

AEA Guiding Principles Training Package

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The following materials are contained in a single PDF file that is read-only format.

- **Facilitator's Guide**—*Read this first for an overview of the components of the training package and for useful information on preparing for and conducting a training workshop.*
- **Case Study**—*The case study is about an external evaluation of a health program to be used in the small group exercise.*
- **Case Study Work Sheet**—*The work sheet is to be used by participants during the small group exercise.*
- **Completed Case Study Work Sheet**—*The completed work sheet is only for the facilitator as a guide for discussion about the case study after the small group exercise.*
- **AEA Guiding Principles**—*The full version of the Guiding Principles can be distributed before or during the workshop.*
- **Workshop Evaluation Form**—*This optional form can be used to have participants evaluate your workshop.*

The following article is a stand-alone resource in a PDF read-only format.

- **Ethical Reasoning Article**—*This resource about ethical reasoning can be distributed before or during the workshop.*

The following materials are contained in separate files and can be modified for your own workshop.

- **Instructions for PowerPoint Presentation**—*These instructions tell you how to open and review the PowerPoint, as well as how to print slides and/or notes pages for a workshop.*
- **PowerPoint Presentation with Notes Pages**—*The PowerPoint presentation with facilitator notes can be used as is or adapted for your workshop context.*

Facilitator's Guide for "Using the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators to Improve Your Practice*" Training Package

Introduction

Background

The revised *Guiding Principles for Evaluators (GP)* were ratified by the AEA membership in 2004 and, in 2005, the Ethics Committee developed a brochure with an abbreviated version of the *GP*. The Ethics Committee has an ongoing goal to actively disseminate the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* and to inform practicing evaluators of their value and utility for guiding ethical evaluation practice.

During 2006, the Ethics Committee worked with a task force to develop this training package. The development of the content of this training package took place in the spring of 2006, and it was first pilot tested in June, 2006 at the AEA/CDC sponsored professional development institute. Because the first audience for the training package was predominantly evaluators affiliated with the CDC, the first case example was developed around a health evaluation theme. More case examples will be developed to feature other content areas within the evaluation field.

The Ethics Committee welcomes your feedback on the content, implementation and utility of this professional development package. Please contact the chair of the Ethics Committee with suggestions, questions and, of course, any evaluative feedback you may have regarding this package. For contact information for the current Ethics Committee Chair, please consult the AEA website, <http://www.eval.org/aboutus/organization/board.asp>.

Purpose

The purpose of this professional development package is to introduce the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* in a workshop format and, using an actual evaluation case, engage the audience in dialogue about ethical evaluation practice. The *GP* are designed to promote and guide ethical practice in evaluation and this training package is organized around the *Guiding Principles*. The overview of the *GP* and the case study exercise should surface discussion about the relevance of the *GP* to particular practical challenges and the ways in which the *GP* can be used to guide ethical evaluation practice. However, it is not within the scope of this training package to attempt to address every issue related to good, ethical evaluation practice. Rather, this is designed as an introductory workshop that can lay the foundation for further exploration of ethical issues in evaluation.

In preparation for presenting this workshop, you—the presenter—should take considerable time to familiarize yourself with all the materials included in this packet (see below for list of materials). In addition to becoming familiar with the PowerPoint presentation, notes and handouts for the actual training, we recommend that you review both the long and short (brochure) version of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*. This will help you to expand on the presentation slides and to clarify issues or questions that may arise in the small and large group discussions. In addition to the two versions of the *GP*, you might also take a look at the Professional Support Resources and Other Resources for Guiding Evaluation Practice listed in the presentation (slides 16-18). These are supplemental materials that will help you to point

your audience in the right direction for information after the training; the more familiar you are with them, the more likely you are to help them know the right resource for their question or issue.

We recognize that there are many other ways to present this information and encourage facilitators to adapt this training package to their audience, as needed. In fact, we have put together a list of possible adaptations (see Suggested Adaptations, pages 5-6).

Materials in Training Package

For the facilitator's packet:

- The Facilitator's Guide
- The PowerPoint presentation, with facilitator's notes
- The Case Study example
- The Sample Completed Worksheet
- The full version of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*
- The brochure version of the *GP*
- A resource about ethical reasoning from the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions

For the participants' packets:

- The PowerPoint presentation handout, printed with three to a page
- The Case Study example
- The Worksheet
- The full version of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*
- The brochure version of the *GP*
- The Workshop Evaluation Form
- A handout from the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions

Logistical Information to Prepare for the Workshop

Audience Level

The primary audience for this professional development package is beginning level evaluators. The workshop is meant as an introduction to the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* and therefore is geared toward evaluators who are either new to the profession or are not already familiar with the *GP*. However, this training package could also serve as a refresher on the *GP* for more seasoned evaluators. Audiences could also include those funding evaluations or those commissioning evaluations.

It is important to be aware of the level of understanding of program evaluation that your audience brings to this training. Adaptations would be necessary to use this package with more experienced evaluation audiences. When using this with funders or commissioners of evaluation, it may be necessary to supplement it with information about evaluation as a practice and a field.

