



June 2016

Independent Consulting TIG Newsletter

CHAIR'S CORNER: TIG WINS! by Matt Feldmann, 2016 IC TIG Chair



It sure was fun seeing many of you at the American Evaluation Association conference in October. As I get ready to pass the symbolic gavel to Laura Keene, I thought I would focus this column on what we as a TIG accomplished during the last year and some of the amazing accomplishments of our members.

I think it is important to recognize Gail Barrington, Rita Fierro, and Stephen Maack. This year Gail won the Alva and Gunnar Myrdal Evaluation Practice Award, an award that is presented to an evaluator who exemplifies outstanding evaluation practice and who has made substantial cumulative contributions to the field of evaluation through the practice of evaluation. Rita will assume a two-year responsibility as one of the AEA at-large board members for 2017 and 2018. Stephen Maack is stepping down from the IC TIG Board after more than 12 years of service as the TIG webmaster, program chair, and TIG Chair.

Minutes from IC TIG meeting AEA Conference, Atlanta, GA October 27, 2016

The meeting began with a welcome from our IC TIG Chair Matt Feldmann. Matt first shared with us the **TIG wins** for the year.

- **Gail Barrington** won the Alva and Gunnar Myrdal Evaluation Award. We congratulated Gail and she spoke to us briefly.
- **Rita Fierro**, our previous Chair, was elected to the AEA Board for 2017. Rita spoke to us and said that she wants us to leverage our membership to influence policy.
- As of yesterday, our TIG has 937 members, the second largest in AEA. Matt told us that AEA encourages membership in a TIG because it has found that members who find a home within a TIG are more likely to remain members of AEA.
- We sponsored 21 presentations at this year's annual meeting, matching the highest number ever.
- We have instituted a book club.
- Our quarterly newsletter is now being distributed via Mail Chimp.

Please send a note of congratulations to each of these great evaluators.

[Read More](#)

Laura Keene, our Chair Elect, spoke to us about the **benefits of membership** in our TIG. The core of the TIG is a community of people who want to learn and work together. We accomplish this through the annual meeting and dinner, the newsletter, Facebook, and our e-group.

[Read More](#)



Meet IC TIG member Myia Welsh, Welsh & Company, LLC

I really love the entrepreneurial spirit that independent consulting has allowed me to tap into. Since dipping my toe into the waters five years ago, I still get excited by learning more about running a business.

I'm Myia Welsh of Welsh & Company Evaluation Consulting, LLC, your new Chair-Elect. I've been working in evaluation for about 13 years now, and I've been an independent consultant for five years. I'm based in Morgantown, West Virginia.

1. What has been vexing for you when it comes to evaluation and its beneficiaries (e.g. clients, programs)?

The most vexing situation I've ever found myself in is one in which an organization is engaging with me as an evaluator just to report that they've done it as a grant requirement, rather than being invested in the evaluation, the results, and how the results can be used. Over time, I've engaged with fewer of these clients who are looking simply to check "evaluation" off of a to-do list.

2. What's unique about the work you do?

Since becoming an independent evaluator, I've primarily worked with social service organizations that provide support to victims of domestic human trafficking. When I began that work, there wasn't much knowledge out there on best practices for programs, let alone performance indicators or evaluation examples for a US context. I've loved designing and implementing meaningful evaluations for organizations that are doing work that has sincere magnitude in the lives of the people they work with. It has given me the opportunity to do evaluation in a completely new area with a very special population.

[Read More](#)



Questions for Rita

We have a special treat for our readers in this issue of the newsletter. Recently Loretta Kelley spoke with Rita Fierro, the former chair of the IC TIG. Rita was just elected to serve on the AEA Board, beginning in 2017. These are highlights of their discussion.

First, congratulations to you Rita. Can you tell us what your election to the Board means to us as independent consultants?

I'm one of three independent consultants on the Board, along with Dominica McBride and Thomas Grayson. The AEA leads by policy-based governance; this means that the Board makes strategic decisions for the organization's direction, leaving the management to our management team. Since 2014, we have hired the Association Management Firm SmithBucklin for this purpose. For you, having independent consultants on your Board means that the knowledge and needs of consultants get taken into account for the direction of AEA as a whole. You also have easy access to me as a Board Member and can tell me your concerns. Feel free to contact me at DrRita@ritafierro.com.

We have known each other a long time, you and I, and I've seen you work tirelessly to make this world a better place. How does your commitment to helping others intersect with your work on the Board?

I believe strongly that I don't work to make the world a better place, to "help others," I do it for myself. I do it because, in the face of an unjust world, I want to invest my life for a just, equitable, and compassionate world. I try to live my life beyond [hope and fear](#), accepting the world for what it is. Our AEA focus on members is myopic to me. We have a lot more to offer the world. By discovering our collective power, there is so much more we can accomplish.

I see the results of this Presidential election as a failure of our profession to communicate what we know and take action from it. We have failed to translate for the public, in easy terms, what we know about promoting the social good. It's unacceptable that with all the data we have, a political campaign can take place from ideologies, instead of tangible evidence of what does and doesn't work.

[Read More](#)

FAQs and what to do about them! by Gail Vallance Barrington, President, Barrington Research Group

QUESTION: What can I do when a project ends abruptly?

ANSWER: We spend a lot of time thinking about getting projects, but not so much about ending them. However, projects can stop precipitously for any number of reasons. Budget cuts, grant termination, organizational restructuring, and staff turnover can all result in the evaluation being a casualty. What was central to your life a month ago is now a gaping hole and the implications for your work plans and cash flow can be significant. What to do?

1. Don't leave angry.

However acrimonious the situation, maintain your own professionalism, keep your cool, and avoid drama. Take a broader systems perspective. You may lose this project but consider what the new environment may offer in the future. Demonstrating your resiliency, creativity, and business acumen will stand you in good stead in the long run.

2. Do something with the pieces.

As Steve Maack suggests, although the client has changed their strategic direction, it may be possible to salvage some of the work already completed. They may still be able to use the logic model, tools, interim data analyses, or database structures. Another option might be to interpret the data you already collected by preparing an infographic on *What We Learned*. It is worthwhile trying to negotiate an exit strategy that benefits both sides.

[Read More](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations to our newly elected officers for 2017:

- TIG Chair-elect, Myia Welsh
- Program Co-Chair, Robert Perez
- Social Media Chair, Susana Morales

Other IC TIG members who will continue to work on the leadership team are:

- TIG Chair (as of January 2017), Laura Keene
- Past chair (as of January 2017), Matt Feldmann
- Print/web chair, Mary Nash
- Program Co-Chair, Tamara Hamai
- Newsletter Editor, Loretta Kelley

Ways to stay in touch:

Like us on [Facebook](#) -- Engage with other IC TIG members on our [website](#).

Next newsletter deadline: February 28, 2016. Please send questions, submissions or suggestions to [Loretta Kelley](#).

are receiving this newsletter.

You are receiving this email because you are a member of the ***Independent Consulting TIG***. If you would like to be removed from this TIG's mailing list, please email [Zachary Grays](#) in the AEA office.

The MailChimp logo is displayed in a white, cursive font within a dark gray rounded rectangular box.
