

AEA 2012: Call for Proposals

Greetings Environmental Program Evaluation TIG members!

AEA's Annual Conference will meet this year in Minneapolis from October 24 through 27. The theme for this year's conference is *Evaluation in Complex Ecologies: Relationships, Responsibilities, Relevance*. This theme, chosen by AEA President Rodney Hopson, is sure to resonate with environmental program evaluators. We are excited to see and hear your recent contributions to environmental evaluation! Your evaluation work regarding energy programs, climate change practices and policies, conservation biology, environmental policy & management, environmental & conservation education, or any other kind of environmental program are all welcome. Similarly, topics that intersect with the interests of other TIGs --such as PreK-12 Education, Evaluation Use, Disaster & Emergency Management Evaluation, Qualitative Methods, Quantitative Methods: Theories and Design, etc. – offer terrific opportunities for co-sponsorship.

There are many different session formats that can be proposed including demonstrations, expert lectures, roundtables, posters, think tanks, papers, panels, idea exchange and skill-building workshops. You can also submit a proposal for a 3, 6 or 12 hour professional development workshop. New this year, AEA will sponsor *The Saturday Lunch Brown Bag Idea Exchange!* These small, informal, discussion-based gatherings are aimed at building networks and sharing ideas. To explore the types of submissions that can be proposed, please visit <http://www.eval.org/eval2012/12sessiontypes.htm>.

The deadline for submitting your proposal(s) is midnight (Eastern US Time Zone) **March 16th, 2012**. Instructions on submitting proposals can be found at: <http://www.eval.org/eval2012/12proposals.htm>. Frequently asked questions can be accessed at <http://www.eval.org/eval2012/12questions.htm>. If you have any questions or need assistance in developing and submitting your proposals, please contact the AEA office at info@eval.org.

We trust that this year's theme as well as your own passion for evaluation will evoke some rich reflections. Happy Writing!

Best Regards,
Your 2012 AEA Environmental Program Evaluation TIG Leadership
Team



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EPE TIG Business Meeting Highlights

During the EPE TIG Business meeting, Yvonne M. Watson and Nancy Carrillo were elected EPE TIG Chair and Program Chair. In addition, three new members of the leadership team were elected: Lydia Lange (Co-Chair) Chris Parry (Program Co-Chair) and Angela Helman (Web Master). To learn more about the newest members of the leadership team, see the profiles on page 4 of this issue. Christina Kakoyannis will continue her role as a member of the leadership team. Please join us in extending a special thanks to Annelise Carlton-Hug (former Chair), Kara Crohn (former Co-Chair and Program Chair) and Mary McEathron (former Co-Chair and Program Chair) for their past leadership, commitment and exemplary service to the EPE TIG!

EPE TIG Field Trip To Inside the Outdoors

PUTTING OUR EVALUATION SKILLS TO GOOD USE!!



On November 4, 2011, during the American Evaluation Association's annual conference, a dozen conference attendees braved the rain and headed for the hills of Rancho Soñado, CA for a tour of the Inside the Outdoors headquarters. Inside the Outdoors is a K-12 outdoor science education program, independently funded and administered by the Orange County Department of Education. It serves approximately 152,000 students annually, providing scholarships to 55,000 low-income students. Its curriculum is aligned with and assesses student learning according to CA Science and Social Science standards.

On the bus ride to the site, Program Administrator, Pam Johnson, provided us with ample background on the organization and its goals. Once we arrived, Pam and her colleague, Tracy Meyers, graciously hosted us for a fun, muddy walk through the site and a presentation on how Inside the Outdoors works to engage students in hands-on science exploration. Towards the end of our visit, we brainstormed opportunities for Inside the Outdoors to use logic models and alternative assessment techniques, and continued the conversation with Pam on the bus ride back to Anaheim. Both the field trip attendees and the host organization gained new knowledge and professional connections through the field trip. In spite of (or perhaps because of) the rain, we all had a laughter-filled, energizing break!