If you are using this training package within the context of an evaluation course or other pre-scheduled training, you may choose to assign reading ahead of time. For example, assigning the full version of the *GP* and the case study to read ahead of class may contribute to deeper discussion during the workshop session.

Time Needed

We recommend that you set aside at least 2 hours for this workshop. It may be possible to conduct the workshop in less time, say 1½ hours, but the discussion may be cut short. You will see that each section has accompanying time estimates. For a 2-hour training, to correspond to the parts of the PowerPoint presentation, times may look like this:

Objectives, assumptions and overview of *GP* (slides 1-10) – 30 min.

Case and small group instructions (slides 11-13) – 5 min.

Small group work – 30 min.

Reporting out (slide 14) – 15 min.

Large group discussion (slide 15) – 25 min.

Resources (slides 16-18) – 5 min.

Ethics Committee Task Force and Workshop evaluation (slides 19-20) – 5 min.

Equipment Needed

To conduct this training with a group of evaluators, you will need a computer with Microsoft PowerPoint and a projector. Or, alternately, you will need some way to reproduce the PowerPoint slides and either project them onto a screen—as, for example, transparencies—or distribute them to the audience as handouts. The workshop consists of lecture based on the PowerPoint presentation, small group discussion and large group discussion formats. Therefore, in addition to a space that is conducive to projecting a presentation on a screen and conducting a large group discussion, there should be room for small groups to split up for discussion. Each small group should ideally have its own table and flip chart (with markers) and the facilitator should have his or her own flip chart and markers for taking notes from the large group discussion.

You will want to make copies of the handouts and distribute them at the beginning of the training. Each participant should have his or her own copy of the materials, including the case study, the work sheet, the full version of the *GP* and the brochure version of the *GP*.

Workshop Materials

PowerPoint Presentation

- The PowerPoint presentation is the framework for the training package; it should be used as a slide show during the session. (As mentioned above, this can either be done using a computer and a projector or by printing the presentation slides on transparencies and projecting them on a screen.) You should plan to print out the slides of the presentation as a handout for the audience, so that they can follow along and take notes.
- This PowerPoint presentation contains notes for the facilitator to use to supplement the slide show presentation. The Notes contain **Background** information for you as the facilitator, **Talking Points** you may use, and **Adaptations** you may want to make in your presentation. These notes contain more information that a presenter can convey during the workshop. You should review them and, based on your time allotment and audience level, decide how you'd like to incorporate them into your presentation. We encourage you to modify the content of the slides and notes pages as you wish for your own workshop presentation.
- The following instructions are for opening and printing the PowerPoint presentation:
 1. Open the PowerPoint presentation, which puts you in the first slide
 2. Use the scroll bar on the right to scroll through all the slides and notes pages

To print only the slides--one slide to a page:

1. In the toolbar at the top of the screen for the first slide, click on **File**; in the dropdown menu, then click on **Print**
2. In the window under **Print what**, click on **Slides** in the dropdown list
3. Click the **OK** button at the bottom right of the window to print the slides one to a page

To print only the slides--as a handout three to a page with lines to the right of each slide:

1. In the toolbar at the top of the screen for the first slide, click on **File**; in the dropdown menu, then click on **Print**
2. In the window under **Print what**, click on **Handouts** in the dropdown list
3. The small box to the right that says **Handouts** lights up. Under **Slides per page**, click on "**3**" in the dropdown list and it shows 3 slides to a page with lines to the right of each slide
4. Click the **OK** button at the bottom right of the window to print

To print the slides with notes pages to use as the facilitator (slide at the top with the notes below):

1. In the toolbar at the top of the screen for the first slide, click on **File**; in the dropdown menu, then click on **Print**
2. In the window under **Print what**, click on **Notes Pages** in the dropdown list
3. Click the **OK** button at the bottom right of the window to print

Case Study Example

- The case study is an important and integral part of the training package. It is to be used during the small and large group discussion sections of the training and is meant to allow the audience to dive into the material and wrestle with the real issues that confront evaluators in practice. In addition to the case study, we have included a list of possible issues in the sample Completed Work Sheet that may surface during the discussions. This is meant for you, as facilitator, to read so that you might prepare yourself to facilitate discussion around these issues or bring them up if they are not surfaced in the discussions. (See more information about the Completed Work Sheet, below.) As mentioned above, additional cases dealing with different content areas within the field of evaluation will be developed in the future.
- Prior to the small and large group discussions, the audience will read the entire case and consider the issues it highlights within the context of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*. We've designed this case so that all five *Guiding Principles* are relevant, and there is material for discussion about any of them. There are other options for facilitation that you might consider if, for example, you are short on time or have a specific interest in one particular principle. We leave these adaptations up to you, trusting that you know your audience and their information needs and your time limitations. (See pages 5-6 for Suggested Adaptations.)
- When possible and appropriate, e.g., in the context of an evaluation course or a pre-scheduled training session, you may choose to have your audience read the case example ahead of the workshop.

Work Sheet

- This work sheet should be filled out by each participant as they read the case. It's designed to help participants organize their thoughts for the small and large group discussions and is theirs to keep.

Sample Completed Work Sheet

- This completed work sheet suggests major issues in the case and is meant to be illustrative, not comprehensive. It is provided as background information *for your information only* and is not intended to be provided to participants. It also includes suggested probing questions that may be used in the large group discussion to move the conversation to a deeper level (these are in the left column, under the principle name).

