In 2014 the Independent Consulting TIG engaged in a strategic planning process led by the TIG Chair (Stephen Maack). After the Chair announced a tentative “Plan to Plan” at the AEA 2013 TIG meeting, a 15-member committee conducted virtual discussions throughout the year and generated member feedback on an early version of a strategic plan. Once the committee revised and finalized it internally, the plan was distributed to the greater TIG and ultimately approved at the AEA 2014 conference TIG meeting. In January 2015, the new Chair (me) led the beginning phases of implementing the plan. This phase will carry on through 2017, with a new Chair elected each year (Matt Feldmann for 2016) in charge of implementation. The TIG identified committees and leaders for all goals and objectives of the strategic plan and the work is successfully in progress.

The leaders who stepped up and led the charge for each goal will present their progress to date, along with next steps, at the conference session, Keeping the Love Alive: Adventures in TIG Strategic Planning, on Thursday, November 12th at 3:00pm. The session includes discussion time, and IC TIG members are strongly encouraged to attend and to provide input into the planning and communication process. Here is a brief preview of the work that has been done so far. Note that only the goals that we have worked on (1, 2, 4, 6) are included.

Goal #1: Increase the ICTIG’s value to its members by providing targeted services by 2017.

1.a. By October 2016 identify and evaluate current member benefits and develop recommendations for continuing or dropping services.

1.b. By October 2016 explore and develop recommendations for productive and sustainable mentoring or peer-to-peer services for members.

1.c. Between January 2016 and December 2017 identify and utilize data sources on an ongoing basis to help drive IC TIG decision making.

As of now, 1a and 1b are complete and ready for TIG leadership approval. Following, their launch will be planned and implemented. Work on 1c will begin after the New Year.

Goal #2: Provide effective ongoing communication with TIG members each year between 2015 and 2017.

2.a. Maintain a robust, up-to-date AEA ICTIG website designed to increase member engagement between 2015 and 2017.


2.e. Analyze best uses of social media to communicate with our members and others between 2015 and 2017.

The ICTIG website has been streamlined so that it can be navigated more easily. Problems in accessing the eLibrary and eGroup were resolved. Instructions have been placed on the website regarding how to use the eLibrary and eGroup and what type of information is appropriate to post on different parts of the website. The committee is broadening the scope of Facebook posts to communicate effectively with members — look for upcoming posts about the ICTIG planning process, services and benefits, ICTIG presentations at the AEA conference and topics of interest to independent consultants.

Goal #4: Develop meaningful ways for the TIG to promote the value of small to medium size evaluation consultants and advocate on their behalf.

4.a. Between 2015 and 2017 communicate with consumers of evaluation services about alternatives to contracting in addition to RFPs.

4.b. Expand information sharing between the ICTIG and other TIGs to promote mutually beneficial business and evaluation practices between 2015 and 2017.

4.c. Develop and provide information to potential clients about what is involved in doing evaluations, evaluation costs, and alternative ways to fund evaluations between 2015 and 2017.

4.d. Repeat the deployment and analysis of the decennial Independent Consultant Topical Interest Group Survey by December 2016 and publish results.

Work to date has focused on Goal 4d (the decennial survey). A draft survey should be completed by the end of September along with an administration plan.

(Continued on p. 3)
Meet Gail V. Barrington

Each quarter we will feature a member in this newsletter. Send your suggestions for future interviewees to Loretta Kelley LKelley@kpacm.org

1. Please describe your independent consulting practice.

As a program evaluator, I have conducted over 130 program evaluation studies since founding my consulting firm, Barrington Research Group, Inc., in 1985. I teach and design on-line courses on research and evaluation for two universities. I have presented over 30 workshops and several webinar series in both Canada and the United States on consulting skills. I also present workshops on logic models and data handling. I blog on consulting topics, most recently a three-part series on marketing skills for consultants. See www.barringtonresearchgrp.com

2. What is your disciplinary background? Education. I have a teacher's certificate and taught Grade Five for two years before moving into adult education. I have a BA and an MA in English Literature; I taught English upgrading, English as a Second Language, and Reading skills for adults for seven years, working at a community college. My interest there in the organization and my involvement in various committees and councils led to my continued interest in education, so my PhD was in postsecondary Educational Administration. I took two courses in my doctoral program in program evaluation and this led to my lifelong interest in evaluation—I haven’t looked back since then.

