

Evaluation as a Professional Discipline in Government

Debra J. Rog, Ph.D.
Westat
American Evaluation Association

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Propitious Time for Evaluation

- Increasing roles for evaluation, especially at the federal level with focus on effectiveness, accountability, and performance measurement
- Evaluation is growing as a discipline and profession, domestically and globally
- Community of support continues to grow across and within sectors

Overview of Today's Presentation

- Provide a brief understanding of the ways in which evaluation is growing as a profession
- Review the resources that are available to help in building evaluation capacity
- Describe the role that AEA is playing to foster and support this growth

Growth in Evaluation Networks

- Incredible global growth in the last 5-10 years
 - Only 5 national and regional associations prior to 1995
 - Now 82 networks and counting across the world
- Growth is a reflection of increased demand for evaluation globally, need for professional support and community, and for interest in quality evaluation

Role for Evaluation Networks and Societies

- Importance of **building community**
 - Providing professional and collegial support
 - Providing vehicles for communicating
 - Emphasizing shared mission, vision, and values
 - Helping establish professional identity for evaluators and
 - Fostering the role of evaluation as a central function in good governance
- Having a network that embraces **varying perspectives**
 - Providing a forum for a 'disputatious society'
 - Allowing for diversity of theories, approaches, and methods that can foster quality evaluation

Growth in the American Evaluation Association

- Began officially in 1986
 - Roots in two organizations that had begun in 1970s (Evaluation Research Society and Evaluation Network)
- Current membership is at nearly 6,000 members (5,785)
 - 60% growth since 2003 (3,759 members)
 - Members from all 50 states and over 80 countries
- Continue to show signs of growth, diversity, and stability
 - Membership and conference attendance increases from year to year
 - Over last five years, finally have achieved financial stability

American Evaluation Association: Evaluation Policy

- Established an Evaluation Policy Task Force (EPTF) in 2007
- Charge is to assist AEA in developing an ongoing capability to influence **evaluation policies** that are critical to the practice of evaluation
- Examples – US policies regarding:
 - Defining evaluation
 - Requirements of evaluation
 - Evaluation methods
 - Human resources regarding evaluation
 - Evaluation budgets
 - Evaluation implementation
 - Evaluation ethics

American Evaluation Association: Evaluation Policy (cont.)

- To guide AEA on two key tasks:
 - Consultative campaign related to federal evaluation policy
 - Develop public presence, especially through the development of collateral materials
- George Grob, current AEA Policy Consultant working with the Staff and the AEA Board

Examples of AEA's Policy Work To Date

- Comments on OMB PART Guidance document
- Meeting with and presentation to work group of OMB's Performance Improvement Council
- Development of one page hand-outs describing evaluation and evaluators and what they can offer to effective government
- Development of "An Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government"

Focus of Evaluation Roadmap

- Transforming the Federal management culture to one that incorporates evaluation as an essential management function
- Making program evaluation integral to managing government programs at all stages
 - from planning and initial development
 - through start-up, ongoing implementation, appropriations, and reauthorization.

Evaluation Roadmap Framework

- Scope and Coverage of Evaluation
- Management
- Quality and Independence
- Transparency

Evaluation Scope and Coverage

- As a tool throughout the life-cycle of programs and policies
- Evaluate to support and inform program decision-making and management
- Tailor approach and methods to the questions, program and context, audience
 - Range of approaches likely required

Evaluation Management

- Administered by professionals with competence in evaluation
- Guided by annual and long-term evaluation plans, and written evaluation policies
- Provided sufficient and stable sources of funds
- Provided high level support for evaluation

Quality And Independence

- Preserve and promote objectivity
- Develop and adopt quality standards
- Promote use of robust set of appropriate methods
- Safeguard the independence of the evaluation functions

Transparency

- Consult with Congress and other stakeholders
- Disseminate accountability findings in broad public and timely manner
- Create clearing houses and encourage secondary analyses

Important Roles for an Evaluation Community

- **Legitimizing** the role of evaluation in good governance
- Providing the '**conscience**' for **ethical and quality practice**
- Fostering **capacity building** for individuals and organizations
 - Focus not just on tools for evaluation inquiry, but ***evaluation thinking*** as well
 - Focus context fit of evaluation approaches
- Promoting a **culture** of evaluation and **creating demand**