Electronic Version of Full GP

- The full version of the *GP* can be referred to in the small and large group discussions, if desired. Mostly, this is for participants to have for future reference. An electronic copy of the full version of the *GP* is available on the AEA website (<http://www.eval.org>).
- When possible and appropriate, you may choose to have your audience read this before the workshop.

Electronic Version of GP Brochure

- As part of this package, we have included an electronic version of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* brochure, which is available on the AEA website (<http://www.eval.org>). A nice addition to the training is to order actual hard copy brochures from the AEA management office. This well-designed brochure is something your participants can keep on hand for easy reference. To request copies of the brochure, please contact Susan Kistler at susan@eval.org, 1-888-232-2275.

Evaluation Form

- The evaluation form can be used at the end of the training session to gather feedback on the presentation and the content. This feedback could be helpful to you to know whether your audience learned what was intended. You may modify the evaluation form to meet your needs.
- We encourage you to send any information, gathered through the evaluation forms or in conversation with participants, that you think is useful for improving the training package to the Ethics Committee chair. Contact information for the current Ethics Committee Chair can be accessed at <http://www.eval.org/aboutus/organization/board.asp>. It will be helpful for us to get the following information:
 - Type of audience (e.g., graduate class in evaluation, Local Affiliate meeting, etc.)
 - Number of participants
 - Length of training session
 - Adaptations you made in the workshop (e.g., covered only some of the principles, covered only some stages of the evaluation process, used more than one case, etc.)
 - Your recommendations for improvement
 - Other suggestions or comments

Resource on Ethical Reasoning

- This short article, from the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, offers some criteria for what constitutes a strong and well-reasoned response to an ethical challenge. We thought it may be helpful background information for facilitating discussion about the *Guiding Principles* and ethical evaluation practice. It is written for research scientists, but the basic principles apply to the practice of evaluation. The

electronic version of the article can be found at <http://poynter.indiana.edu/mr/mr-developing.pdf>. [Reprinted from Muriel J. Bebeau, et al., *Moral Reasoning in Scientific Research: Cases for Teaching and Assessment*. Bloomington, Indiana: Poynter Center (1995). This essay may be reproduced, unaltered, and used without further permission for non-profit educational use. Copyright © 1995 by Indiana University; all rights reserved.]

- More information about ethical reasoning and suggestions for guiding discussion about ethics in research practice can be found at the Poynter Center website: <http://poynter.indiana.edu/index.shtml>.

Suggested Adaptations of the Training Package

The current set of training materials represents one way to conduct a workshop on the AEA *Guiding Principles*, but certainly not the only way. We encourage you to be creative in how you might adapt the materials to fit your training context, audience and available time. Below we suggest some possible adaptations.

1. If time is limited, each of the small groups could focus on only one of the principles and its sub-principles in discussing the case study. Or, each small group could focus on applying the *Guiding Principles* to one phase of the evaluation process in the case study. Another possibility is to use the case to focus on only a single issue, such as cultural competence/cultural relevance.
2. If you have a longer time for a workshop (more than 2 hours), you could use the questions on the Completed Sample Work Sheet as questions for further discussion after the reporting out from the small group work. Those questions would allow more in-depth discussion of the issues raised in the case study.
3. You could conduct a workshop in which more time is spent discussing the *Guiding Principles* in depth, rather than applying them to a case study. For that in-depth discussion, you may want to add to the Facilitator's notes on the PowerPoint more questions that probe each of the sub-principles.
4. If your audience is primarily funders or commissioners of evaluation, or another group without formal evaluation training or knowledge, you may need to adapt your presentation accordingly. For example, you may need to add a slide or two about the importance of the GP for guiding evaluator practice and why it would be important to hire an evaluator who is aware of and follows these guidelines. In addition, you might focus some of the small and large group discussion on issues that are directly related to their specific role in an evaluation.
5. For international audiences, we recommend you take into account that the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* were developed in a western cultural context, particularly that of the United States. As such, the principles and materials reflect the values and approaches of evaluators in the United States. You may wish to discuss with your audiences how the AEA *Guiding Principles* are similar to or different from your audience's values and approaches. Or, you may find it useful to conduct a comparison of the ethical guidelines of other international evaluation associations listed under the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (<http://ioce.net/home/index.cfm?dv=1&lan=en>). In addition, you may want to develop a case study to reflect your cultural context.

6. You may want to have participants attempt to apply the *Guiding Principles* to the scenarios presented in the Ethical Challenges section of the *American Journal of Evaluation*. Or, you may develop mini-scenarios of your own that purposefully raise ethical challenges to be analyzed using the *Guiding Principles*.
7. You could use the small group time to have participants begin to plan an evaluation, using the *Guiding Principles* as a framework. To do this, instead of using the included case study, you should include materials about the program to be evaluated—tailored for this kind of activity and time frame—for the small groups' information in their discussion. In addition, depending on the level of experience of your audience, a one-page description of the steps in planning an evaluation can be helpful for focusing small group discussion.
8. Depending on the group, you could choose to present the Case Study before presenting the slides about the *Guiding Principles*. This may give the audience a context for the *Guiding Principles* as you present them and allow for more time to consider the case before small group discussion.

