

Using the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* to Improve Your Practice

Ethics Committee Professional Development Task Force

Note: This workshop has been approved by the AEA Board for public use and dissemination.

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The notes for each slide provide, where relevant, **Background** information for you as the facilitator, **Talking Points** you may use, and **Adaptations** you may want to make.

Background:

- The AEA Ethics Committee has an ongoing goal to actively disseminate the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators (GP)* and to encourage their use to guide the ethical practice of evaluation. During 2006, the Ethics Committee worked with a task force to develop this training workshop on the *GP* to be useful to a wide range of evaluation audiences.
- The workshop provides one way, but *not the only way*, to present the *GP* in a training situation. We encourage facilitators to adapt the workshop content and materials to the knowledge and experience of your audience members.

Talking Points:

- You may want to begin by saying something like, Good evaluation is ethical evaluation. The AEA *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* were developed to provide direction for the ethical practice of evaluation.
- You may want to get an idea of the evaluation background and knowledge of the *GP* of your participants if you don't know it already.

Adaptation:

- You will want to adapt the information provided throughout your presentation based on the amount of time available and the experience level of your participants.

- ☉ Increase knowledge of the AEA *Guiding Principles for Evaluators (GP)*
- ☉ Analyze the *Guiding Principles* in a program evaluation context
- ☉ Consider how the *Guiding Principles* can be used to inform ethical evaluation practice

Talking Points:

- You will want to introduce the objectives of the workshop.
- Describe the methods to be used: presentations by the facilitator, small group work on a case study, and large group discussion.
- Explain that the *Guiding Principles* provide a foundation for the ethical practice of evaluation.
- The *GP* should be used as we plan, design, and conduct evaluations and disseminate evaluation results.
- This workshop is organized around the *GP* but may not address every issue related to ethical practice the participants may have.

Adaptation:

- If you modify parts of the training, you will want to modify this slide also. For example, if more than one case is used, it should be noted here.

AEA's Development of the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*



- 1986: Founding of American Evaluation Association
- 1993-1994: Original five *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* developed and ratified
- 2002-2004: *GP* reviewed and updated
- 2004: Revised *GP* endorsed through referendum of AEA membership

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Background:

- This slide is to help the participants understand how the *GP* came about.
- The American Evaluation Association was created in 1986 from the merger of the Evaluation Network and the Evaluation Research Society (ERS). ERS had previously adopted a set of standards for program evaluation, 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 statements, standards, or guiding principles put into place. In 1992, the AEA president appointed a committee that recommended that our association pursue this issue, and the AEA Board created a Task Force to develop guiding principles for evaluators. The original *GP* were ratified by AEA members in 1994. Between 2002-2004, an extensive and inclusive process was used to update the *GP*, resulting in the *Guiding Principles* we have today. (Source: AEA *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, long version)

Talking Points:

- The *GP* are a product of committees and task forces of the AEA. When they are revised, the new version is put to the membership for ratification.
- Through this process, many perspectives on evaluation are represented and the membership of the Association agrees that these are the principles that guide our work.
- There is additional information about the development of the *GP* in the background section of the long version of the *GP*, included in your packet. (You will want to encourage the audience members to read the complete version of the *GP* if they have not already done so in preparation for the workshop.)

Assumptions behind the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*



- ☉ Purposes of the *Guiding Principles*
 - ☉ Promote ethical evaluation practice
 - ☉ Foster continuing professional development
 - ☉ Stimulate discussion within and outside evaluation
- ☉ Evaluators aspire to provide best possible information that might bear on the value of whatever is being evaluated

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Background:

- It's important to talk for a minute about what assumptions drive the *Guiding Principles* and that the purpose of them is to guide practice (this slide and next). These assumptions are from the preface of the long version of the *GP*.

Talking Points:

- AEA has chosen to develop and use principles for our profession. Principles are better at “providing guidance and enlightenment for practice than they are at supplying definitive answers.” (Morris, 2006)
- There is a diversity of methods and disciplines within evaluation. This both enhances our profession as well as makes agreeing on principles challenging.
- Learning about ethics is an important element in professional development.
- The *GP* can also inform those who commission evaluations, evaluation clients and the general public about the principles they can expect to be upheld by professional evaluators.

