person events due to COVID-19.

In Conclusion

2021 was a year in which we all felt a real urgency to come together to effect positive change in the field of evaluation. I learned so much during my time as President of WE and feel that we made good progress toward our affiliate's goals. It is with great confidence that I am passing the baton over to [Esther Nolton](#), our 2022 WE President. I will close with the same call to action I put forth at the beginning of 2021. The best way to support progress is to get involved and to help. It's only through our collective efforts that we can make the changes we want to see. With such an incredible community, Washington Evaluators likely has it's best days ahead and I look forward to all that is still to come!

Beeta Tahmassebi
2021 Washington Evaluators President