Facilitator's Guide Checklist

Facilitator Preparation

- Read Facilitator's Guide
- Read Full Version of *GP*
- Read Brochure Version of *GP*
- Read through PowerPoint Presentation and Notes
- Adapt Presentation as Appropriate—see Suggested Adaptations for ideas
- Familiarize Yourself with Evaluation Resources, including article on ethical reasoning
- Read Case Study Example
- Read Sample Completed Work Sheet
- Read Evaluation Form

Materials to Prepare for the Audience

- Print Handout of PowerPoint Slides
- Print Copies of Full Version of *GP*
- Order *GP* Brochure copies or print copies of brochure version
- Print Copies of Case Study Example and Case Work Sheet
- Print Copies of Evaluation Form
- Room Set Up
 - Secure Projector and Screen for Presentation
 - Flip Charts—one for each small group and one for large group discussion
 - Markers—for all flip charts
 - Tables for Small Group Work

CASE STUDY: Evaluating the Health Care Collaborative

Evaluation Context. The Health Care Collaborative (HCC) program grew out of a multi-year effort funded in many sites by a national foundation. That initiative promoted the delivery of primary health care services through local collaboration among health care providers and residents in poorly served or underserved neighborhoods. The HCC office uses trained neighborhood residents as outreach health workers to raise health-issues awareness among residents and to give them options for accessing health care. Health care providers who are collaboration partners deliver a range of services to neighborhood residents who choose to participate in the HCC program. A local funding source supports the HCC, which has a program director, administrative staff, and a small network of outreach workers. The HCC Board of Directors consists of a small group of health care providers and community members.

The HCC serves an economically challenged neighborhood in a small metropolitan area: average income is one-third to one-half of its metro and national counterparts. The neighborhood is quite diverse along many dimensions, including age, household composition, sexual identity, education, religious preference, race and ethnicity. The neighborhood has a large African American population, many refugees from African and Eastern European nations during the past 20 years, and a rapidly growing Hispanic population in recent years.

Entry, Contracting and Design. HCC's Board and local funder found that they needed more information than the program's reporting system alone could provide—about how program participants viewed HCC, how the staff viewed the program and the neighborhood, and how the program met or did not meet identified service needs. The funder provided \$20,000 for this purpose and the Board established a one-year schedule for completing an evaluation. The funder and the program director approached a local faculty member, an evaluator who also teaches evaluation, to ask for a proposal. The faculty member has previously served on the HCC Board. Discussions with the funder, program director and some members of the Board identified key expectations and constraints.

The faculty evaluator proposed a multi-method approach for a formative evaluation. The design included surveys of participants, program staff and other health care provider partners. The surveys would include questions about racial and ethnic identity. Selected program participants would be asked to keep journals and to participate in either a focus group or in an observed service delivery for a small group. Three focus groups were proposed: one for senior citizens; another for adult, non-senior males; the third, for adult, non-senior females. HCC focus group participants would be offered a \$25 gift card for their time. IRB approvals would be obtained for informed consent to voluntary participation in the evaluation.

A graduate student would do most of the data collection, under the evaluator's supervision. The student was fluent in Spanish and English and this project would be the subject of the student's Master's thesis. The evaluation's final product would be a presentation of results, in PowerPoint format, with the slides and notes delivered to the program director and funder.

Data Collection. The student administered the staff surveys in person. These surveys asked for how long the staff person worked with HCC, what they did in the program, how they viewed the people served by the program, and what difference the program made in the neighborhood. Surveys of other providers involved with HCC were web-based. The questions concerned what kinds of interaction the providers had with whom at the HCC, how often, how that relationship

affected both organizations, and what health care services the responder brought to residents who participated in the HCC.

HCC staff administered surveys to program participants during ongoing program contact. The student also conducted a small number of interviews of people identified for their longevity in working with this particular neighborhood, and added open-ended historical questions.

The student observed both staff and participants in health care awareness sessions for small groups, to better enrich the evaluator's and student's understanding of the program, its staff, and the participants. Participants' journals provided inspirational stories of their experiences in navigating the health care maze.

Data Analysis and Interpretation. From the surveys, some data were aggregated and reported descriptively (e.g., comparisons of the racial and ethnic composition of the HCC participants with that for the neighborhood). Scaling and cluster analyses were used to structure and analyze the results of the focus groups, and some journal entries and responses to open-ended questions from interviews also were analyzed.

All in all, the program served a disproportionate number of Hispanic adults (compared to the neighborhood's composition) and disproportionate numbers of people without health insurance and without other known ways to access health care. Participants and staff were very positive about the program and its value in their neighborhood and lives. Neighborhood residents who used the HCC program overwhelmingly credited the use of racially and ethnically diverse staff, from the neighborhood itself, as the main reason for HCC's success.

Younger adults placed more concern on financial issues related to health care, compared with older adults. Hispanic participants in focus groups were all female and most were unemployed. From all three focus groups, whether participants were treated fairly and had access to insurance and to health care were more important than waiting times or actually getting to appointments.