Morris, M. (2006, July). *Professional Standards and Principles for Effective and Ethical Evaluation Practice*. Presentation at the Evaluator's Institute, Washington, DC.

Assumptions behind the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* (cont.)



- ☉ The *Guiding Principles*:
 - ☉ Proactively guide everyday practice
 - ☉ Cover all kinds of evaluation
 - ☉ Are not independent, but overlap
 - ☉ May sometimes conflict; need to consider trade-offs
- ☉ The *GP* were developed in the context of the United States

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Background:

- It is impossible to write guiding principles that 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. When this occurs, the *Guiding Principles* are not intended to constrain evaluators. 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.

Talking Points:

- The *GP* are not guidelines for reaction, but are designed to proactively guide how we design and conduct evaluations.
- The *GP* cover all kinds of evaluations: programs, products, personnel and policies; external and internal; etc.
- Some of the sub-principles overlap, and sometimes they may seem to conflict. If this occurs, evaluators need to use their own values, knowledge of the setting, and ethical reasoning to consider trade-offs and decide on an appropriate response.
- The *GP* were developed in the context of Western cultures, particularly the United States, and reflect the experiences and values of evaluators in that context. The relevance of these principles may vary across other cultures, and across subcultures within the United States.

Principle A: Systematic Inquiry



☉ Evaluators conduct **systematic, data-based** inquiries:

- ☉ Adhere to highest technical standards
- ☉ Explore strengths and shortcomings of evaluation questions and approaches
- ☉ Communicate approaches, methods and limitations accurately

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Background:

- You may encourage workshop participants to follow along on the short version (brochure) of the *GP* as you present an overview of the five principles and their sub-principles. The slides do not present all the sub-principles, but highlight some major ones to discuss. Where possible, we recommend asking questions to help the participants relate them to their own experience and having examples in mind to answer the questions.

Talking Points:

- How might we know that evaluators are following high technical standards?
Responses could include the following, for example:
 - Use methods appropriate to the evaluation question(s)
 - Collect and analyze data appropriate for quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods used
 - What else?
- What are some ways that an evaluator can help stakeholders understand the limitations in an evaluation?

Adaptation:

- In some circumstances, you may want to introduce the case study before discussing the *GP*. This would provide a context and give more meaning to the discussion of each *GP*.

Principle B: Competence

- ☉ Evaluators provide **competent performance** to stakeholders:
 - ☉ Possess appropriate skills and experience
 - ☉ Demonstrate cultural competence
 - ☉ Practice within limits of competence
 - ☉ Continually improve competencies

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Talking Points:

- This *GP* refers to two types of competence: technical competence and cultural competence. Cultural competence was added in the 2004 revision as our field became more aware of the need for cultural sensitivity in evaluation contexts.
- You may want to ask, What are some ways of demonstrating technical competence?
 - This refers to methodological, content area, project management and interpersonal skills.
- You may want to ask, What are some ways evaluators demonstrate cultural competence?
 - They have self-awareness of their own cultural, political and social values
 - They have awareness of the cultural, political and social values of the groups and communities with whom they are working
 - They have the language skills to communicate with evaluation stakeholders
 - What else?
- This principle refers to an evaluation team because one individual, especially in larger or more complex evaluations, may not possess all the technical and cultural competence skills necessary.
- This principle also emphasizes the dynamic aspect of the evaluation field and the need for continually improving our knowledge and skills.

Principle C: Integrity/Honesty



☉ Evaluators **display honesty and integrity** and attempt to ensure them throughout the entire evaluation process:

- ☉ Negotiate honestly with clients and stakeholders
- ☉ Disclose values, interests and conflicts of interest
- ☉ Represent accurately methods, data and findings
- ☉ Disclose source of request and financial support for evaluation

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Talking Points:

- This principle holds the evaluator responsible for managing a conscientious evaluation process. The evaluator should educate clients and stakeholders and take actions to prevent them from being misled or misinformed.

- You may want to ask, How might the idea of integrity affect different stages of an evaluation, e.g., planning and design, data collection and analysis, reporting, etc.?

- Evaluation is a values-driven process. You might want to ask rhetorically:
 - Are we explicit about our own interests and values related to the evaluation, as well as those of the client and other stakeholders?
 - Do we disclose our values and any roles or relationships that might pose a conflict of interest in the evaluation?

