

## Index of Qualitative Analysis of Interviews from the 2007-2008 AEA Internal Scan

The American Evaluation Association undertook an internal scan to learn more about its membership during the period September 2007 to January 2008. Methods included an online survey of the full membership, follow-up interviews, and online Question and Answer (Q&A) groups.

Currently available reports from the scan include:

- *American Evaluation Association Internal Scan Report to the Membership*
- *Index of Quantitative Analysis of the 2007 AEA Member Survey*
- *Index of Qualitative Analysis of the 2007 AEA Member Survey*
- *Index of Qualitative Analysis of Interviews from the 2007-2008 AEA Internal Scan*
- *Index of Qualitative Analysis of Online Q&A Groups from the 2007-2008 AEA Internal Scan*
- *Presentation of the American Evaluation Association Internal Scan Findings*

Currently available instruments from the scan include:

- *AEA Member Survey 2007*
- *AEA Member Interviewer Guidelines and Interview Protocol*
- *AEA Online Question and Answer (Q&A) Groups Protocol*

All reports and instruments listed above may be found online on the AEA website at [www.eval.org](http://www.eval.org).

This document contains the *Index of Qualitative Analysis of Interviews from the 2007-2008 AEA Internal Scan*. It is your source for qualitative results from the [interviews](#) conducted as part of the scan. Results are organized by topics explored and major themes that emerged from the responses, with links to sample quotes.

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Practitioner pathways: sample references to getting into evaluation through practice (total references = 30)

Reference 1

I used to be a financial manager of a grant funded department at a different university. It was an applied research department. I was kind of exposed to program evaluation and the need for evaluating the outcomes of what grant funds were being used for.

Reference 2

I finished a Master's in social research methods in sociology, came back to Canada, found an ad for a social research consultant in the private sector. One thing that the firm did was evaluation; I was introduced to it there.

Reference 3

I trained as a city planner with an emphasis on participatory city planning ... I adopted the identity of evaluator while working in juvenile justice.

Reference 4

I worked for the state Department of Ed as a program manager and became increasingly interested in program evaluation.

Reference 5

I earned my M.A. in Anthropology. Then I had a job for the national conference of state legislators. I was a consumer of legislative audits; that was my first real exposure to the field. I later pursued a Ph.D. in Sociology and later ended up getting a job as an evaluator.

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Evaluation bug: sample references to "getting the evaluation bug" and/or to evaluation being a good fit (total references = 15)

Reference 1

[While I was a graduate student], I went to my first AEA conference and "got the bug" and looked for ways to do evaluation.

Reference 2

I was a teacher for 14 years and decided I wanted to take a step back and empower people who did the direct work. I was very interested in the Foundation world and interned at [Foundation]. I did tons of informational interviews and I spoke to their evaluator and hit it off with her. I was finishing up masters in Public Administration. There was a project she had that I could turn into an evaluation. I asked her, "May I work with you?" I made it fit what I was curious about.

Reference 3

I found that I appreciate the applied nature of evaluation and made a conscious choice to stick with it.

Reference 4

I have always been a logical, analytical person so I naturally enjoyed evaluation-type activities.

Reference 5

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I like judging, puzzle putting together, investigative reporting.

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Accidental evaluator: sample references used to describe to the “accidental” nature of pathways into evaluation (total references = 14)

Reference 1

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I'm an accidental evaluator.

Reference 2

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All these paths are so circuitous.

Reference 3

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It was happenstance, serendipitous.

Reference 4

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I was not trained into it.

Reference 5

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It fell on my head; I had no idea that you could do this for a living.

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Academic pathways: sample references to academic coursework as a pathway into evaluation (total references = 11)

Reference 1

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I took a lot of courses in program evaluation and statistics and thought, “How can I do this full time?” I was shopping around talking to people about, “Who does this?”

Reference 2

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Between coursework and my own interest in research and methods in particular, that was the pathway.