When the evaluator and student felt comfortable with their work, they shared draft findings informally with the program director, funder, and Board members—through in-person as well as telephone conversations and through email. Some feedback was given and considered in reviewing those findings and in developing the final product.

Dissemination and Utilization of Results. The final evaluation briefing was delivered at a meeting of the HCC Board, to which the funder and some residents were invited. The funder could not make this meeting, accepted the electronic PowerPoint file, and asked no further questions. Only one resident—a regular attendee of Board meetings—was present for the briefing. Two or three questions were asked, more of apparent curiosity than any other cause or purpose. No future plans for the findings were discussed at this meeting.

The student completed the thesis based on this project and it was very well received by the faculty committee. The evaluator adapted the evaluation for use in an advanced evaluation course for graduate students.

The student and evaluator also proposed a poster session for the program of their annual, national professional conference. The proposal was accepted and a large poster developed, which covered the basics of the evaluation. Those who stopped to read and talk about the evaluation expressed admiration for its scope and methods.

Case Study Work Sheet for *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* Workshop

Guiding Principle	Issues or Questions Raised Related to Principle
Systematic Inquiry	
Competence	
Integrity/Honesty	
Respect for People	
Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare	

Completed Case Study Work Sheet for *Guiding Principles for Evaluators Workshop*

Guiding Principle	Specific Issues or Questions Raised Related to Principle
<p>Systematic Inquiry How are methods of participant selection important to the credibility of an evaluation? What about methods of data collection?</p>	<p>How were neighborhood residents as well as program participants included in evaluation activities? What procedures were established or used to assure systematic inclusion of those stakeholders' perspectives? How were focus group participants recruited (potential bias)? (related issues in sampling, field testing instruments, survey design) In what ways does the evaluation address potential weaknesses or criticisms of convenience in gathering data as opposed to systematic methods, documented in a work plan? How well does the evaluation design and its questions address the information needs of the funder and board?</p>
<p>Competence How can you decide what dimensions of competence are relevant for an evaluation? What is cultural competence and how will you know its presence?</p>	<p>What elements of competence are brought into play here and what omissions (in competence) might be envisioned? How does cultural competence weigh with respect to (a) evaluation competence (evaluation knowledge, skills, experience—what do we assume from academic credentials and some relevant experience); (b) program competence (knowledge of policies, mission, staffing, and so on); and (c) social or environmental competence (understanding and appreciation of the social, economic, and political realities in this neighborhood/city/state)? For cultural competence, are language skills necessary? Are they sufficient? In what ways might competence be usefully or realistically judged from the eyes of the buyer of evaluation services?</p>
<p>Integrity/Honesty How might the idea of integrity or honesty affect different stages of the evaluation?</p>	<p>What possible conflicts might arise from the evaluator's previous experience on the board? How can these be resolved or handled? What potential influences might be created by the graduate student's use of the evaluation for a Master's thesis and how could these be addressed? What mechanisms or agreements were (or might be) established to deal with potential conflicts or issues that might arise during the course of an evaluation like this one? Why wasn't an RFP issued and/or a written proposal used as the basis for explicitly establishing mutual expectations for the evaluation? How does this principle affect the inclusion of participants and residents (or ways in which they are included and supported) in the evaluation activities?</p>
<p>Respect for People What are major ways of showing respect for people in an evaluation context?</p>	<p>How does this principle interact with the need for cultural competence? What about the apparently minimal inclusion of program participants in the evaluation activities, and how about the lack of inclusion of neighborhood residents who are not program participants? How does IRB approval indicate sufficient and appropriate respect for people (clients, staff, etc.) in this evaluation? For example, staff are not only informants but also collectors of surveys from participants. What issues of respect might arise regarding compensation for participation?</p>
<p>Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare Are there limits to an evaluator's responsibilities for general and public welfare?</p>	<p>How does the planned dissemination meet these responsibilities, or what issues are raised in possibly not meeting them? How might the evaluation results negatively impact the neighborhood or residents and how might the evaluator (or board, funder) consider and address such risks (e.g., limiting access to health care for some or all residents; creating pedestrian or other traffic into the neighborhood of others from outside, who may or may not contribute to the neighborhood's well being or to residents' sense of safety)? What pressures or influences might be anticipated from the power/status relationships at work in this evaluation concerning, for example, participants in relation to staff; both in relation to board and funder; between board and funder?</p>

AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATORS

Revisions reflected herein ratified by the AEA membership, July 2004

Preface: Assumptions Concerning Development of Principles

A. Evaluation is a profession composed of persons with varying interests, potentially encompassing but not limited to the evaluation of programs, products, personnel, policy, performance, proposals, technology, research, theory, and even of evaluation itself. These principles are broadly intended to cover all kinds of evaluation. For external evaluations of public programs, they nearly always apply. However, it is impossible to write guiding principles that neatly fit every context in which evaluators work, and some evaluators will work in contexts in which following a guideline cannot be done for good reason. The Guiding Principles are not intended to constrain such evaluators when this is the case. However, such exceptions should be made for good reason (e.g., legal prohibitions against releasing information to stakeholders), and evaluators who find themselves in such contexts should consult colleagues about how to proceed.