- You may want to ask, How do we negotiate and conduct an evaluation in an honest and transparent way?

Principle D: Respect for People



☉ Evaluators **respect security, dignity and self-worth** of all stakeholders:

- ☉ Understand evaluation context
- ☉ Get informed consent and protect confidentiality
- ☉ Maximize benefits and minimize harm
- ☉ Foster social equity
- ☉ Respect differences among stakeholders

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Talking Points:

- This principle gives ways in which we as evaluators demonstrate respect for the dignity and self-worth of all stakeholders in an evaluation.
- What are some specific ways in which we do that?
 - Attempt to fully understand all the contextual elements of the evaluation, such as location, timing, political and social climate, culture, economic conditions, etc.
 - Follow current professional ethics, standards and regulations regarding the avoidance of potential risks or harms to participants, safeguarding confidentiality and privacy, and obtaining informed consent (e.g., IRB and Human Subjects Review procedures)
- Cultural competence is an element of respecting the dignity and self-worth of stakeholders.
 - What constitutes all stakeholders?
 - What are some characteristics of stakeholders that evaluators need to understand, respect and take into account?
- This principle presents the responsibility to foster social equity in evaluation, where feasible.
 - How can evaluation contribute to social equity?
 - Under what conditions might fostering social equity not be feasible?

Principle E: General and Public Welfare



- ☉ Evaluators take into account **general and public interests**:
 - ☉ Include relevant stakeholders
 - ☉ Balance client and stakeholder needs
 - ☉ Examine assumptions and potential side effects
 - ☉ Present results in understandable forms

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Talking Points:

- Some evaluators consider the last principle the most difficult and challenging.
- This *GP* suggests that there is a public interest that transcends client and stakeholder interests, although this public interest and how it can be served are not defined or specified.
- It suggests that evaluators should serve the interests not only of the evaluation's sponsor but of the larger society, and of various groups within society.
- Also, this principle recognizes that there are many diverse interests and values at play in every evaluation. It places responsibility upon the evaluator to be sure the interests of those relevant to the evaluation context are included.
 - Some contend that it places additional responsibility upon the evaluator to be concerned about the interests not represented, as well.
- What are some ways in which evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of general and public interests and values?
 - Each of the bullet points on the slide offers some ways.
- How can evaluators maintain a balance between the needs and interests of the client and other stakeholders?
- How does taking into account the public interest and good apply to the dissemination of both positive and negative evaluation findings?

- ☉ Summary of an actual evaluation case, adapted for discussion
- ☉ Case includes all phases of evaluation
- ☉ All details could not be included in summary

Talking Points:

- The case study was developed from an actual evaluation case that was adapted and shortened for these purposes. While the case includes some information about all phases of the evaluation, because of space constraints, it could not describe all aspects of the evaluation.

- The purpose of this exercise is not to critique the evaluation methods and procedures used, as is the inclination of evaluators. Rather, we want you to reflect on how the *GP* provide guidance for the evaluator's decisions and actions, and what the evaluator might have done differently to follow the *Guiding Principles*.

- Because all the details cannot be provided, we encourage you to think where you might give the evaluator the benefit of the doubt in the case and where you might be more critical.

Individually:

- 1) Read the complete case study
- 2) Identify issues or questions that relate to each *Guiding Principle*
- 3) Record issues/questions on work sheet

Background:

- At this point, you should ask your participants to break into small groups, ideally with not more than 5 or 6 people. Each group should have a flip chart or other means of taking group notes and should agree on who in the group will be the recorder. They should also nominate someone to be the group's spokesperson to later report out to the large group.

- It is desirable to distribute the long form of the *GP* and case study in advance so the participants can read them before the workshop. If not, you need to allow 5 or more minutes for them to read the case study now. Encourage the participants to use the *GP* brochure as they complete their individual Work Sheets.

- Groups should be encouraged to give enough time to this individual work so that participants can thoroughly read the case and think about their own questions and issues before sharing them in the small group setting.