Reference 3

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I have a Master's in Public Health/Health Education. Evaluation is an expected skill set.

Reference 4

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I had a program evaluation course in my undergrad degree and hated it! I didn't recognize the value of evaluation, thought if I ever did it again in my life it would too soon. Then, when I started my Master's degree, unbeknownst to me my advisor was a program evaluator. Through working with her and through coursework I learned the value and really appreciated program evaluation.

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Journals: sample references to the AEA journals as a key way to learn about recent developments or advances related to their evaluation work (total references = 34)

Reference 1

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Learning is an ongoing thing for me. That is one of the reasons I joined AEA last year so that at the very least I can get the journals to stay up-to-date.

Reference 2

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I've been using the [AJE] and New Directions; they're my main avenue for [learning] new things.

Reference 3

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One of the reasons I joined AEA, when I went out on my own, was that I needed to keep in touch with what was going on, have a journal to read.

Reference 4

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I try to read as much as I can of the journals I get through my membership.

Reference 5

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AEA journals are the only ones I read.

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Annual meeting: sample references to annual meeting as a key way to learn about recent developments or advances related to their evaluation work (total references = 22)

Reference 1

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Usually the conference is very helpful. I go to sessions where "my head will be stretched."

Reference 2

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The annual meeting is a great way to get up to speed on who's doing what.

Reference 3

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My hope is by being here [at the annual meeting], that I will think intensively, meet people, that I will motivate myself [to learn], define myself.

Reference 4

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AEA is only way I hear anything new – just the conference; I'm too busy to read.

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Evaluation institutes/programs: sample references to evaluation institutes/programs as a key way to learn about recent developments or advances related to their evaluation work (total references = 16)

Reference 1

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At the Evaluator's Institute, they give you a book, talk you through what's in the book; it's very helpful.

Reference 2

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I made decision about a year and a half ago to do Evaluator's Institute classwork to get the certificate. Those classes have filled in holes from being self-taught. I'm thinking forward about how I would be able to obtain work as a consultant, because I was starting to become aware of the big body of knowledge in place. People were referring to things that I wanted to know about.

Reference 3

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[I've learned through] the Evaluator's Institute and the Claremont Summer Institute. I've bought books and attended the institutes with my own money.

Reference 4

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The Evaluator's Institute is very helpful; I've done it for years.

Reference 5

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I went to Claremont professional development training last summer. This is also a way of connecting with other people, to see what's going on.

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Workplace: sample references to having support of workplace for professional development (total references = 16)

Reference 1

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I am supported; I'm here [at the conference] with three colleagues. It's part of our learning process.

Reference 2

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We have internal and external opportunities for professional development. We have semi-regular brown bags at the firm, where you share a project you've worked on.

Reference 3

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Our company will support us in professional development. I just took a workshop in group facilitation.

Reference 4

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My direct supervisor has been very supportive of evaluation, allowing me to go to conferences, trainings, obtain SAS program.

Reference 5

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There is a high level of support; several people attended the CDC/AEA training in Atlanta.

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Local/regional groups: sample references to local/regional group of evaluators as a key way to learn about recent developments or advances related to their evaluation work (total references = 11)

Reference 1

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There is a fair amount of attention paid locally to forming groups of evaluators, an alignment of people regionally to get together and share new developments.

Reference 2

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I try to connect with local evaluators. There is a Research Triangle Park Evaluators Group that meets about four times a year to discuss a topic over lunch.

Reference 3

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The Baltimore area evaluators group meets five or six times a year for training and/or networking. I learn from my peers.

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EVALTALK: sample references to EVALTALK as a key way to learn about recent developments or advances related to their evaluation work (total references = 7)

Reference 1

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The AEA listserv – oh my gosh, that is so helpful!

Reference 2

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EVALTALK – sometimes I'm overwhelmed with the number of emails that come, but I still find it very useful.

Reference 3

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The main thing I count on is the EVALTALK listserve. I follow that every day and follow up on things depending on what I hear there.

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Journals: sample references to journals as value of AEA membership (n=26)

Reference 1

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[I read] journals for the newest approaches.

Reference 2

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Publications are useful and reflective.

Reference 3

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Journals alone make it worth it.

Reference 4

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We get all the journals among my team; articles get directed to certain members of team.

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Networking/community: sample references to networking/community as value of AEA membership (n=21)

Reference 1

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Collegial; like-minded people ... not competitive even though competitors.

Reference 2

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I don't know how I could be involved and not grow in this community.

Reference 3

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The TIGs I belong to are comfortable for me; I know the community; there are always new people but the core group remains the same.

Reference 4

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[I value] the ability to network and collaborate with people who have similar interests and I like that people are from different areas (education, practitioners, etc.) and that I get to see evaluation from multiple perspectives.

Reference 5

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[I value] being connected to other evaluators, especially because I feel isolated from the lack of evaluators in my immediate area.

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Learning from people: sample references to learning from others as value of AEA membership (n=11)

Reference 1

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[I value] exposure to different ideas, like the tension between quantitative and qualitative, and the vastly different perspectives on what is valid.

Reference 2

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I relate to other people doing similar things; I don't get to do that on a daily basis.

Reference 3

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[I value] the peer-to-peer learning.

Reference 4

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What I've found valuable is the discussion list of the IC group. Some pearls in that have been very helpful for me. If I have a question, another IC might know that answer.

Reference 5

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On EVALTALK, people pose questions that I think I know the answer but then I always learn something.

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Continued growth: sample references to growth, increased interest in evaluation (n=19)

Reference 1

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Increasingly, there is acknowledgement around evaluation. Grants require evaluation and emphasis is increased.

Reference 2

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I'm learning that [evaluation] is getting more important. In [my country], the law says you must evaluate programs after five years. I don't know if the rest of Europe will get to that. The biggest step forward is the push coming from the government. They instantly recognized the need for it.

Reference 3

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I see evaluation coming more and more into all fields, like fingers spreading out.

Reference 4

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Based on my own really local experience, I definitely think [evaluation] is growing. When I first started here, people were really scared of the word evaluation – a really terrifying word. I've seen that change in the last five years; it is becoming more normalized.

Reference 5

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[There will] always be a role for evaluation, but I don't think it will eclipse academic research. There's a role for both.

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Evaluator professional development: sample references to the need for evaluators to learn new techniques, approaches (n=16)

Reference 1

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The field needs to move towards and appreciate mixed, multiple methods.

Reference 2

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Social scientists need to get down from their ivory towers and become more oriented to more social problems.

Reference 3

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In my small sliver of evaluation, I'm going to see more need to standardize and represent the reliability of instruments so that across regions and across forms of implementation, you can do comparisons. The Federal government gives huge contracts and will force evaluators to look at a number of programs from a central point. You'll see the need to compare different methods (of training, program delivery, outreach).

Reference 4

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Involvement of technology – much more evaluation work will be done virtually, online or through electronic means. It's all heading in that direction.

Reference 5

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I've observed a movement away from the gold standard (randomized trial) as the way to measure impact and increase in knowledge.

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User savvy: sample references to evaluation users becoming (or needing to become) more savvy about evaluation; accept more evaluation methods (n=15)

Reference 1

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[I see] more sophisticated, savvy clients.

Reference 2

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The value of evaluation is clear to many in the nonprofit world, but they struggle to get the money out of their budget for evaluation.

Reference 3

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There is more routine, consistent insistence from Federal government and funders for evaluation.

Reference 4

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There is much more education to do, to educate others on what evaluation is, why it's needed and helpful. [We need to] make the field more practical and useful for everyone, not just for evaluators.

#### Reference 5

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There's such a lip service paid to evaluation: it's required by the grants and government, but do they really use the information? We need to get program staff to see value of evaluation information.

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Promotion: sample references to AEA promoting the association and evaluation, making policies and systems more clear, including how to be more involved (n=18)

#### Reference 1

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AEA has been around for a while and has seen growth. There needs to be more collaboration and systems to promote sharing ideas across TIGs.

#### Reference 2

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At [the AEA] business meeting, there were questions about how to be more involved. There should be more policies, documentation, and more transparency about how to do it.

#### Reference 3

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Keep the lines open so more can benefit from what goes on here.

#### Reference 4

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I think [AEA] could be touting their wares more.

#### Reference 5

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I don't think [AEA] is really accessible or approachable. There are an awful lot of people out there who have medium-type skills like I do because there have been no real opportunities to advance that. The board looks like academia to me. They're the experts. There are no regular, front-line, doing the work people on the board. It's a bit of an elitist organization to me. The skills they have are intimidating. I don't feel I could sit down and have a conversation with any of them. In real life, doing evaluation with nonprofits, they wouldn't understand sophisticated evaluation.

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Tailored opportunities: sample references to AEA offering more resources, professional development for different groups/needs (n=15)

#### Reference 1

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Please offer one-day professional development, so we can get some of the benefits of enrichment, networking without having to spend a lot of money.

#### Reference 2

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It's a little cost prohibitive to be active AEA member. I'd like ways to get involved and link with other evaluators that wouldn't involve taking work off work and flying.

#### Reference 3

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I currently can't list as an evaluator on AEA's national site unless I have my own web site. I can't advertise my services without having a web site. It's very frustrating! Can AEA come up with an overall website, or a website template or an email listing to give people access to you?

#### Reference 4

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I would like to see more graduate level courses. I'd like to have more opportunities to take evaluation courses.

Reference 5

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I think that offering certification coursework on line might increase participation; extended stay away from home is a deterrent.

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Communication with users: sample references to AEA communicating and disseminating information about evaluation to prospective users (n=13)

Reference 1

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If they could develop some written materials we could use to give people (e.g., potential clients) to help them see the value of evaluation. It could be on the web site.

Reference 2

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The other push would be working towards more common language and concepts. Users of evaluation struggle to understand the various different approaches.

Reference 3

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More needs to be said about the root issue. Why evaluate? What do we want evaluation to do? That could push us out of this era sooner.

Reference 4

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[My advice to AEA leadership is to] pursue some kind of professional credential. It would give more stature. The current philosophy is that anyone can be an evaluator.

Reference 5

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We need tools that could inform policymakers. Evaluation is having a hard time telling public policy what it has to offer.

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Communication with members: sample references to AEA communicating and disseminating information about evaluation to members (n=11)

Reference 1

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AEA needs an advisory board made up of leaders to set standards/certification; need to go beyond usability, feasibility. Where the rubber hits the road is at the local level; if evaluators are not competent, it does damage to evaluation on a large scale.

Reference 2

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At the summer institute in Atlanta, I didn't see a single topic related to cultural diversity in evaluation, issue of evaluation itself being so diverse in terms of home field (psychology, public health). [AEA should] focus on the diversity we have among evaluators as well as issues of diversity within evaluation.

Reference 3

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I would like more ways to be able to keep abreast of developments/advancements. Would love to get a weekly/biweekly evaluation email update.

Reference 4

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I don't know how much [AEA is] involved with actually training the next generation, but I think that is needed. It would be helpful if they stepped in and had ideas to train people in how to go about evaluation.

Reference 5

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Getting information out to the membership about how individual members could gain access to online virtual meetings or presentations.

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Clarification: sample references to AEA clarifying the association's goals/mission as field evolves (n=9)

Reference 1

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My question to AEA: What is your mission and goal of growth?

Reference 2

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Communities of practice, idea of small groups of people working together on their issues, great way to not feel so lost. Once of year you dip in at the annual conference and that's it? Would be very dynamic to have a really interactive web world to reach its members.