3. How long have you been evaluating, and how long have you been an independent consultant?

I started getting evaluation contract work as soon as I graduated in 1981 and began my own business, Barrington Research Group, Inc. in 1985 specializing in program evaluation.

4. Are you primarily qualitative, primarily quantitative, or mixed methods? Which do you prefer?

With my background in English, I have always preferred qualitative research but working with quantitative researchers over the years, I learned a lot and have developed a number of ways to do mixed methods research well. I am now designing a course on qualitative and mixed methods based on my experience.

5. What was your favorite evaluation experience?

For nine years I worked for Health Canada on the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program Evaluation, Population & Public Health Branch. This large-scale evaluation of the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, including the design of a national-level evaluation framework with regionally- and locally-customized surveys, the development and maintenance of a national evaluation database, and on-going staff capacity building and consultation as well as data analysis and report preparation, has resulted in the collection of over 100,000 surveys related to high-risk women in Canada and has had a significant impact on public policy in this area both federally and regionally.

During that period I grew my business from a staff of three to a staff of 20...

6. What type of experience have you had that was less than ideal?

Not every client is satisfied. A few bumps along the way have taught me many important lessons and helped to shape my craft. Many of these experiences have resulted in better practice management and/or evaluation skills and many have been written up in my book.

7. Have you had any comical experiences? Describe them.

I have a good sense of humour but can’t think of a humourous project—the work has always been paramount.

8. What do you like to do when you’re not evaluating?

• Travel. Right now I am getting ready for a vacation in France and really looking forward to it.

• Reading. I belong to a book club and the 12 other members are now lifelong friends. You have to like wine and chocolate to be a member, as well as having served the YWCA in some capacity.

• Cooking and Eating—enough said!

9. Is there anything else you would like for your peers to know about you?

I love being a member of AEA and have been since 1985. I am currently Vice President of the Canadian Evaluation Society and am overseeing the evaluation of the Professional Designations Program, specifically the Credentialed Evaluator program. Interestingly, my colleagues from Claremont Graduate University were selected to conduct the evaluation and I am enjoying working with them. My history with the CES is just as long as my history with the AEA. I have been a member of the Editorial Board, New Directions in Program Evaluation since 2007. My book has been well-received:


In 2008 I won the Canadian Evaluation Society award for Contribution to Evaluation in Canada and in 2014 I was made a Fellow of the Certified Management Consultants of Canada.

During that period I grew my business from a staff of three to a staff of 20...
Join Us for These Great IC TIG Sessions!

In addition to our business meeting, which will be held on Thursday, November 12\textsuperscript{th} from 6:20 – 7:10, and our annual dinner (details to follow), we encourage you to check out this year’s IC TIG-sponsored sessions at the AEA conference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary evaluation partnerships: Experiences of global evaluation teams</td>
<td>Wed, Nov 11\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>4:30PM-6:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging the Independence: Maximizing Your Skill Set As An Independent Consultant</td>
<td>Wed, Nov 11\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>6:15PM-7:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the Pros: Intermediate Consulting Skill-Building Self-help Fair</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>7:00AM-7:45AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caught in the Middle: The Challenge of Maintaining Effective Evaluator-Client Relationships with Both Programs and Their Funders</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>8:00AM-9:30AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt or die: Survival skills for independent evaluators in the real world</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>11:00AM-11:45 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating &quot;Mature&quot; Programs That Aren't so Mature: Practical and Ethical Implications</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>1:00PM-1:45PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costing Your Evaluation: Budgeting for Reality and Results</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>2:00PM-2:45PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning Evaluation Theory and Practice: How Do We and How Can We Communicate What We Do?</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>3:00PM-4:30PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping the Love Alive: Adventures in TIG Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Thu, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>3:00PM-4:30PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and Nonprofit Capacity Building: Forging the Critical Link</td>
<td>Fri, Nov 12\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>7:00AM-7:45AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See you in Chicago!

### CHAIR’S CORNER (Continued)

Goal #6: Better promote IC TIG membership benefits among diverse and international AEA members.

6.a. By March 2015 contact AEA and the International and Cross-cultural TIG and Multiethnic Issues in Evaluation for information about benefits they are providing to diverse and international members.

6.b. Determine current or new services that the IC TIG can provide to diverse and international AEA members.

6.c. As appropriate and needed, develop or revise marketing approaches and communications about AEA IC TIG benefits in relation to attracting diverse and international members.