- See the sample Completed Work Sheet, in your packet, for the types of issues that may come up and the kind of information that participants may jot down during the individual working time. This example work sheet is not meant for participants but for the facilitator's information and use in planning the presentation and discussion. In addition, this work sheet offers examples of probing questions that you may later use to bring the discussion to a deeper level.

As a Group:

- 1) Identify main issues to report
- 2) Record on flipchart and choose a reporter
- 3) Discuss how the *Guiding Principles* relate to the evaluation summarized in the case study

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Background:

- The participants' individual work sheets should serve as a base of information for the discussion within the small group.
- You should wander the room, listening in on small groups, making sure they are using their time wisely (that is, not getting stuck on any one of the subtasks—the reading, the filling out of the worksheet or the small group discussion—and answering any questions they may have).

Talking Points:

Summarize the instructions from slides 12-13:

- Break into small groups.
- First read the case study if the participants have not previously done so.
- Individually, use the brochure to identify issues that relate to each *GP* and record them on the work sheet.
- After you've completed the work sheet individually, discuss issues you identified in your small group.
- Compile the issues for your group and choose a reporter.
- Say the amount of time for the small group work, e.g. 15-20 minutes if the participants read the case study in advance (otherwise allow more time).

☉ Summarize small group reports—what are similarities and differences across groups?

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Background:

- Ask the small groups to report out, but keep these reports brief. You want the reporter to focus the reports on the main issues the group discussed and how the *Guiding Principles* might provide guidance for addressing them.

- You may hear lots of criticism of the evaluator in the case. Remind the participants that the purpose of this discussion is not to determine whether the evaluator did a good job at evaluating the program. The purpose of the discussion is to extrapolate from this case how the *GP* provide guidance for ethically conducting an evaluation.

Adaptation:

- After the reporting out, you might want to have participants brainstorm what could have been done differently, or additional details about the case that would affect how the evaluator negotiated the ethical terrain of the case.

Large Group Discussion

- How can you use the *Guiding Principles* as you design and conduct your own evaluations?
- How can the *Guiding Principles* inform the ethical practice of evaluation?

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Background:

- After the reporting out from the groups, the facilitator will want to help the participants synthesize all the information discussed in the workshop, and to have them consider how it can be used in their current or future evaluation work. Two general questions for large group discussion are provided in this slide. Or, the facilitator could pose the questions on the Completed Work Sheet to continue an in-depth discussion of the case.

Adaptation:

- The facilitator could use questions that are most relevant to the participants' roles and evaluation knowledge. Examples of questions to ask specific groups:
 - For students doing an evaluation: How do the *GP* extend your understanding of the evaluation you are working on, and how does your work in that evaluation deepen your appreciation of the *GP*?
 - For commissioners/sponsors of evaluation: What did you learn that you should expect from the evaluator when you commission an evaluation?
 - For stakeholders in an evaluation: What did you learn that can be applied to this evaluation context? What could be done differently, and why would it be beneficial to do that?
 - For audiences with grounding in the ethical codes of other professions: How do you see the AEA *Guiding Principles* being similar to or different than the ethical guidelines in your profession?

Professional Support Resources



- EvalTalk
(<http://www.bama.ua.edu/archives/evaltalk.html>)
- AEA Local Affiliates and TIGs
(<http://www.eval.org/AboutUs/Organization>)
- Evaluation colleagues
- Faculty who teach evaluation and peers
- Ethical Challenges column in *American Journal of Evaluation* (<http://www.eval.org/Publications/AJE>)
- *Evaluation Ethics for Best Practice*, by Michael Morris
- Ethical Reasoning article from the IU Poynter Center

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Background:

- This slide presents a list of possible resources to turn to when confronted with evaluation issues or dilemmas that arise in practice.

Talking Points:

- EvalTalk is the main discussion listserv for the evaluation community.
<http://www.bama.ua.edu/archives/evaltalk.html>
- A list of Local Affiliates of AEA and Topical Interest Groups can be found at [http://www.eval.org/About Us/Organization](http://www.eval.org/AboutUs/Organization).
- Each issue of the *American Journal of Evaluation* features a column on ethics in practice. AJE can be found at <http://www.eval.org/Publications/AJE>.
- Michael Morris, who formerly wrote the Ethics column in AJE, edited a newly published casebook, *Evaluation Ethics for Best Practice: Cases and Commentaries* (Guilford Press, 2007). In this book, the authors use the *Guiding Principles* to analyze a series of cases, written to draw out a variety of ethical issues.
- The Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions at Indiana University provides resources for training in ethics, such as the article included in your handouts. The article provides a foundation of moral reasoning for dealing with ethical challenges in professional practice.

