

Washington Evaluators 2020: A Year in Review

As I prepared to write this review of Washington Evaluators activities during the past year, I revisited my January 2020 statement on WE's priorities in which I described 2020 as a "most auspicious year." The arrival of COVID-19 pandemic changed everything, of course, forcing us to retreat into our homes, followed by Black Lives Matter protests, driving many of us into the streets, and finally the national election, which brought Americans to the polls in record numbers. Yet in the midst of this turbulent year, WE thrived because of the dedicated and enthusiastic efforts of our Board, committees, and volunteers – thank you!

WE set out to address two broad priorities in 2020: 1) building capacity for public good, and 2) nurturing our community of practice. WE made strong progress in addressing each of these priorities throughout the year.

Building Capacity for Public Good

We began 2020 with a bold commitment to build the capacity of individuals and organizations to engage in evaluation. A special focus for WE this year was providing support for emerging evaluators. Below are highlights of our accomplishments in building capacity for public good:

- The new Community Engagement committee was launched this year under the leadership of Emily Bango. This committee was charged with overseeing initiatives to intentionally grow and sustain our evaluation community of practice and extend the reach of evaluation into the broader Washington, DC, community, and beyond. Evaluation Without Borders, Mentor Minutes, and the New Professional Scholarship were key activities led by this committee.
 - Mentor Minutes continued this year with activities moving fully online under the leadership of Bryce Leary. WE connected 17 Mentor-Mentee pairs and registered 4 new Mentors and 19 Mentees.
 - Laura O'Brien led WE's work to build capacity of local non-profits and community-based organizations through the continuing pro bono initiative, Evaluation Without Borders, which matches evaluators to non-profits and community-based organizations seeking program planning, measurement, and evaluation services. While organizational participation was lower this year due to the pandemic, the program continued to thrive. WE's Evaluators Without Borders was spotlighted on [AEA365](#) during the week of October 18.
 - The New Professional Scholarship, coordinated by Sue Cottrell, provided support to new evaluators interested in attending courses at The Evaluators' Institute. This past year WE received 8 applicants (4 professionals; 4 students) from three universities (George Mason University, American University, University of Maryland). Scholarships were awarded to Fanni Farago and Bryce Leary.

- Supporting new and emerging evaluators was an important priority during 2020. WE had planned a career fair for students at the end of March, which was cancelled due to pandemic-related closures. Board members rallied in the fall to organize two events for emerging evaluators: a discussion panel on Navigating the Job Market as a New or Emerging Evaluator (Sept. 11, 2020) and a Professional Skills Seminar for New and Emerging Evaluators (Dec. 10, 2020). Special thanks to Mindelyn Anderson, Val Caracelli, Esther Nolton, and Beeta Tahmassebi for their leadership in bringing these events to fruition.
- In response to this year's calls for social justice and antiracism, WE formed an antiracism task force, which led to the development of the Embodying Antiracism Principles and Practices in Evaluation statement and a proposal to integrate an antiracist perspective into WE's 2021 strategic plan. Thanks to Emily Bango, for chairing the task force, and task force volunteers Valerie Caracelli, Fanni Farago, Kelly Feltault, Ron Freeman, Esther Nolton, and Beeta Tahmassebi.

Nurturing our Community of Practice

During a year that kept us physically isolated, WE's vision to nurture a community of practice was never clearer. The 2020 Board sustained community-building through communications and professional development and networking activities, with all activities moved online by the end of March. Below are highlights of WE's activities during the past year:

- WE held a range of meetings, social events, and professional development events during this past year:
 - Board meetings were held monthly (with the exception of July) and were open to guests.
 - A Meet the Candidates event organized by Melissa Chiu offered members the opportunity to meet the President-Elect and Treasurer candidates and to hear from the President and 2021 President-Elect about WE's present and future activities.
 - The Membership Committee organized several social events, although its impressive roster of creative outings for members was cut short by the pandemic. Social events for members included a pottery social and a hike in D.C.'s Cleveland Park, organized by Charlie Gilman, two virtual happy hour events supported by David Bernstein and Bryce Leary, and our first ever virtual holiday party led by Natalie Donahue.
 - Professional development events included Deep Dive discussions with evaluation leaders Ghazia Aslam, Albertina Lopez, Sarah Smith Lunsford, Donna Mertens, Michael Quinn Patton, Steven Putansu, Chera Reid, Veronica Thomas, and Bernadette Wright; a presentation by Mark Lipsey on impact evaluations co-hosted with The Evaluators' Institute; and a panel discussion on Federal performance management with Ioana Munteanu, Kathryn Newcomer, and Crystal Philcox co-presented by the IBM Center for the Business of Government. Thanks to the support of the Programs Committee, led by Katie Pitts and Erin Murrock, and other volunteers who contributed to programming this year.

- WE released a members' survey this summer; 207 members (53%) of members responded to the membership survey. WE is using the information gained to inform 2021 planning for member services and activities. Thanks to Natalie Donahue and Esther Nolton for making this happen.
- Members enjoyed a redesigned weekly e-newsletter – the Digest – that highlighted WE events, other evaluation events, “fresh reads” in evaluation, and job and contract opportunities. Member spotlights provided another way to get to know fellow WE members. Communications Chair Katherine Braga also maintained a strong presence for WE across social media platforms.

Building a Strong Organization

WE also made strides in improving how the organization works. This was our first year fully utilizing our Google Nonprofit platform, which provided each Board position with a dedicated email account and access to Google products. Secretary Melissa Chiu led work to develop standardized operating protocols for management of the Google platform. Treasurer Josh Joseph led WE's effort to invest for the first time in liability insurance, providing greater protection for the organization. WE also migrated away from PayPal early in 2020, instead using the Wild Apricot platform for membership payments. WE also made great use of our Zoom account, which was procured at a discounted rate through our TechSoup account.

