

AEA Board Slate 2026 Ballot Statement – Melissa Chapman Haynes

June 21, 2026

Candidate Name: Melissa Chapman Haynes

Board Position Candidacy: Member-at-Large

Title: Founder and Lead, Elevate What Matters

Affiliation: Elevate What Matters, and the University of Minnesota (adjunct)

Discipline: For the past two decades, I have led evaluation, research, and strategic planning work in the areas of early childhood to postsecondary education, public health, human services, and quality improvement in medical settings.

Practitioner and/or Academic Focus: I am a practitioner, though I am familiar with academic institutions and continue to hold an adjunct position at the University of Minnesota with their Evaluation Studies program. I am an external member of thesis committees for doctoral students, as needed.

Geographic Representation: I am based in Minneapolis, Minnesota and collaborate with partners across the United States. For my work as the Co-Chair of the Feminist Issues in Evaluation TIG, and through formal and informal mentoring, I collaborate with evaluators across the world.

Area(s) of Work Application: I have extensive experience teaching and mentoring new and experienced evaluation professionals across a wide range of focus areas, through my professional and volunteer experience. Further, I have many years of experience planning and leading trainings and professional development experiences and am a past president of our local area affiliate.

AEA Member Since: 2008

AEA Positions Held:

- Chair, Feminist Issues in Evaluation TIG (current)
- AEA 2025 conference resume reviewer
- Program Chair, Feminist Issues in Evaluation TIG
- AEA Strategic Planning working group, 2020
- Program Co-Chair for the AEA annual conference in 2019, with AEA President Tessie Tzavaras Catsambas
- President of the Minnesota Evaluation Association, the Minnesota local area affiliate, from 2017 – 2019

- Member, Local Area Affiliates group, which allowed me to gain a deep understanding of other affiliates (and international voluntary organizations) and an appreciation for the relationship between local affiliates and AEA
- Member, Minnesota Evaluation Association (and other affiliates periodically, including Washington Evaluators and the Chicago Evaluation Association)
- I was deeply involved as a reviewer and supported multiple aspects of the process of revising the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation's Program Evaluation Standards (3rd edition), and am acknowledged for this contribution in that publication.

Statement

The continued evolution of the field of program evaluation, including over the past five years and for decades prior to that, has spurred my strong interest and readiness to be considered for one of the open AEA Board Member-at-Large positions. The AEA mission, vision, and values are what solidified my decision to commit to growing as a professional program evaluator in 2007, which is when my doctoral advisor, Dr. Donald Yarbrough at The University of Iowa, shared the program from that year's annual meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, with Hallie Preskill as the AEA President. The sessions, including the Presidential Address ("*Evaluation's Second Act: A Spotlight on Learning*") was a timely convergence of my interests in teaching, research, complexity, and the deep curiosity of evaluative thinking. It takes a special kind of alignment for someone to become giddy with excitement from reading a conference program; however, that was exactly my experience, and I became an AEA member in 2008 and have attended the annual conference since that time.

Over the past two decades, in addition to leading and contributing to a wide range of program evaluations and research studies, I have also had the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of AEA's structure and ways of operating. This started early in my career, as I was deeply involved as a reviewer and supported multiple aspects of the process of revising the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation's Program Evaluation Standards (3rd edition), and am acknowledged for this contribution in that publication. I have also taught graduate students and mentored many evaluators while working as a consultant, and that teaching is grounded in the foundational documents of AEA and other organizations, including AEA's Guiding Principles, case studies on ethics in evaluation, resources in TIGs and listservs, and the power of simply connecting with and learning from the rich experiences of evaluators across the globe.

I also served as President of the Minnesota Evaluation Association, our local area affiliate, from 2017 – 2019 and was heavily involved with the Local Area Affiliates group, gaining a deep understanding of other affiliates across the United States (and international voluntary organizations) and an understanding of the relationship between local affiliates and AEA. Since 2019, I have served on the leadership of the

Feminist Issues in Evaluation TIG and have volunteered for numerous other opportunities with AEA, including the resume review at the 2025 annual conference.

My approach to leadership is based in collaborative, servant leadership and I have a deep and demonstrated commitment to learning and accountability. Over the past several years, I have received professional development in decision-making, interpersonal, and communication skills, including:

- Facilitating Disagreement, Aorta (April 2025)
- Facilitating Decision-making, Aorta (February 2025)
- Exercising Leadership: Foundational Principles, Ronald Heifetz (July 2024)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Team Dynamics (Sept 2021 – 2022)
- Individual coaching in leadership development, team development, conflict management, and communication, Jean Morrison (December 2019 – August 2022)

In closing, it has been a fascinating honor to be part of a field that has evolved in meaningful ways over the past two decades, with organizations like AEA at the helm of providing structure, convening, ethical guidance and guidelines, and professional development as a constant north star. There have been numerous, steep challenges over the past five years and I anticipate a great responsibility put into the future Board to continue to address these challenges.

I am submitting my interest to the Board now because I have the experience, skills, capacity, and humility to commit to this service and responsibility. If elected, my goal is to contribute to AEA evolving during this period of disruptive change, to be a sustainable and trusted thought leader and beacon to the continued evolution of the field of program evaluation. I understand that we need to ensure financial viability of this organization while balancing the multiplicity of voices and interests of the AEA membership, which includes ensuring access and relevance of the AEA community to practitioners and scholars in a variety of settings across the world. What I will bring to the AEA Board is training and experiences in facilitating disagreement, ability to hold tension and complexity, and a measured, persistent, servant leadership that is rooted in collaboration.

Thank you for the consideration of my candidacy!