B. Based on differences in training, experience, and work settings, the profession of evaluation encompasses diverse perceptions about the primary purpose of evaluation. These include but are not limited to the following: bettering products, personnel, programs, organizations, governments, consumers and the public interest; contributing to informed decision making and more enlightened change; precipitating needed change; empowering all stakeholders by collecting data from them and engaging them in the evaluation process; and experiencing the excitement of new insights. Despite that diversity, the common ground is that evaluators aspire to construct and provide the best possible information that might bear on the value of whatever is being evaluated. The principles are intended to foster that primary aim.

C. The principles are intended to guide the professional practice of evaluators, and to inform evaluation clients and the general public about the principles they can expect to be upheld by professional evaluators. Of course, no statement of principles can anticipate all situations that arise in the practice of evaluation. However, principles are not just guidelines for reaction when something goes wrong or when a dilemma is found. Rather, principles should proactively guide the behaviors of professionals in everyday practice.

D. The purpose of documenting guiding principles is to foster continuing development of the profession of evaluation, and the socialization of its members. The principles are meant to stimulate discussion about the proper practice and use of evaluation among members of the profession, sponsors of evaluation, and others interested in evaluation.

E. The five principles proposed in this document are not independent, but overlap in many ways. Conversely, sometimes these principles will conflict, so that evaluators will have to choose among them. At such times evaluators must use their own values and knowledge of the setting to determine the appropriate response. Whenever a course of action is unclear, evaluators should solicit the advice of fellow evaluators about how to resolve the problem before deciding how to proceed.

F. These principles are intended to supercede any previous work on standards, principles, or ethics adopted by AEA or its two predecessor organizations, the Evaluation Research Society and the Evaluation Network. These principles are the official position of AEA on these matters.

G. These principles are not intended to replace standards supported by evaluators or by the other disciplines in which evaluators participate.

H. Each principle is illustrated by a number of statements to amplify the meaning of the overarching principle, and to provide guidance for its application. These illustrations are not meant to include all possible applications of that principle, nor to be viewed as rules that provide the basis for sanctioning violators.

I. These principles were developed in the context of Western cultures, particularly the United States, and so may reflect the experiences of that context. The relevance of these principles may vary across other cultures, and across subcultures within the United States.

J. These principles are part of an evolving process of self-examination by the profession, and should be revisited on a regular basis. Mechanisms might include officially-sponsored reviews of principles at annual meetings, and other forums for harvesting experience with the principles and their application. On a regular basis, but at least every five years, these principles ought to be examined for possible review and revision. In order to maintain association-wide awareness and relevance, all AEA members are encouraged to participate in this process.

The Principles

A. Systematic Inquiry: Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries.

1. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the evaluative information they produce, evaluators should adhere to the highest technical standards appropriate to the methods they use.
2. Evaluators should explore with the client the shortcomings and strengths both of the various evaluation questions and the various approaches that might be used for answering those questions.
3. Evaluators should communicate their methods and approaches accurately and in sufficient detail to allow others to understand, interpret and critique their work. They should make clear the limitations of an evaluation and its results. Evaluators should discuss in a contextually appropriate way those values, assumptions, theories, methods, results, and analyses significantly affecting the interpretation of the evaluative findings. These statements apply to all aspects of the evaluation, from its initial conceptualization to the eventual use of findings.

B. Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.

1. Evaluators should possess (or ensure that the evaluation team possesses) the education, abilities, skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the evaluation.
2. To ensure recognition, accurate interpretation and respect for diversity, evaluators should ensure that the members of the evaluation team collectively demonstrate cultural competence. Cultural competence would be reflected in evaluators seeking awareness of their own culturally-based assumptions, their understanding of the worldviews of culturally-different participants and stakeholders in the evaluation, and the use of appropriate evaluation strategies and skills in working with culturally different groups. Diversity may be in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economics, or other factors pertinent to the evaluation context.
3. Evaluators should practice within the limits of their professional training and competence, and should decline to conduct evaluations that fall substantially outside those limits. When declining the commission or request is not feasible or appropriate, evaluators should make clear any significant limitations on the evaluation that might result. Evaluators should make every effort to gain the competence directly or through the assistance of others who possess the required expertise.
4. Evaluators should continually seek to maintain and improve their competencies, in order to provide the highest level of performance in their evaluations. This continuing professional development might include formal

coursework and workshops, self-study, evaluations of one's own practice, and working with other evaluators to learn from their skills and expertise.

C. Integrity/Honesty: Evaluators display honesty and integrity in their own behavior, and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.

