Evaluation as a Professional Discipline in Government

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Propitious Time for Evaluation

- Increasing roles for evaluation, especially at the federal level with focus on effectiveness, accountability, and performance measurement

- Evaluation is growing as a discipline and profession, domestically and globally

- Community of support continues to grow across and within sectors
Overview of Today’s Presentation

- Provide a brief understanding of the ways in which evaluation is growing as a profession
- Review the resources that are available to help in building evaluation capacity
- Describe the role that AEA is playing to foster and support this growth
Incredible global growth in the last 5-10 years

- Only 5 national and regional associations prior to 1995
- Now 82 networks and counting across the world

Growth is a reflection of increased demand for evaluation globally, need for professional support and community, and for interest in quality evaluation
Role for Evaluation Networks and Societies

- Importance of **building community**
  - Providing professional and collegial support
  - Providing vehicles for communicating
  - Emphasizing shared mission, vision, and values
  - Helping establish professional identity for evaluators and
  - Fostering the role of evaluation as a central function in good governance

- Having a network that embraces **varying perspectives**
  - Providing a forum for a ‘disputatious society’
  - Allowing for diversity of theories, approaches, and methods that can foster quality evaluation
Growth in the American Evaluation Association

- Began officially in 1986
  - Roots in two organizations that had begun in 1970s (Evaluation Research Society and Evaluation Network)

- Current membership is at nearly 6,000 members (5,785)
  - 60% growth since 2003 (3,759 members)
  - Members from all 50 states and over 80 countries

- Continue to show signs of growth, diversity, and stability
  - Membership and conference attendance increases from year to year
  - Over last five years, finally have achieved financial stability
American Evaluation Association: Programs and Supports

- Active Topical Interest Groups and Local Affiliates
  - Relevant TIGs Evaluation Managers and Supervisors
    Government and Evaluation

- Annual Conference (over 2500 attendees)
  - This year’s theme “Context and Evaluation”

- Summer Institute in collaboration with CDC

- Growth in professional development workshops

- Guiding Principles

- Active Listserv “EvalTalk”

- Active Website (www.eval.org)
  - On-line directory for networking
  - On-line forums are new strategy for member engagement
  - Onsite resource library
  - On line access to 4 key evaluation journals
Established an Evaluation Policy Task Force (EPTF) in 2007

Charge is to assist AEA in developing an ongoing capability to influence evaluation policies that are critical to the practice of evaluation.

Examples – US policies regarding:
- Defining evaluation
- Requirements of evaluation
- Evaluation methods
- Human resources regarding evaluation
- Evaluation budgets
- Evaluation implementation
- Evaluation ethics
To guide AEA on two key tasks:

- Consultative campaign related to federal evaluation policy

- Develop public presence, especially through the development of collateral materials

George Grob, current AEA Policy Consultant working with the Staff and the AEA Board
Examples of AEA’s Policy Work To Date

- Comments on OMB PART Guidance document
- Meeting with and presentation to work group of OMB’s Performance Improvement Council
- Development of one page hand-outs describing evaluation and evaluators and what they can offer to effective government
- Development of “An Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government”
Focus of Evaluation Roadmap

- Transforming the Federal management culture to one that incorporates evaluation as an essential management function

- Making program evaluation integral to managing government programs at all stages
  - from planning and initial development
  - through start-up, ongoing implementation, appropriations, and reauthorization.
Evaluation Roadmap Framework

- Scope and Coverage of Evaluation
- Management
- Quality and Independence
- Transparency
Evaluation Scope and Coverage

- As a tool throughout the life-cycle of programs and policies
- Evaluate to support and inform program decision-making and management
- Tailor approach and methods to the questions, program and context, audience
  - Range of approaches likely required
Evaluation Management

- Administered by professionals with competence in evaluation
- Guided by annual and long-term evaluation plans, and written evaluation policies
- Provided sufficient and stable sources of funds
- Provided high level support for evaluation
Quality And Independence

- Preserve and promote objectivity
- Develop and adopt quality standards
- Promote use of robust set of appropriate methods
- Safeguard the independence of the evaluation functions
Transparency

- Consult with Congress and other stakeholders

- Disseminate accountability findings in broad public and timely manner

- Create clearing houses and encourage secondary analyses
Important Roles for an Evaluation Community

- **Legitimizing** the role of evaluation in good governance
- Providing the ‘**conscience**’ for ethical and quality practice
- Fostering **capacity building** for individuals and organizations
  - Focus not just on tools for evaluation inquiry, but **evaluation thinking** as well
  - Focus context fit of evaluation approaches
- Promoting a **culture** of evaluation and **creating demand**