The AaEA Pro Bono Evaluation Program: Structure and Process

Erin Lebow-Skelley, MPH
AEA 2016
October 28, 2016
Background
  • The Atlanta-area Evaluation Association (AaEA)
  • AaEA’s Pro bono history
  • Atlanta’s setting

Methods
  • Pro Bono Program overview
  • Committee structure
  • Pro Bono Program pilot year
The Atlanta-area Evaluation Association (AaEA) was formed in 2000 to support the broad and diverse group of evaluators in the Atlanta area. Our mission is to:

- **Promote the science and practice of evaluation in both the public and private sectors.**
- **Improve the quality of evaluation** by promoting professional evaluation practices and stimulating new evaluation ideas and opportunities.
- **Enhance the professional life of evaluators** by providing networking opportunities among evaluators and providing a forum for cross-fertilization of evaluation ideas among various professions, settings, and content areas.
- **Add credibility and visibility to the evaluation field** by bringing students into the evaluation field and **mentoring their professional development.**
Evaluation Capacity Building

“Evaluation capacity is all about getting people in organizations to look at themselves more critically through disciplined processes of systematic inquiry... about helping people ask these questions and then go out and seek answers”

- Srik Gopalakrishnan, formerly with the Ball Foundation, Evaluator (Preskill & Boyle, 2008, p. 148)

Decatur Cooperative Ministries (DCM)

- “I find myself always talking about our evaluation work and all that we are learning.”
  - Beth Vann, Executive Director (Preskill, 2008, p. 138)

Pro Bono in Atlanta

The perfect storm

City full of non-profits

Ample supply of eager evaluators

Georgia State University

Emory University

Morehouse College

Spelman College

Clark Atlanta University

Georgia Tech
Non-Profit and Volunteer Recruitment w/ help from Membership, Marketing/Communications

Intro to Evaluation/What to Expect When You’re Evaluating (New Evaluators for Non-profits)

Non-Profit and Volunteer Recruitment

Pro-Bono Applications Open

Review applications, match volunteers

Application not suitable for matching, referred to “New Evaluators”

Orientation Kick-Off/Working Meeting

Clients and Evaluators Work on evaluation projects

Clients and mentors complete evaluations which inform process revisions

Evaluation Showcase Event

Key
- Process
- Event
- Decision

AaEA Pro-Bono Evaluation Pilot Year 1 – Proposed Timeline

Refer all prospective clients to “What to Expect When You’re Evaluating”. Applicants who demonstrate strong evaluation knowledge in application can attend orientation kick-off w/o the class but it’s a pre-requisite for most.

Clients interested after the application period has closed are invited to attend next year’s “New Evaluators”

Sept – Jan 2015
Feb 2016
Feb 2016
Mar 2016
Mar 2016
Apr – July 2016
Aug 2016
Sep 2016
2 Roles:

- Pro Bono Committee Members
- Pro Bono Evaluators

Committee Tasks:
- Developing Materials for Application and Matching Process
- Develop Training Content
- Recruitment
- Application review
- Communications
- Assessment/Evaluation

Pro Bono Evaluator Tasks:
- Attend brief volunteer orientation
- Attend all-day training/kick-off event
- Work with assigned evaluators and non-profit evaluation ‘champion’ to develop scope of work and implement deliverables on agreed upon timeline.
- Attend showcase event at end of project cycle
Get to know us!

Pro-bono Evaluation Services for Atlanta Nonprofits with the

AaEA Atlanta-area Evaluation Association

The Atlanta-area Evaluation Association (AaEA) is looking to partner with Atlanta nonprofit organizations to provide program evaluation services at no cost. Our evaluators will work with nonprofits to answer important questions like:

- Are we doing things right?
- Are we doing the right things?
- What difference are we making?

Learn about the AaEA pro-bono process and how you can get involved!

Webinar: January 29th 12:00-12:30 PM
Sign up: http://www.anymeeting.com/PIID=EC53DA8186463B
More Info: Email probono@eval-atl.org

Informational Webinar

Attendance:
7 interested participants,
5 committee members
You're Invited!