1. Evaluators should negotiate honestly with clients and relevant stakeholders concerning the costs, tasks to be undertaken, limitations of methodology, scope of results likely to be obtained, and uses of data resulting from a specific evaluation. It is primarily the evaluator's responsibility to initiate discussion and clarification of these matters, not the client's.
2. Before accepting an evaluation assignment, evaluators should disclose any roles or relationships they have that might pose a conflict of interest (or appearance of a conflict) with their role as an evaluator. If they proceed with the evaluation, the conflict(s) should be clearly articulated in reports of the evaluation results.
3. Evaluators should record all changes made in the originally negotiated project plans, and the reasons why the changes were made. If those changes would significantly affect the scope and likely results of the evaluation, the evaluator should inform the client and other important stakeholders in a timely fashion (barring good reason to the contrary, before proceeding with further work) of the changes and their likely impact.
4. Evaluators should be explicit about their own, their clients', and other stakeholders' interests and values concerning the conduct and outcomes of an evaluation.
5. Evaluators should not misrepresent their procedures, data or findings. Within reasonable limits, they should attempt to prevent or correct misuse of their work by others.
6. If evaluators determine that certain procedures or activities are likely to produce misleading evaluative information or conclusions, they have the responsibility to communicate their concerns and the reasons for them. If discussions with the client do not resolve these concerns, the evaluator should decline to conduct the evaluation. If declining the assignment is unfeasible or inappropriate, the evaluator should consult colleagues or relevant stakeholders about other proper ways to proceed. (Options might include discussions at a higher level, a dissenting cover letter or appendix, or refusal to sign the final document.)
7. Evaluators should disclose all sources of financial support for an evaluation, and the source of the request for the evaluation.

D. Respect for People: Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders.

1. Evaluators should seek a comprehensive understanding of the important contextual elements of the evaluation. Contextual factors that may influence the results of a study include geographic location, timing, political and social climate, economic conditions, and other relevant activities in progress at the same time.
2. Evaluators should abide by current professional ethics, standards, and regulations regarding risks, harms, and burdens that might befall those participating in the evaluation; regarding informed consent for participation in evaluation; and regarding informing participants and clients about the scope and limits of confidentiality.
3. Because justified negative or critical conclusions from an evaluation must be explicitly stated, evaluations sometimes produce results that harm client or stakeholder interests. Under this circumstance, evaluators should seek to maximize the benefits and reduce any unnecessary harms that might occur, provided this will not compromise the integrity of the evaluation findings. Evaluators should carefully judge when the benefits from

doing the evaluation or in performing certain evaluation procedures should be foregone because of the risks or harms. To the extent possible, these issues should be anticipated during the negotiation of the evaluation.

4. Knowing that evaluations may negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
5. Where feasible, evaluators should attempt to foster social equity in evaluation, so that those who give to the evaluation may benefit in return. For example, evaluators should seek to ensure that those who bear the burdens of contributing data and incurring any risks do so willingly, and that they have full knowledge of and opportunity to obtain any benefits of the evaluation. Program participants should be informed that their eligibility to receive services does not hinge on their participation in the evaluation.
6. Evaluators have the responsibility to understand and respect differences among participants, such as differences in their culture, religion, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity, and to account for potential implications of these differences when planning, conducting, analyzing, and reporting evaluations.

E. Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare: Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of general and public interests and values that may be related to the evaluation.

1. When planning and reporting evaluations, evaluators should include relevant perspectives and interests of the full range of stakeholders.
2. Evaluators should consider not only the immediate operations and outcomes of whatever is being evaluated, but also its broad assumptions, implications and potential side effects.
3. Freedom of information is essential in a democracy. Evaluators should allow all relevant stakeholders access to evaluative information in forms that respect people and honor promises of confidentiality. Evaluators should actively disseminate information to stakeholders as resources allow. Communications that are tailored to a given stakeholder should include all results that may bear on interests of that stakeholder and refer to any other tailored communications to other stakeholders. In all cases, evaluators should strive to present results clearly and simply so that clients and other stakeholders can easily understand the evaluation process and results.
4. Evaluators should maintain a balance between client needs and other needs. Evaluators necessarily have a special relationship with the client who funds or requests the evaluation. By virtue of that relationship, evaluators must strive to meet legitimate client needs whenever it is feasible and appropriate to do so. However, that relationship can also place evaluators in difficult dilemmas when client interests conflict with other interests, or when client interests conflict with the obligation of evaluators for systematic inquiry, competence, integrity, and respect for people. In these cases, evaluators should explicitly identify and discuss the conflicts with the client and relevant stakeholders, resolve them when possible, determine whether continued work on the evaluation is advisable if the conflicts cannot be resolved, and make clear any significant limitations on the evaluation that might result if the conflict is not resolved.
5. Evaluators have obligations that encompass the public interest and good. These obligations are especially important when evaluators are supported by publicly-generated funds; but clear threats to the public good should never be ignored in any evaluation. Because the public interest and good are rarely the same as the interests of any particular group (including those of the client or funder), evaluators will usually have to go beyond analysis of particular stakeholder interests and consider the welfare of society as a whole.

Background

In 1986, the Evaluation Network (ENet) and the Evaluation Research Society (ERS) merged to create the American Evaluation Association. ERS had previously adopted a set of standards for program evaluation (published in New Directions for Program Evaluation in 1982); and both organizations had lent support to work of other organizations about evaluation guidelines. However, none of these standards or guidelines were officially adopted by AEA, nor were any other ethics, standards, or guiding principles put into place. Over the ensuing years, the need for such guiding principles was discussed by both the AEA Board and the AEA membership. Under the presidency of David Cordray in 1992, the AEA Board appointed a temporary committee chaired by Peter Rossi to examine whether AEA should address this matter in more detail. That committee issued a report to the AEA Board on November 4, 1992, recommending that AEA should pursue this matter further. The Board followed that recommendation, and on that date created a Task Force to develop a draft of guiding principles for evaluators. The task force members were:

William Shadish, Memphis State University (Chair)
Dianna Newman, University of Albany/SUNY
Mary Ann Scheirer, Private Practice
Chris Wye, National Academy of Public Administration

The AEA Board specifically instructed the Task Force to develop general guiding principles rather than specific standards of practice. Their report, issued in 1994, summarized the Task Force's response to the charge.