AEA 2011: Reflection

What I enjoy most about our annual conference is that it gives me time to: 1) reconnect with colleagues, 2) renew my passion for evaluation, and 3) reflect on my work through the lens of the conference theme. The theme *Values and Valuing in Evaluation* helped me examine how and when the theme of values emerge in my work – explicitly and implicitly. Values are those ideas and principals that really matter to us—the beliefs we hold dear. In her plenary remarks, Jennifer C. Greene said that evaluators must assume responsibility for the values in our work. She said that “we must name them and claim them”! We have an obligation to understand the values we hold as an individual, a division, and as an organization because they influence the questions we ask, the methods we select and the outcomes we choose to accept. She challenged us to better understand the values of our clients and stakeholders and when possible, document how we intend to address them as part of our evaluation plans. It’s been three months, since our time in Anaheim and the lessons I learned then, still ring true. If you haven’t done so already, take stock of your values and how they might influence the evaluation you’re currently working on.

Yvonne M. Watson, EPE TIG Chair

Current Projects of TIG Members

Tracy Dyke Redmond is currently working on several environmental evaluation projects, three of which are being conducted as part of U.S. EPA's Program Evaluation Competition. In one project, Ms. Redmond is working with consultants Chris Leggett and Michael Crow to pilot test experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies to measure the impact of EPA compliance assistance for auto body shops. In another project, Ms. Redmond is helping conduct an evaluation of Virginia's Risk Based Inspection Strategy, which represents an innovative compliance monitoring strategy. In a third project, Ms. Redmond is evaluating the effectiveness of EPA's hazardous waste determination project. Ms. Redmond also works for clients outside EPA. For example, in partnership with Ross & Associates and the Stockholm Environmental Institute, she is currently in the third year of a real-time evaluation of the ClimateWorks network. ClimateWorks is a network of philanthropic and non-governmental organizations working in multiple regions and sectors worldwide to prevent dangerous climate change. Ms. Redmond typically uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis in her projects, and she often develops case studies to explore factors that could lead to program results.

AEA 365 BLOG

Seeking Bloggers for AEA365 Blog: Earth Week, April 15-21

Share your hot tips, cool tricks, rad resources and other lessons learned with the evaluation community! This spring, for the 3rd year, the EPE TIG will host the AEA365 blog during Earth Week. This very helpful [blog](#) provides a wealth of topical information and useful resources for evaluation. For Earth Week, the EPE TIG features posts that provide tips and information that are particularly relevant to environmental evaluation - but that also would appeal to the broader AEA population. In the past, these blog contributions have been a great way to share information, as well as improve the visibility of the TIG. Posts should be written in first person and be concise - approximately 250-400 words. Click [here](#) for contribution guidelines.

If you are interested in writing a post for the week, send a brief description of your post topic to Annelise Carleton-Hug at annelise@trilliumassociates.com no later than **February 22**. Ideas include how evaluation addresses current and emerging environmental issues, useful tools for the environmental evaluation field, and resources to help readers think more environmentally. We hope to have a diversity of posts to exemplify the breadth and diversity of topics in environmental evaluation.

EPE TIG Profiles:

This issue of the newsletter spotlights three newly elected members of the EPE TIG Leadership team and the face behind the EPE TIG Newsletter.

Lydia Lang

Geographic Location: Pittsburgh, PA

Education: BA (Hons) Anthropology, University of Western Australia, P. Grad Diploma Assessment and Evaluation, University of Melbourne, Certificate in Social Network Analysis.

Area of Specialization: Natural Resource Management, market based instruments for resource management, local government run sustainability programs, environmental education programs and interpretation.

Years of Experience in the Field: Environment and Sustainability 4 years, Evaluation 2

Professional/Personal Interests: My professional drive is a passion for understanding and developing the integration of cultural, social and natural values in landscape and natural resource management, with particular interests in the intersection of urban and natural environments, water, food systems, sustainability and behavior change. I enjoy cooking, swimming in the ocean and yoga.