Selected Cultural Competence References:

- 🌀 In Search of Cultural Competence in Evaluation, *New Directions in Evaluation* vol. 102 (2004)
- 🌀 Co-Constructing a Contextually Responsive Evaluation Framework, *New Directions in Evaluation* vol. 101 (2004)
- 🌀 Overview of Multicultural and Culturally Competent Program Evaluation: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities (2003)
 - 🌀 <http://www.calendow.org/evaluation/pdf/overviewbook.pdf>
- 🌀 Selected Bibliography Related to Culture and Context in Assessment and Evaluation Studies 1994-2004
 - 🌀 <http://www.howard.edu/schooleducation/ETI/bibliography.pdf>

Talking Points:

- This slide provides additional references related to cultural competence and cultural relevance in evaluation.
- The two *New Directions in Evaluation* volumes provide useful guidance for evaluators in addressing cultural competence issues in evaluation practice and for designing and conducting culturally responsive evaluations.
- The other two resources provide a variety of writings by evaluation theorists and practitioners on the roles of evaluation in society and conducting culturally competent and culturally relevant evaluations.

Other Resources for Guiding Evaluation Practice



- ☞ Meta-evaluation Checklist for AEA *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*
 - ☞ <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/checklistmenu.htm>
- ☞ Program Evaluation Standards, 2nd Edition (1994)
 - ☞ Under revision by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation
 - ☞ <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/>
- ☞ Personnel Evaluation Standards (1988)
 - ☞ Under revision by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Field tests are currently underway.
 - ☞ <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/>
- ☞ International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation
 - ☞ <http://ioce.net/home/index.cfm?dv=1&lan=en>

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Talking Points:

- Dan Stufflebeam has put together a comprehensive *Guiding Principles* checklist to use when conducting a meta-evaluation.
- The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) has developed specific standards to follow in conducting an educational evaluation, although the standards are also used in other evaluation content areas.
- The Joint Committee has developed standards for both program evaluation and personnel evaluation. Both sets of standards are currently being revised.
- You can find information about the guiding principles or standards of other international evaluation organizations on the website of the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation.

Ethics Committee Professional Development Task Force



- ☉ 2006 Ethics Committee: Jules Marquart, Leslie Goodyear, Dennis Affholter
- ☉ Professional Development Committee: Bill Rickards
- ☉ Diversity Committee: Denice Cassaro, Jennifer Williams
- ☉ Other AEA members: Marcie Bober, Edie Cook, Randall Davies, Amy Germuth, Tom Grayson, Kelly Hannum, Judith Inazu, Rita O’Sullivan, Stephanie Schneider, Linda Schrader, Veronica Thomas, Brian Yates

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Talking Points:

- This training package on the *Guiding Principles* was developed in 2006 by a Task Force under the auspices of the AEA Ethics Committee.
- This slide lists the members of the Task Force that worked collaboratively to develop and pilot test the *GP* workshop components.

☉ Wrap-up

☉ Now it's up to you to use the *Guiding Principles* in your practice!

☉ Your turn to give us feedback

☉ Please complete and return the evaluation form

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Talking Points:

- The objectives of this workshop have been: 1) to provide an overview of the *GP*, 2) to analyze them in an evaluation case study, and 3) to consider how the *GP* can be used to guide ethical evaluation practice.
- You may want to conclude that now it is up to the participants to use the *Guiding Principles* as they design and conduct their own evaluations (or commission evaluations for their organization). In that way, the *Guiding Principles* will come to life and help to improve evaluation practice.
- Get participants' feedback on the workshop and how it can be improved.

Adaptation:

- You may revise the optional evaluation form in any way or get verbal feedback from the participants.

IMPORTANT—What We Need Back From You:

- We request that you provide your workshop summary information and any recommendations to the chair of the Ethics Committee so that we can continue to improve the workshop content and format. It will be helpful for us to receive 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

THANK YOU!