



Washington Evaluators Board Meeting 5/20/2020 – MINUTES

In attendance:

Patricia Moore Shaffer, President
Beeta Tahmassebi, President-Elect
Melissa Chiu, Secretary
Josh Joseph, Treasurer
Katie Pitts, Program Chair
Erin Murrock, Deputy Program Chair
Natalie Donohue, Membership 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
Val Caracelli, New Professional and Student Coordinator
Giovanni Dazzo, Past President
Charles Gilman, Deputy Membership Chair

Guests:

Bethany Woodson – new member, past month, new to DC, budget analyst for DHS, looking to shift into Evaluation. Excited about the group's programming
David Bernstein – owner of DJB evaluation, consulting, Gaithersburg MD. Longtime member and past president. Helped with virtual cocktail hour later this month.
Tara Rice – Federal Government: HHS, evaluation specialist, just joined WE 3 months ago.
Jacqueline Singh – Indianapolis, WE since 2 years, longer Eval Action. Originally from Philly, family in DC. WE supports M&E. Online programming
Martha Muco Museo- General Dynamics for State Dept and USDA
Pamela Rao – worked with WE years ago as website coordinator, was FDA, starting her own business

Not in attendance: Mindelyn Anderson, Special Initiatives Coordinator

Agenda:

1. Welcome & Agenda Review (Patricia Moore Shaffer)

Exciting despite the pandemic. Programs: We held Michael Quinn Patton's Deep Dive online. He was very interested in doing it. Before that was Donna Mertens. Amazing how much we can do virtually.

Sue Cottrell has done a lot of work on the New Professional Scholarships. Congratulations to Fanni Farago and Bryce Leary. Thanks also to Tina, Giovanni, and Val. We plan to bring the recipients to present to the board, how they utilized funds and where they're going.

Emily Bango and Laura O'Brien launched Evaluation Without Borders (EWB).

We published our Action Plan for 2020. Tonight we'll discuss the budget. Next month we'll look at Action plan and see where we are.

We are posting high quality communications from Katherine Braga.

We had a nice member spotlight of Stacey Merola.

2. Approval of [April 15 Meeting Minutes](#)

Melissa Chiu motioned to approve; seconded by Patricia Moore Shaffer:

VOTE: Approved, no nays.

3. Old Business:

a. [Directors and Officers Insurance](#) (Josh Joseph)

Josh did further investigation into directors and officers insurance, which is liability insurance for the activities of the organization. WE has no employees, the Board members are those who are personally liable, if someone brought a suit against us. He got quotes and learned:

We are a unique organization because we have activities that we conduct but no physical structure and no employees. The insurance industry for nonprofits is catching up to organizations like us. Directors and Officers insurance typically offers coverage we don't need like employees, and it also doesn't cover things that matter to us. Once he finds an agent to talk about what we need, we can get tailored insurance to cover what our activities actually are.

The main activities where we could be liable, where someone could bring suit is how we deal with our fiduciary responsibilities. We hold events that may be unfair.

We offer advice: we mentor, and, in Evaluation Without Borders we give pro bono advice. That is free, but individual or organizations can feel that by taking the advice, it may not work out the way they want, and they could bring suit. This is “errors and omissions.”

For our gatherings, e.g., field trips, brown bags, annual party, there could be liability issues for events, especially if held in a place that doesn’t have their own insurance.

The personal risk to the Board is high: damages and cost of defense. Insurance covers the defense, legal costs on the front end, and if found against us, would cover that as well.

The \$1200 estimate in the budget was accurate up until today. Josh now understands the increase is in the range. It’ll be predicated on our annual income, i.e., based on the amount of money we take in. The estimated range is \$1200-\$1700 annually. We’re still information gathering, so not taking a vote today. Want to make sure not putting families at risk too.

Would we have to cut something out to accommodate this expense? – It depends, but unlikely. We have \$21k in research fund. The anticipated budget right now has a shortfall of \$700-1000, depending on the estimate.

Someone noted that the prices aren’t bad, as personal business insurance costs about half that.

Have we considered asking individuals to sign waivers as part of mentor program or activity? – We do have disclaimers on the website. We initially had disclaimers for Mentor Minutes. For EWB, haven’t had a waiver because parties sign an MOU which says that WE is not responsible for advice feedback as a result of the project. Do we want a lawyer to look at the waivers and disclaimers? Are they legally enforceable?

We need to find someone who has the right information for our situation. There are more tailored ways to get what we need. We want to get information, but not sure what to ask for. The Local Affiliates Collaborative has 30+ affiliates and many have insurance – we may be able to get their information and coverage.

There also could be EEO-related issues, such as disability, unfairness, or discrimination (e.g., WE holds hikes, the holiday party was not wheelchair accessible). No waiver protects WE from that. Additionally, sexual harassment, e.g., Mentor-Mentee, could be an issue.

Additionally, there could be issues about communications and which content we select for reposting. We don’t have many criteria, no matrix to go through in order to publish. There’s concern about publishing something that may have been a poor idea. Which jobs are chosen to promote, for example. We don’t have a privacy policy posted on our website. Always concerned about responsible data handling.

For the prices quoted, one member felt that insurance is an imperative AND also to keep the waivers in place.

In the discussion, many Board members leaned towards obtaining the insurance. The examples were helpful for asking questions about coverage. The Board thanks Josh for exploring options.

Josh will let Patricia know mid-month if there is a proposal to put to a vote and she will put on agenda for June.

b. [2020 Budget](#) – Vote (Josh Joseph)

The first Budget was too high, planning to run a deficit. So due to the pandemic, some of the events and community engagement changed, and we tightened up. Posted the updated budget, which includes an estimate for the insurance.

Josh introduced the budget. The main changes since last time: the in-person meetings that would have happened with Mentor Minutes and EWB that were taken off, as was money for scholarships related to travel and meals. Added a pin for liability insurance. The budget is nearly balanced now with a \$600-1000 deficit depending on estimate of liability insurance. Also included monthly reports on income and expenditures this year.

We were concerned about loss of membership in the pandemic, but overall, we are doing well, surprisingly, so Patricia personally feels comfortable. The income was conservative and expenditures were fairly liberal.

The biggest expense is the holiday party.

The Scholarship is considerably higher than last year. One 2-day and one 1-day attendance to the TEI conference. Also included the AEA membership (1 person) in the budget. Correction: Last year we didn't include AEA membership but did include WE membership. Last year, TEI, through their generosity, and through Beeta, offered one of the scholarships. This year, TEI might be able to offer the 1-day scholarship, but they are in a different position this year. Do we keep the AEA membership for one person? – We committed to the WE membership, but decided not to offer the AEA membership. Beeta could offer a free spot in one of the upcoming ELC classes. Emily will email the revised total for the New Professional Scholarship.

New Professional Scholarship does not support attendance at the AEA Conference.

What is the Paul L. Johnson Scholarship? – Paul Johnson was a past president and was President for many years. He was a warm man and mentor to many. In 2013 after he passed away, to honor him, WE set up the scholarship to sponsor students to attend AEA. It works like the AEA student registration where students work some time at the conference, and then WE asks for donations to support it, when the AEA conference is in DC. Next in 2021—decided to wait for 2021. (This year, we are not even sure if Portland is happening. It will either be a downscaled Portland conference OR a virtual conference, not both.) So it's every 4 years and by donation, during Beeta's year as President. Should we do a matching approach? Dollar for dollar, assuming the coffers are healthy. Like new graduate students.

<https://washingtonevaluators.org/johnsonscholarship>

Josh motioned to approve the budget with the discussed changes to the New Professional Scholarship. People have a sense of the range of those changes and Josh will make adjustments later. Beeta Seconded. **VOTE: Approved, no nays.**

c. Career Fair (Beeta Tahmassebi)

WE had to cancel the Career fair planned for the end of March due to COVID. Discussed a virtual career fair.

There is uncertainty for organizations around hiring too. What is more realistic is a panel event to reach out to organizations that were planning to be a part of the initial event. The panel would provide tips and advice for people on getting jobs, and give information about available opportunities to people looking for jobs. Two dates: June 4, 9. Mindelyn is happy to organize the online component of it. Then we advertise it. This way we do something, even if it's not what we were thinking. Thought it was too ambitious to do breakout rooms if people aren't really hiring.

In principle do we like this interim type of event?

We could do it with only organizations that have opportunities. It needs to have an opportunity attached, otherwise it's a tantalizing disappointment.

On the other hand, maybe it's about how we market it. Organizations could talk about the experience they look for, the types of jobs or evaluators they have. Could have Mentors for MM serve on the panel.

