The American Evaluation Association (AEA) Public Statement on
Cultural Competence in Evaluation

Summary
The complete Statement can be found at http://www.eval.org/ccstatement

The AEA Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation (a) affirms the significance of cultural competence in evaluation and (b) informs the public of AEA's expectations concerning cultural competence in the conduct of evaluation. The concepts in this statement apply to all evaluations. However, because this statement was written for a U.S. audience, care should be used in employing these guidelines outside the U.S.
What is culture? Culture is the shared experiences of people, including their languages, values, customs, beliefs, and mores. It also includes worldviews, ways of knowing, and ways of communicating. *Culturally significant factors encompass, but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, religion, spirituality, social class, caste, language, lineage, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender, geographic region, and socioeconomic circumstances.* It is important to note that while these factors include culture they are not fixed and can change over time.
Evaluations reflect culture. Culture shapes all evaluation regardless of type (process, outcome, impact, etc.), setting (government, academia, business, etc.), or evaluand (policy, practice, teaching, etc.). Culture impacts all phases of evaluation—including staffing, development, and implementation of evaluation efforts as well as communicating and using evaluation results. Culture shapes the ways in which evaluation questions are conceptualized, which in turn influences what data are collected, how the data will be collected and analyzed, and how data are interpreted. Those who engage in evaluation do so from perspectives that reflect their values, their ways of viewing the world, and their culture. Evaluations cannot be culture free.
What is cultural competence? Cultural competence is a stance taken toward culture, not a discrete status or simple mastery of particular knowledge and skills. Cultural competence is a "process" or a sensibility cultivated throughout a lifetime. It requires awareness of self, reflection on one's own cultural position, awareness of others' positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others.
Why is cultural competence in evaluation important? Cultural competence in evaluation is important for three main reasons. First, the evaluation team is ethically responsible to be culturally competent in order to produce work that is honest, accurate, respectful of stakeholders, and considerate of the general public welfare. Second, cultural competence supports validity by insuring that diverse voices and perspectives are honestly and fairly represented, which in turn, helps to make valid inferences and interpretations. Third, evaluation is steeped in theories that are, themselves shaped by cultural values and perspectives; therefore, it is important to scrutinize theories in order to understand how they describe societal issues, and how to address them.
Essential Practices for Cultural Competence.

- *Acknowledge the complexity of cultural identity.* Culturally competent evaluators recognize, respond to, and work to reconcile differences between and within cultures and subcultures.
- *Recognize the dynamics of power.* Culturally competent evaluators work to avoid reinforcing cultural stereotypes and prejudice in their work.
- *Recognize and eliminate bias in social relations.* Culturally competent evaluators are thoughtful and deliberate in their use of language and other social relations in order to reduce bias when conducting evaluations.
- *Employ culturally congruent epistemologies, theories, and methods.* Culturally competent evaluators seek to understand how the constructs are defined by cultures and are aware of the many ways epistemologies and theories can be utilized, how data can be collected, analyzed and interpreted, and the diversity of contexts in which findings can be disseminated.
- *Continue self-assessments.* Regularly monitor the extent to which you can serve as an open, responsive instrument given relevant attributes of an evaluation context.