Required Training: Introduction to Evaluation

"What to Expect When You're Evaluating"  
a training for Atlanta Nonprofits

- Learn about program evaluation & how it can help your nonprofit answer important questions
- Meet our team & ask questions about the pro-bono process and program evaluation
- Apply on-site for pro-bono evaluation services. (This training is required for nonprofits seeking pro-bono evaluation services in March-July 2016)

February 23, 2016 | 4:00-5:30 PM
Ponce de Leon Library  
(980 Ponce de Leon Ave)

Email probono@atl-eval.org for more information!

Attendance:
7 interested non-profits attended.
All applied for pro bono services.
Excerpt from Application:

Evaluators may design, implement, and/or guide common evaluation activities. Examples of pro-bono evaluation projects include:

- Developing logic models
- Conducting needs assessments
- Designing surveys, interview guides, or other data collection instruments
- Collecting data (quantitative or qualitative)
- Analyzing existing data
- Facilitating data driven program planning
- Leading evaluation trainings for staff.

Evaluation Standards:

As evaluators, our work is guided by professional principles and standards. The AaEA Pro-Bono Committee expects volunteer evaluators to adhere to these principles and standards as they work with nonprofit organizations.

- The Program Evaluation Standards: [http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=103](http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=103)
**Excerpt from application introduction:**

**How we can help**

- AaEA volunteer evaluators can help by designing evaluations, implementing evaluations, and by guiding common evaluation activities, such as:
  - Articulating the relationship between your activities and intended outcomes (i.e., logic models)
  - Identifying the needs of target communities (i.e., needs assessments)
  - Assessing readiness for evaluation (i.e., evaluability assessments)
  - Designing surveys, interview guides, or other data collection tools
  - Collecting data (quantitative or qualitative)
  - Analyzing existing data
  - Facilitating data-driven program planning
  - Leading evaluation trainings for staff

---

**Non-Profit Application**

**Application Content:**
- Introduction
- Background
- Evaluation Champion
- Evaluation needs
- Logistics
Matching

Identify Team Leads

Assess non-profit Projects

Match Team Leads with non-profis

Match volunteers with non-profits
Orientation Call for Volunteer Evaluators

Purpose of the call:

- Understand the purpose of the pro bono initiative
- Introduce the evaluation team members
- Review expectations, roles, and responsibilities
- Answer any questions about the initiative
- Provide information about the kick-off meeting
**Expectations:** Establish an agreement (MOU) among all partners concerning their respective roles and responsibilities.

### Non profit responsibilities
- Provide knowledge about the program
- Participate in the evaluation process
- Provide access to contacts and data
- Provide facility support

### Evaluation team responsibilities
- Provide knowledge about program evaluation
- Ongoing communication; Design, implement, and/or guide program evaluation activities
- Ongoing communication
- Identify outcomes and produce deliverables
- Build capacity

---

**Pro Bono Pre Kick-Off Meeting**
Evaluation Projects!

- Teams work independently to complete their discrete evaluation projects
- Pro Bono Committee Co-Chairs check-in with team leads and are available as needed
- Online evaluation resources and meeting resources (flip charts, etc.) available.
Showcase Event

Purpose:

- Wrap-up and celebrate projects
- Recruit new members, volunteers, and non-profits

The Atlanta-area Evaluation Association’s

Pro-Bono Showcase
Fall Membership Event

Tu. Sept. 13
5:30 – 8:30 PM

Sweetwater Brewing Company – Atlanta

Celebrate the Pro-Bono Program’s inaugural year over Sweetwater beer!
And of course....

Evaluation!
The AaEA Pro Bono Evaluation Program: Pilot Outcomes

Sarah Sliwa, PhD
AEA 2016
October 28, 2016
Data Collection Points

AaEA Pro-Bono Evaluation Pilot Year 1 – Proposed Timeline

- Refer all prospective clients to “What to Expect When You’re Evaluating”. Applicants who demonstrate strong evaluation knowledge in application can attend orientation kick-off w/o the class but it’s a pre-requisite for most.