There is value in an informational session. One member gave a guest lecture to graduate students and they had many career and data questions. The event could be like the Consultants dinner or Consultants panel – it's the business side of evaluation. It's still of value, but different.

If we do find people who have positions open, we would make sure to post in the Digest and the WE forum. They could just add that they are also looking at the end of their talk/advice.

Decided to hold an informational event. Will touch base with the Program Committee to coordinate dates. Early June seems too early.

4. Committee Reports:

a. Communications (Katherine Braga)

There is lots of content, almost becoming too long.

b. Community Engagement (Emily Bango, Sue Cottrell, Laura O'Brien)

Emily noted that Sue and Laura have done amazing work.

Regarding the Scholarship program, Sue noted she was thrilled we received 8 applications and 2 winners. She thanked the team who reviewed the applications, especially since things were delayed and it was a short turnaround.

Fanni Farago is at George Mason, a different school than we've received applications from. Bryce Leary is at American University. Katherine got the member spotlights out so quickly- well done.

For Evaluation Without Borders, Laura noted that Tara, a guest at the meeting, is a part of the program. WE started it a few years ago to connect members. We connected to DC nonprofits then expanded to international organizations. Received applications for volunteers and organizations over the last few months. Over the last few weeks did some matching and the kick-off was this past Friday.

Currently there are 29 volunteers and 24 came to the kick off webinar. There were breakout sessions where people talked with each other on their teams for a few minutes. There are 6 client organizations:

- Institut pour la Santé, la Population et le Développement (ISPD) (Institute for Health Population, and Development) in Haiti – HIV
- Arts Education Partnership in DC and Denver
- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Development Fund in Bhutan
- Historic Triangle Messmer Community Services Coalition in Williamsburg, VA
- Community Health Partners in Kenya – arts and mental health support
- One Common Unity in DC

It's a beautiful mixture. We connected them with their clients, made initial contact. There's risk: organizations haven't been responsive; it could be due to COVID-19. Laura may have to reach out a few times. People are excited and happy with their matches. Have monthly check ins, and want ongoing peer learning. We will ask people to share the experience through blogging, with the permission of client. Laura's on a team too. Team effort.

c. Membership (Natalie Donohue)

As of today, there are 414 active members, 11 organizational sponsors. We lost IREX as an org sponsor. Natalie will reach out. Erin Murrock used to work there.

Member Survey in June – do we still want to do this? Do we want to ask COVID-related questions, such as activities we want to attend? It implies we'd do more than virtual programs at the moment. How do people feel about in-person events?

The white water rafting trip that some people have paid for, need to talk with the company about getting reimbursement unless the event is canceled. WE will withdraw the sponsorship of it.

Multiple people suggested not to do in-person events until we get the liability insurance. Otherwise, September at the earliest. We yet haven't planned anything to September.

Patricia will follow up with Natalie on the survey. We're in a new context, so to find out what members want in this time is valuable.

d. Programs (Katie Pitts)

Katie has numerous ideas for virtual programming through August. Had a Deep Dive May 6, June 10. Now looking at Deep Dives for July 8 and August 12.

Could have cocktail/mocktail events with conversations and breakout rooms. Typically about 10 minutes in, it can get boring or content can get weird. So, could do life experiences bingo, e.g., I've run a race before, I've jumped out of a plane. Could do it in breakout room.

Could do virtual tours, museums and virtual sites around the world are holding these.

Side by side screen or a video, or playing a scavenger hunt. Could have MacGyver- themed music, say: if you have a rubberband, coffee cup, and a key, and people are to come up with the most creative thing using these items.

Could have a themed month with a 2-page article, e.g., Pride month then build out discussions.

Deep Dives: Our Zoom account allows up to 100 people, but we usually register 95 to give leeway. Topics we should be seeking for deep dives. What have we been reading around COVID-19, and tap someone to lead discussion. If someone has a book to sell, they might want to do it for free to promote the book. So keep an eye on the AJE book reviews. Steven Putansu, June 10, has a book published recently.

Beeta can ask if someone on her team is willing to do one on how to move meetings to sessions online.

5. New Business – SKIPPED

Patricia: WE typically take a break in the summer, take July off, return in August. Next month look at Action Plan and see where we are.

6. Adjournment – 8:02 p.m.