

Evaluation Fundamentals: Insights into Program Effectiveness, Quality, and Value

Though we are surrounded by evaluation, evaluators sometimes have trouble explaining their profession. The usage, value, and need for evaluations is not always commonly understood by outsiders. Even within our membership, how evaluation is defined can differ greatly based on field, background, education, or interest.

To provide insight into the purpose and focus behind evaluation, we have asked a few of our members to speak to what evaluation means to them, how they approach evaluation, and what they find rewarding in their work.

Broken into different sectors, their perspective on the field of evaluation can help you articulate need and basic understanding of the work that you accomplish year over year.

To learn more about evaluation, download the What is Evaluation statement. This statement was developed by an AEA Task Force commissioned by the AEA Board to “define and communicate the value of evaluation to the media, the public, and other audiences as well as be used comfortably by evaluators throughout the field without regard for specialty or area of expertise.” The Task Force was comprised of both long-time evaluation professionals and AEA members newer to the profession. All have experience and expertise in communicating to others about evaluation.

Organizational Evaluation

Governments, businesses, not-for-profit agencies, philanthropic foundations, and international organizations around the world use evaluation evidence to find out what is and is not effective.

Eric Barela works for Salesforce and is the first measurement & evaluation professional employed by the company. He has expertise in helping organizations use evaluation findings to improve both programs for key stakeholders and processes designed to measure a company's social impact. His insights show why evaluation is important in a corporate setting and why his company places a high value on measurement & evaluation.

Teaching Evaluation

Evaluators come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and community backgrounds, bringing to the profession a wide variety of experiences, training, and skills. Currently, there is no official licensing body for evaluators. However, many higher learning organizations offer programs or courses in evaluation to prepare students for a career as an evaluator.

Karen Jackson teaches in the Leadership Studies and Adult Education department at North Carolina A&T State University. Karen teaches students in a variety of disciplines the methodological skills, cultural competence, and specialized knowledge to be evaluators. Karen shares insights on how she helps her students understand what evaluation is and how it can be used in different work settings.

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Independent Evaluator or Consultant

Independent evaluation can increase public confidence. The use of an outside source can independently verify fiscal responsibility, organizational health, accomplishments, and resource allocation.

Karen Jackson and Jara Dean-Coffey both work as independent evaluators to discover insights and data to inform decision making for their clients.

Reference

[A Guide to Disseminating Your DNP Project](#)

[Social Class and Classism in the Helping Professions: Research, Theory, and Practice](#)