Process of Development. Task Force members reviewed relevant documents from other professional societies, and then independently prepared and circulated drafts of material for use in this report. Initial and subsequent drafts (compiled by the Task Force chair) were discussed during conference calls, with revisions occurring after each call. Progress reports were presented at every AEA board meeting during 1993. In addition, a draft of the guidelines was mailed to all AEA members in September 1993 requesting feedback; and three symposia at the 1993 AEA annual conference were used to discuss and obtain further feedback. The Task Force considered all this feedback in a December 1993 conference call, and prepared a final draft in January 1994. This draft was presented and approved for membership vote at the January 1994 AEA board meeting.

Resulting Principles. Given the diversity of interests and employment settings represented on the Task Force, it is noteworthy that Task Force members reached substantial agreement about the following five principles. The order of these principles does not imply priority among them; priority will vary by situation and evaluator role.

- A. **Systematic Inquiry:** Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries about whatever is being evaluated.
- B. **Competence:** Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
- C. **Integrity/Honesty:** Evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
- D. **Respect for People:** Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of the respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact.

- E. **Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare:** Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general and public welfare.

Recommendation for Continued Work. The Task Force also recommended that the AEA Board establish and support a mechanism for the continued development and dissemination of the Guiding Principles, to include formal reviews at least every five years. The Principles were reviewed in 1999 through an EvalTalk survey, a panel review, and a comparison to the ethical principles of the Canadian and Australasian Evaluation Societies. The 2000 Board affirmed this work and expanded dissemination of the Principles; however, the document was left unchanged.

Process of the 2002-2003 Review and Revision. In January 2002 the AEA Board charged its standing Ethics Committee with developing and implementing a process for reviewing the Guiding Principles that would give AEA's full membership multiple opportunities for comment. At its Spring 2002 meeting, the AEA Board approved the process, carried out during the ensuing months. It consisted of an online survey of the membership that drew 413 responses, a "Town Meeting" attended by approximately 40 members at the Evaluation 2002 Conference, and a compilation of stories about evaluators' experiences relative to ethical concerns told by AEA members and drawn from the *American Journal of Evaluation*. Detailed findings of all three sources of input were reported to the AEA Board in *A Review of AEA's Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, submitted January 18, 2003.

In 2003 the Ethics Committee continued to welcome input and specifically solicited it from AEA's Diversity Committee, Building Diversity Initiative, and Multi-Ethnic Issues Topical Interest Group. The first revision reflected the Committee's consensus response to the sum of member input throughout 2002 and 2003. It was submitted to AEA's past presidents, current board members, and the original framers of the Guiding Principles for comment. Twelve reviews were received and incorporated into a second revision, presented at the 2003 annual conference. Consensus opinions of approximately 25 members attending a Town Meeting are reflected in this, the third and final revision that was approved by the Board in February 2004 for submission to the membership for ratification. The revisions were ratified by the membership in July of 2004.

The 2002 Ethics Committee members were:

Doris Redfield, Appalachia Educational Laboratory (Chair)
Deborah Bonnet, Lumina Foundation for Education
Katherine Ryan, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Anna Madison, University of Massachusetts, Boston

In 2003 the membership was expanded for the duration of the revision process:

Deborah Bonnet, Lumina Foundation for Education (Chair)
Doris Redfield, Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Katherine Ryan, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Gail Barrington, Barrington Research Group, Inc.
Elmima Johnson, National Science Foundation

Guiding Principles for Evaluators Workshop Evaluation Form

1. What is your level of evaluation knowledge and experience?	1 Beginner	2 Intermediate	3 Advanced	
For each question below, use the following scale:	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
	1	2	3	4
2. How knowledgeable about the <i>Guiding Principles for Evaluators</i> were you <u>before today</u> ?	1	2	3	4
3. How likely were you to have applied the <i>Guiding Principles for Evaluators</i> in your evaluation practice <u>before today</u> ?	1	2	3	4
4. How knowledgeable about the <i>Guiding Principles for Evaluators</i> are you <u>now</u> ?	1	2	3	4
5. How likely are you <u>now</u> to apply/use the <i>Guiding Principles for Evaluators</i> in your evaluation practice?	1	2	3	4
6. How useful was each part of the workshop:	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
	1	2	3	4
Development of and assumptions behind the <i>GPFE</i>	1	2	3	4
Overview of 5 principles and sub-principles	1	2	3	4
Case study	1	2	3	4
Small group work	1	2	3	4
Large group discussion	1	2	3	4
Other resources and sources of evaluation standards	1	2	3	4

7. What are **two** ways in which you might use the *GPFE* in your evaluation practice?

8. What are **two** ways in which the workshop could be improved?

Other comments or suggestions: