



Washington Evaluators Board Meeting 4/21/2021 – MINUTES

In attendance:

Beeta Tahmassebi, President
Emily Bango, President-Elect
Patricia Moore Shaffer, Past President
Melissa Chiu, Secretary
Jessica Pomerantz, Treasurer
Natalie Donohue, Membership Chair
Esther Nolton, Program Chair
Courtney Carr, Communications Coordinator and Acting Communications Chair
Kantahyanee Murray, Community Engagement Chair
Fanni Farago, Scholarship co-coordinator
Eric Keys, Scholarship co-coordinator

Not in attendance:

Katherine Braga, Communications Chair – On Leave
Bryce Leary, Mentor Minutes
Kelly Feltault, Program Coordinator
Mindelyn Anderson, Evaluation Without Borders co-coordinator
Katie Pitts, Evaluation Without Borders co-coordinator
Danielle Lane, Program Coordinator
Val Caracelli, New Professional and Student Coordinator
Marie-Ellen Ehounou, Membership Coordinator

Guests:

Jacqueline Singh –, Indianapolis, consultant, scholarship application reviewer volunteer, also helped with a programming event two weeks ago that couldn't have pulled it off without her
Amgad Farah – GWU student
Abel Gbala – environment, emerging evaluators, saw social media.
Karyna Tafel- helping matching evaluators with non-profits

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Agenda Review

2. Governance:

Approval of last month's meeting minutes (Secretary)

Melissa motioned to approve the March Board meeting minutes. Emily seconded. **VOTE: approved.**

Review of monthly financials (Treasurer)

Nothing unusual to report.

3. Update on Strategic Planning

Core Board met to talk about strategic goals. We will meet in May to flesh out goals and objectives. We plan to put out for public comment over the summer. Timeline:

		2021							
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Strategic Plan									
1. Stakeholder Consultation									
2. Draft Strategic Goals									
3. Draft Strategic Objectives									
4. Strategic Plan Writing									
5. Draft Plan Public Comment Period									
6. Plan Updates and Board Approval									
7. Final Strategic Plan Posted Online									

Note: Core Board members are the elected positions and Committee Chairs.

4. Committee Updates:

- **Programs**

Planning to the end of the summer is solid. Starting Fall/Winter, and 2022. Let Esther know if we have ideas. See: <https://washingtonevaluators.org/upcoming-events>. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to and supported our great events!

- **Community Engagement (Mentor Minutes, EWB, Scholarships)**

Evaluation Without Borders (Kantahyane briefed): Today had an information session for volunteers, 70 registrants/41 attendees. Katie and Mindelyn did a great job. There were many good questions via chat. There's deep interest in our evaluator community. Mindelyn emphasized you have to be a member to participate and the value of being a member. Esther set it up and the recording will go up on the website soon. Next will be the information session for non-profit organizations on May 12. Mindelyn was clear about it being a discrete project, limited scope.

To verify membership for those who fill out the EWB volunteer information form, send the list to Natalie. There are six that have been completed, due May 11. Kickoff in July. November will hold a culminating program to acknowledge and celebrate.

- EWB Volunteer Form: <https://washingtonevaluators.org/ProBonoEvaluator>
- EWB Client Interest Form: <https://washingtonevaluators.org/ProBonoClients>
- EWB Closing Event: <https://washingtonevaluators.org/event-4222247>

So far 32 registered for the non-profit event. In the past there have been more volunteers than organizations and some people didn't get matched. Same in 2020. We try to tell them the benefits of evaluation. It was more on the coordinator to reach out to the NGOs.

Discussion: How to get the word out? The NGOs don't have to be in the DC area. Looking for an organization that doesn't have grant funding or other support to do evaluation otherwise. However, Mindelyn has received inquiries from Canadian Red Cross. Are our criteria too strict?

Kantahyane noted she thinks the need is there, it's a matter of reaching them. Have we done targeted outreach? To smaller organizations? For members? We also want Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion-oriented organizations too. Do start-up non-profit organizations qualify for EWB? – Yes. – For startup non-profits, there is active list serve: Sibley group.

We dedicated our AEA365 blog post week last year to our EWB program. Here is one from the client's perspective: <https://aea365.org/blog/washington-evaluators-week-evaluation-without-borders-a-clients-perspective-by-jamie-kasper/>.

Here is a LinkedIn post that I and Natalie shared last week: <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-6787489715361734656-vUp5>. Please feel free to reshare

Had a conversation with Strategic Programs at United Way. They're not ready, but did agree to share within their network this opportunity.

Put out to Local Affiliate Collaboration? Also look at local people interested in international work. Put out all the feelers and use a multi-pronged approach. (Beeta)

Mentor Minutes: No update. Bryce needs to step back; we will need to fill his role. Ideas? The other two programs have **two** coordinators. Is it helpful to have two for this too?

Discussion: Last year had 12-15, maximum 20 pairs.

This is an opportunity to bring in a student as one half of the coordination team. We need more mentors. Comments from strategic planning sessions including having more student representation on the Board. Maybe one coordinator could do outreach to mentors and one to mentees?

Fanni noted that once the scholarship rounds are over this year, she'd be happy to help as a student. Amgad (also a student) noted availability to help Fanni after the summer.

There was a suggestion to engage university ambassadors for these types of roles.

We'll put a call out in the Weekly Digest. Email Kantahyane, communityengagement@ with ideas.

Scholarship Program (Fanni, Eric):

We had a session on how to craft an application; 10 people expressed strong interest and attended the session, but only got 3 applications. It is not an onerous process and it's free to apply. Winner this round to be announced May 3. Next round is due May 21.

Last time we had 8 applicants, 2 were ineligible, so 6 were assessed by the reviewers. For the ineligible candidates: 1 was too experienced, 1 did not have a complete application-- letter writer did not submit letter.

Discussion: How do we modify recruitment strategy?

Target *.edu addresses in our membership?

University Ambassador pool—can we build a stronger relationship with them? Can they help us spread the word? For example, a professor at George Mason sends out the Digest and WE events and is very active. But others? [Someone later questioned if it is appropriate for an Ambassador to forward to lots of non-members, since the Weekly Digest is a perk of membership.]

Regarding membership, since February 2 years ago, we've had 25 student members; pretty steady. Since the new year, we doubled to 50 students. It may be because of the career fair. Natalie has been picking out departments and professors on LinkedIn and letting them know about these opportunities.

Could we offer an organizational/group rate for universities? Like for organizational members, but instead of 5 people, maybe 10 students.

University Ambassadors was associated with DC-SCEP in the past, the student-led, faculty mentored conference. **We have contact list that we advertised the fair to**, will share.

Outreach may not be the answer. Should we do a mini-process evaluation on application process? What are the benefits of the scholarship to the applicant? How to make it smoother to generate more applicants? Do we have an enticing product? Can we survey people who attended but didn't apply?

Does applicant need to be local to the area, when many of our members are not local? (A Board member noted she knew of someone who did not apply because they aren't local to DC.) Are our criteria consistent with our audience? Even pre-COVID we had non-local members. AEA has the GEDI program that is national.

Also, students may have trouble finishing applications based on when the applications are due, as well as getting their referee to write a letter of recommendation in a timely way.

After this round is over, **Kantahyane, Fanni, and Eric will talk and develop something to bring to the Board.**

- **Membership**

We have hit a high water mark of **475 members**. This year we started around 400, dipped to 375. We now have 15 organizational sponsors and 50 students. Note that 25 of the 100-person increase comes from students.

For next meeting: **How many live outside of the DC area?** We have noticed more outside people on the calls.

Natalie has questions for Treasurer, can also email in between meetings.

- **Communications**

Courtney is Acting Communications Chair while Katherine is on leave. Keep sending her things for Digest and please add her work email too **and** communications@.

WE had a free Hoot Suite account where we could schedule 30 posts a week for LinkedIn and Twitter. Now they've changed to 5 scheduled posts per week. She's been creating a draft and then posting the *rest in real time and within each account*. **Can we get a Hoot Suite account for \$588/year or \$49/month and we can schedule unlimited postings?**

She hasn't had much time to look for another social media scheduler account. <https://buffer.com/pricing/publish> could be a good option.

Patricia (former Communications Chair) noted how important it is to have this type of app for communications support. We've used Hoot Suite for years. There's no way to do this in real time. It's a social media manager. There are other options, lesser known. Is there a less expensive option? Vote next time?

Maybe we could try out a couple, but this has become big business, so there are few that are free nowadays. **Patricia sent Courtney an email of names. Courtney to look into it. The Board understands that there will be fewer tweets in the next month.**

Esther and Natalie will help share events until we get a better solution. Natalie is on LinkedIn a lot.

5. Board Action Items (if any)

Bigger picture issues:

Emily announced she is leaving the DC region at the end of May. What does that mean for her involvement in the board? Won't be in DMV in 2022.

Special election? In 2019 we changed the bylaws to require 9 months of Board experience before running for President-elect or President. This was based on past experience, need familiarity with how the Board functions.

Melissa noted that we can interpret Board experience in the bylaws to include non-core Board members (core= the 5 elected plus Communications, Community Engagement, Programs, and Membership), perhaps with a requirement of participating in 9-12 Board members? The interpretation could be written into the decision-making SOP that Melissa has yet to write.

Do we want a high bar for President-elect/President? Beeta's personal story – it's critical to have the year on Board before being in a lead position. A coordinator has a more limited role on the Board than the Chair. This may vary. There were people on the 2019 Program Committee who scheduled one event and did no more. More recently, coordinators have had been volunteering for WE in a longer-term way and attending Board meetings, participating in discussions facing the entire Board.

If you are interested: email Beeta and Emily. In addition, this year we have to elect a president-elect too and the Secretary too. Please consider.

Strategic planning- there were comments at the town halls on restructuring the board. Do we want to include in the Plan? Melissa noted that likely there will be no actions until next year, since a restructuring would require a change to the bylaws that probably wouldn't take effect until the next board (typical schedule is October vote for a start date of Jan. 1 the following year). [Post-meeting note: perhaps could phrase as consider board restructuring as a Goal.] Also, the comment was mainly about the power of president-elect to choose Chairs, rather than about changing the structure of elected President, Treasurer, Secretary positions and Chairs for communications, programs, etc.

Cross cutting objectives: how to rethink hierarchical approach to leadership? How to be more equitable in the selection process? Who holds power in the Board? Is that how we should approach the leadership?

Board meeting in the summer: usually we take off one month in the summer, typically July. Do we want to do this?

Do we want to skip June instead this year? We are Strategic Planning and then may want to test/try new approaches to get candidates for the election. If we start mid-August, then that may not be enough time to enact any changes we want to do for recruiting in September. Melissa felt last year was a little tight already.

Beeta decided that July is default off, i.e., there will be **no official meeting**. We may, however, have a smaller core Board meeting to do a deep dive in a topic.

7:52 PM ADJOURN