We concluded 2020 by awarding a contract to Paragon Education Consulting to facilitate meetings with regional evaluators to apply antiracism principles to envisioning how Washington Evaluators can best fulfill its purpose: to provide a regional, interdisciplinary forum for professional development, networking, and exchange of practical, methodological and theoretical knowledge in the field of evaluation. These meetings, held on January 13 and 22, 2021, kick off a series of informal discussions with the evaluator community that will directly inform the development of the Washington Evaluators 2021 Strategic Plan. This new strategic plan will guide the organization through 2024.

As the 2020 President, I hope that our activities helped our members to more meaningfully engage with their fellow evaluators and helped us consider how, as evaluators, we can contribute to a more equitable society. I also hope WE activities made your 2020 a bit more bearable. Thanks for being part of the WE community!



Patricia Moore Shaffer
2020 Washington Evaluators President

WE in 2020

Washington Evaluators (WE) is a local affiliate of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). Founded in 1984, Washington Evaluators is one of the oldest Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) in the United States.

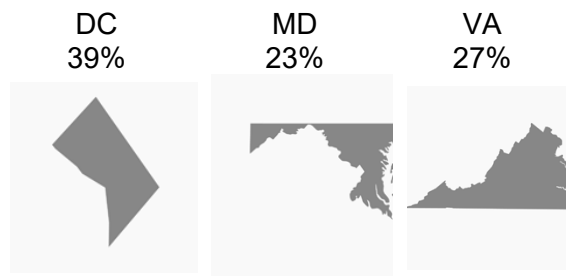
Mission statement: Washington Evaluators is devoted to strengthening the evaluation community in the Washington, DC area. Washington Evaluators serves the evaluation community by advocating for the growth of the evaluation profession and by fostering state-of-the-art knowledge and information sharing about evaluation practice.

Counts as of December 31, 2020

Who We Are

372 members

89% of members live and work in DC, Maryland, and Virginia.



Members also represent:

18 states, including California, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin

5 countries, including Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya

What We Did

1 member survey

2 New Professional scholarships

5 social events

6 Evaluation Without Borders clients

11 board meetings

13 professional development events

17 mentor-mentee pairs

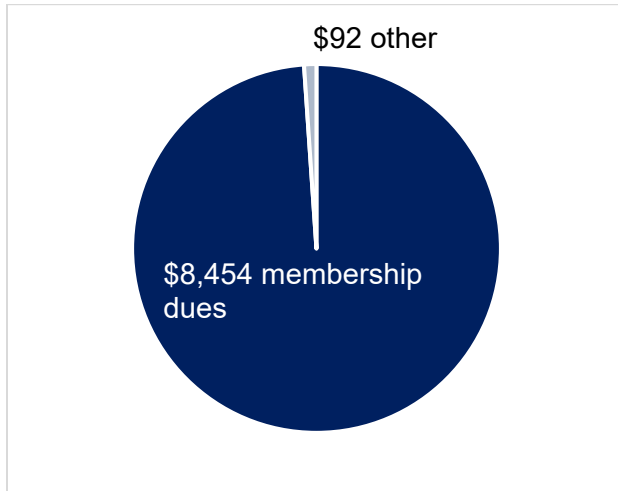
51 Weekly Digests

2,330 Twitter followers

2,680 LinkedIn followers

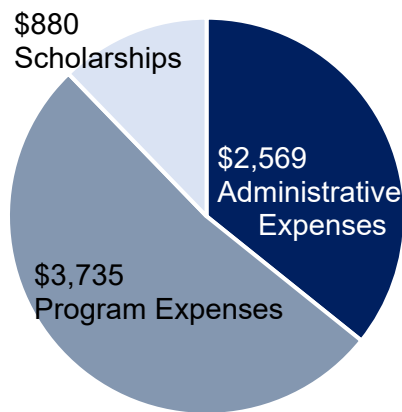
Financial Report

Revenues



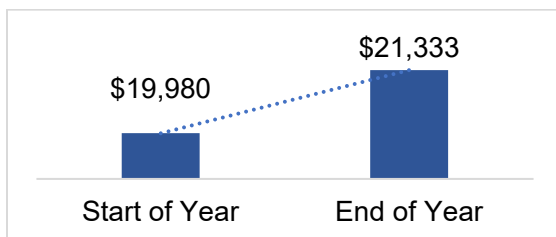
In 2020, WE received \$8,546 in net revenues, 99 percent of which came from membership dues. Total revenues decreased from 2019 by 27% due to reductions in program and membership revenues. Program revenues dropped from \$1,805 in 2019 to \$35 in 2020 due to our inability to host in-person events, particularly the annual holiday party. Although membership revenue also declined, 2020 is the second highest year for membership revenue in recent years.

Expenses



WE's expenses were considerably lower this year due to reduced on-site programming costs. WE incurred \$7,184 in expenses during 2020 – \$1,257, or 15%, less than in 2019. The largest share of expenditures is associated with program activities, with the most significant cost associated with a contract for facilitating meetings with regional evaluators as part of WE's 2021 strategic planning efforts. Administrative costs included the annual subscription for WE's web platform and insurance.

Assets



Total WE assets grew modestly by 7% in 2020 to \$21,333. At the end of the 2020 calendar year, WE held \$ 8,885 in a reserve fund, \$12,156 in a checking account, and \$292 in a PayPal account.