Methodologies Used: My strengths are in qualitative research methods including ethnography, narrative and textual analysis, story telling (including Most Significant Change) and case studies. I have trained in, and frequently employ, quantitative methods including social network analysis and survey to give breadth to my projects.

How did the evaluator come to be interested in environmental evaluation?: As an anthropologist and a committed environmentalist I see people, ourselves, as both the objective of our understanding and also the objective of the solutions we aim to develop. Evaluation provides an ideal space to ask questions of people and their programs and to apply findings in a real and significant way.

Description of Current Work: Having recently relocated from Australia to the USA, I am seeking evaluation work to make best use of my Australian experience. I am currently working on a monograph of West Australian artist Shane Pickett (due for publication in 2013) and enjoying the many mysteries of pregnancy (our first child is due in July 2012).



Advice for other evaluators: Share your ideas and tools with colleagues, support each other, read and discuss things you discover. Everything can be enriched this way!

Chris Parry



Geographic Location: San Francisco, CA

Employer: California Coastal Commission

Education: BA in Psychology, University of California at Irvine; Master of Public Policy, Harvard University

Area of Specialization: Environmental Education, Policy

Years of Experience in the Field: 15 years in environmental education, evaluation focus for past 3 years

Professional/Personal Interests: Human behavior, systems theory, sustainability, stewardship, having fun in nature (hiking, skiing, camping, etc.), gardening, yoga, baking, learning new things.

Methodologies Used: Try to tailor to situation.

How did the evaluator come to be interested in environmental evaluation?: Working in environmental education, I have become increasingly aware of the need for strong, innovative evaluation to help move the field forward (and the lack of it).

Description of Current Work: Among other things, I'm working with our grantees to improve their evaluations and build capacity.

Advice for other evaluators: If you haven't done this, I recommend putting some time into studying the history of evaluation and evaluation theory. I think this can help prompt reflections about one's own approach to evaluation and enrich your appreciation for the field.

Angela Helman



Geographic Location: Cambridge, MA
Employer: Industrial Economics, Inc.
Education: MA in Urban and Environmental Policy, Tufts; BA in Political Science, Tulane
Years of Experience in the field: 9

Area of Specialization: Evaluation of voluntary and market-based programs; evaluation of sustainability programs (such as green building, sustainable communities programs, etc.)

Professional/Personal Interests: Professional: Helping programs with strategic planning for future measurement and evaluation; devising creating approaches to filling data gaps; verifying and improving data quality; helping clients operational evaluation findings. Personal: Hiking with my dogs, cooking, reading a good book, and trivia (my dream is to be on Jeopardy....)

Methodologies Used: Formative, process, outcome, and impact. Various quasi-experimental designs and mixed methods evaluations. Qualitative evaluations, and case study-based evaluations.

How did the evaluator come to be interested in environmental evaluation?: I received formal research design and evaluation training in graduate school, but really developed an interest in both measurement and evaluation as an outgrowth of general policy and program support work at the beginning of my consulting career.

Description of Current Work: I am managing the following M&E projects right now:

For EPA:

- Retrospective, mixed-methods evaluation of EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program
- Formative evaluation for EPA's Community Engagement Initiative, which seeks to broaden public participation in cleanup and redevelopment and contaminated sites
- Development of a measurement framework for EPA's portfolio of community-based programs

For Massachusetts Dept. of Energy Resources:

- Retrospective impact evaluation of the environmental and economic impacts, and cost-effectiveness, of ARRA funds used for energy efficiency and clean energy programs in Massachusetts

Advice for other evaluators: First, understand what matters to the client by having several conversations about evaluation goals and program challenges, with all key stakeholders, before locking down evaluation questions. Be creative in filling data gaps, and use a mix of methods to bolster rigor when data are unavailable to implement your ideal design. Beware of evaluation mission creep; don't bite off more than you can chew.

Gitanjali Shrestha

EPE TIG Member: 2010 - Present

Geographic Location: Pullman, WA

Organization: Washington State University

Education: B.S. Sociology, Southern Arkansas University; M.A. in Human Development, Washington State University in progress

Area of Specialization: Prevention programs aimed at increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors among adolescents and young adults.