Reference 3

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[AEA] just formed a public policy task force. I hope they address domestic and international issues, look at international development as a project.

Reference 4

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Evaluation should stay as a crossover discipline.

Reference 5

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The academic stuff is important. Then there's a jump to doing evaluation, and the academic part goes in the close. Bring them together more. AEA is more theoretical; it's hard to get past that.

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## AEA MEMBER INTERVIEWER GUIDELINES

We are collecting qualitative data through brief, but in-depth, open-ended interviews with AEA members. The interview has 9 main questions and is designed to take **20 minutes**.

Because of limited time and because several people are conducting the interviews, the interview is **standardized**. This said, *some* flexibility in probing and exploring certain topics in greater depth is permitted.

### Interview objectives:

- To understand the interviewee's **experiences in his/her evaluation world**
  - To learn more about the nature of their evaluation work
  - To gain perspective on how they think and feel about their evaluation work
- To understand the interviewee's **perspective on AEA**
  - To gain perspective on why and in what ways members value certain AEA resources (both existing resources and ideas for new/enhanced resources)

### Basic Guidelines:

- Enjoy the interview!
- Stick to the questions.
- Use probes to get more depth/detail.
- Be supportive. Let the interviewee know how the interview is progressing.
- Observe while interviewing. Be sensitive to how the interviewee responds to the questions.
- Maintain control of the interview.
- Take notes.
- Tape record.
- Elaborate on notes after the interview.

**If circumstances are such that you have less than 20 minutes with an interviewee, or the interview is going long, the critical questions to ask are 2, 3, 5, and 7.**

## AEA MEMBER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Interviewee Name:**

**Date and Time:**

### **Introductory Remarks** [2 minutes]

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

The interview should take about 20 minutes to complete. If there are any questions you'd rather not answer, please let me know and we'll move on.

The interview will be confidential; we will not identify you by name in our report or in any conversations with other people.

If you don't mind, I'd like to tape record our conversation so I don't miss anything. Nobody outside the GRG research team will have access to the tape. (Get verbal consent.) Thank you.

I know from the database that you work at [organization name] and you've been working in the field of evaluation for about [range from survey].

### **Experiences in Evaluation** [10 minutes]

#### **1. I'm interested in hearing about your pathway into evaluation. When and why did you first consider evaluation as a professional activity?** [3 minutes]

Probe for some detail:

- When was that?
- Where were you working or studying at that time?

#### **2. Now I'd like to hear more about the work you do now. What is your primary responsibility in evaluation or as an evaluator?** [4 minutes]

Probe for some detail:

- If I shadowed you on a typical day at work, what kinds of evaluation "tasks" would I observe you doing?
- Are there others in your organization also doing evaluation work, or do you work as a sole evaluator?



**3. What are the key ways you learn about recent developments or advances related to your evaluation work?** [3 minutes]

Probe for detail:

- What are the supports and/or limitations of your work place in helping you do that?
- How about formal evaluation coursework? Conferences (AEA or other)? Training/workshops (AEA or other)? Self-initiated study? Learning from others in the evaluation field?

**Perspective on AEA** [3 minutes]

**4. How long have you been a member of AEA?**

**5. People belong to AEA for a variety of reasons. What is the value of membership for you?** [3 minutes]

- Would you share an example or two of how you have made use of AEA products or services? (Refer to list of AEA resources, including the conference)
- How did that go?

**Future of Evaluation** [4 minutes]

**6. Do you see yourself in the field of evaluation in 5-10 years?**

Probe:

- Where do you see yourself going as an evaluator?

**7. I'm also interested in where you see the field of evaluation going. What do you think it will be like in 10-15 years?**

**8. What advice would you give AEA leadership about how to develop the association for that future?**

**Wrap Up** [1 minute]

**9. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences in evaluation or about AEA?**

You said a lot of important things that were just the kinds of things we were looking for. Thank you so much for your time. Enjoy the rest of the conference!