The committee broke into two sub-committees. The sub-committee for 6.a. got good feedback from several other TIGs and has come up with specific recommendations for consideration. The sub-committee for 6.b. and 6.c. developed a “theory of change,” and has come up with several draft papers that it is narrowing down to what the IC TIG might do and some recommendations for overall AEA consideration that the IC TIG might bring forward to the AEA Board.

Lastly, an evaluation component is also built into our process and beginning next year there will be a team of evaluators assessing the extent to which we did what we said we were going to do and ultimately the impact the work has on our TIG.

### IC TIG NEWS

#### IC TIG Dinner

The Independent Consulting TIG Dinner will be Thursday November 12\textsuperscript{th} directly after the TIG business meeting. The location has yet to be determined, but it will be within walking distance (less than 0.5 miles) and the cost per person will be $35 - $45. To assist with planning the event, an online payment site (like PayPal) will be developed so people can pay ahead of time. When more is known, a notification will go out through the AEA eGroup listserv and the Facebook site.

#### By-Laws

TIG By-laws were developed and will be voted on at the TIG Business Meeting. The TIG by-laws will provide direction to the TIG through the identification of officers and their roles, a schedule for regular leadership meetings, and clear identification of the TIG’s responsibilities. To access the draft by-laws please select the following link. If you have comments please contact Matt Feldmann at gosheneducation@gmail.com.

Draft By-Laws: [http://tinyurl.com/tigbylaws](http://tinyurl.com/tigbylaws)
FAQs and What to Do About Them!

**Question:** Days & Hours: What Should I Use for Billing?

**Answer:** Accounting for your time in days or hours is more complicated than you think. While an hour contains 60 minutes, when you start assigning project time to a client’s contract, you need to make some decisions. How many minutes equals an hour—20? 35? 59? Typically professionals think about hours in quarter-hour increments. For example, I count work on a project that takes from 8-15 minutes as a quarter hour (i.e., 0.25 hours). If it is less time, I forget about it because it will likely even out next time.

Days are more complicated. How many hours should be in a work day? The standards for most government employees are either 8 hours a day (40 hours a week) or 7.5 hours (37.5 hours a week). These are usually codified in a collective agreement, providing a useful benchmark for you to share with your client if the topic of your billing practices comes up. And what about coffee breaks and lunch? Are they counted? Where I live, two 15 minute paid coffee breaks are included in the “day” but lunch is not. Search local government human resources websites for more information.

I invite ideas for topics that interest our members. Send questions or suggestions for future columns to gbarrington@barringtonresearchgrp.com.

Fixing Terrible Evaluation RFPs: A Guide for Clients

by Corey Newhouse, Public Profit

Last winter, we received an RFP for evaluation services that we’d waited on for months. I was elated to see the RFP land in my inbox, as the client was one I’d cultivated for a long, long time. More importantly, the project had the potential to launch a new era of data-informed quality improvement in a community that traditionally treated evaluation as a necessary evil. Just the kind of email we all want to receive! More business, more impact? Sign me up.

The RFP was terrible. It included 100+ pages of regulations, sample forms, and assurances we’d have to sign if we got the contract. The two pages that actually described the evaluation were among the worst written in the English language, more like a Mad Lib of evaluation catchphrases than a coherent statement of the client’s vision for the evaluation.

The turn-around time for the full proposal was three weeks, including Christmas and New Year’s. And the budget? Not listed. Sound familiar? Yeah. I know.

To respond adequately to this RFP would take many hours, and we probably wouldn’t offer what the client wanted. Then I hit upon a genius idea: I’d submit a bill to the prospective client for wasting my valuable time! That’s professional, right?

I shared my plan with a colleague, who gently suggested that I not implode my career by behaving badly with a potential client. Instead, she suggested I write a guide for prospective clients to help them write higher quality RFPs for evaluation services.

Our guide, *Your RFP for Evaluation Services is Terrible – You Can Fix It!* offers step-by-step guidance to prepare a high quality RFP for evaluation, including accurately describing the scope of the initiative to be evaluated, timeliness of the requested evaluation, existing data sources, and guiding questions.

We explain why we’re asking for the things we do, linking the quality of the RFP to the quality of the responses from qualified evaluators. This insight, we hope, will help to overcome prospective clients’ objections to crafting thorough RFPs in the first place.

I hope you’ll use the guide to inform your conversations with prospective clients; please share it widely! Download a free copy at our web site at www.publicprofit.net/resources or from the IC TIG eLibrary.

Interested in more great resources? Check out the IC TIG’s Facebook page and eGroup!