Years of Experience in the Field: I am pretty new to the field of evaluation. As a student, I am learning about evaluation theory and methodology. I have worked as a student evaluator for about two years.

Professional/Personal Interests: Health, education. I am a culinary enthusiast. I also love to knit and sew.

Methodologies Used: I have used quantitative methodologies until now. This summer I will be involved with a suicide prevention program for college students. I will be using qualitative analysis for this project.

Description of Current Work: I am involved with the evaluation of a university-based Common Reading program and a community-based substance abuse prevention program for adolescents.

Advice for other students: AEA is a very student friendly organization. Make the most out of your membership by being active in the organization. AEA study workshops and Coffee Break Demonstration Series are wonderful resources to learn more about evaluation. AEA also provides volunteer opportunities. So, be proactive. If you do not see any volunteer opportunities that you are interested in, contact the leadership of the TIGs you are interested in and tell them that you are interested in helping them out. You can offer to be reviewer, webmaster, newsletter editor, or assume any other role the TIG needs. Volunteering is a great way to learn about evaluation as well as to build professional network.



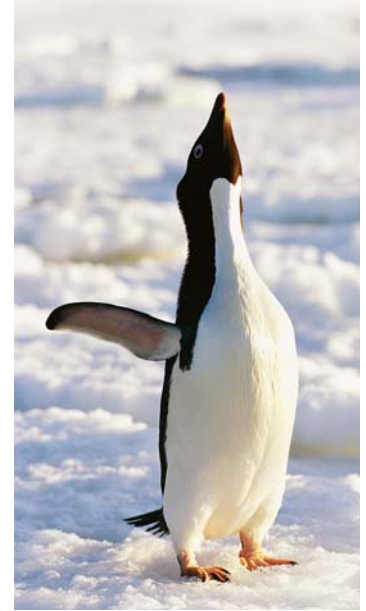
Evaluation Resources

In an effort to continue to expand your evaluation toolbox, we briefly highlight a small number of evaluation resources we hope you will find helpful. Feel free to share any recommendations you have on any of the resources you find particularly helpful.

- [A Periodic Table of Visualization Methods](http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html#)
http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html#
This website is a pretty cool resource to help you with your data visualization needs. It offers approximately 100 examples of data visualization options.
- [Wordle](http://www.wordle.net/)
<http://www.wordle.net/>
This website helps you create visually stunning word clouds from your data.

PUBLICATIONS

- *Fundamental issues in evaluation.* Smith, N. L. & Brandon, P. R. 2008. New York: The Guilford Press. 3rd Edition.
- *What counts as credible evidence in applied research and evaluation practice?* Donaldson, S. I., Christie, C. A., & Mark, M. M. 2009. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.



Dialogue Topic 1

In our June issue, a TIG member suggested generating a dialogue between members of the TIG by posing a topical question, and sharing two different perspectives on the question, ideally where the authors would comment back on each other's perspectives. To kick off our discussion, please consider the following question. "What makes something a program evaluation versus something else (i.e., research, analysis or a study)? How do you know you're doing program evaluation versus "something else"? Can doing "something else" get you to the same end as doing program evaluation? or Does it even matter what you're doing (or what it's called) if you're getting to the same end? We'd love to hear from you on this topic. Send your responses to Gitanjali Shrestha.

Visit the EPE TIG on the Web! @ <http://comm.eval.org/EVAL/environmental/Home/Default.aspx>

The EPE TIG Communications Team is seeking your input. Please contact Gitanjali Shrestha gitanjali.shrestha@email.wsu.edu if you are interested in contributing to the next issue of the EPE TIG Newsletter.

Member Profile

Volunteer to share more information about yourself with other members of the EPE TIG for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

Newsletter Topics

Share your ideas for topics that should be highlighted in future issues of the Newsletter.

Article

Write and submit an article highlighting an evaluation topic of interest, projects you're working on, recommend a cool resource or respond to the discussion topic/question.