- Application not suitable for matching, referred to “New Evaluators”

- Training Evaluation
- Outputs & Process Indicators
- Pilot Program Evaluation
Pro Bono Logic Model

**Inputs**
- AaEA Chapter Resource - ProBono Committee
- Leadership Support (Council and Co-Chair)
- Chapter Structure (communication channels and access to mentorship information)
- Volunteer evaluators
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Technology - Survey Monkey
- Facilities

**Activities**
- Develop and Implement Marketing and Recruitment Plan
- Develop and Disseminate AaEA Pro-Bono Evaluation communications materials
- Coordinate training events for evaluators and non-profits
- Develop program application materials
- Match non-profits with volunteer evaluators
- Establish MOUs with non-profit organizations
- Coordinate Kick off/orientation meeting to identify evaluation needs within organization and intended deliverables
- AaEA leadership and Team Leads assigned to evaluation projects provide mentorship
- Sponsor evaluation showcase event

**Outputs**
- Non-profit organizations and volunteer evaluators implement and complete evaluation projects
- Evaluation project deliverables are completed (e.g., evaluation report, evaluation tools, etc.)

**Products**
- Non-profit organizations use evaluation project deliverables (e.g., funding decisions, grants, program revisions, developing partnerships etc.)
- Non-profit organizations have positive perception of program evaluation
- Non-profit organizations develop capacity to sustain evaluation activities through increased knowledge, skills and resources

**Outcomes**
- AAEA GOAL: 1 AND 2
- Increased awareness of evaluation in the metro Atlanta nonprofit community
Pilot Evaluation Questions

Process Questions

• How well did we set expectations?
• What kinds of projects and deliverables were feasible to complete in 12 weeks?
• How did participants feel about the time commitments required?
• How well were teams able to work together? Personalities? Size? Scheduling?
Pilot Evaluation Questions

- **Short-Term Outcome Questions**
  - To what extent were evaluators’ goals met?
  - How well did the deliverables meet expectations?
  - To what extent did non-profit participants increase skills related to evaluation?
  - How do the non-profits plan to use the deliverables?

- **Improvement Questions:**
  - What should we +? Δ? -?
How well did we set expectations?
“You guys did a fantastic job with setting expectations. My main issues were the fact that my own time, and organization, were limited in the amount of time that I was able to put into the evaluation project.”

I knew what to expect from the process based on the information provided beforehand (i.e., via webinar, in-person training at the public library).
Expectations & Timelines

Twelve weeks is a reasonable amount of time to complete a small evaluation project

- Strongly Agree: 21%
- Agree: 67%
- Disagree: 21%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Evaluation Team

Non-Profit
How did participants feel about the time commitments required?
Time Investment

My involvement was too time intensive

- Strongly Agree: 0%
- Agree: 0%
- Disagree: 94%
- Strongly Disagree: 6%

Evaluation Team
Non-Profit
How well were teams able to work together?
Teams Collaborated Well (17/20)

- “The team members taught me things! But our group might have been unique in that.”

- “I think the team worked well together. We all had different experiences and skills to contribute that I thought were helpful in working with our nonprofit partner. We split up activities and folks volunteered for tasks that were more interesting to them.”
To what extent were evaluators’ goals met?
Meeting Evaluators’ Goals

Volunteer evaluator role provided opportunities to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply evaluation skills in a “real world” setting</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase my familiarity with Atlanta-area non-profits</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel more connected to the community where I live</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet other Atlanta-area evaluators/Peer-networking</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluators’ Satisfaction

> 80% would be willing to serve again as a volunteer evaluator

100% of respondents would recommend to a colleague
Wish I had known...

“A bit more about the role of the team lead. I could have provided more resources if folks were interested or taken on the role differently if the responsibilities were clearer”
To what extent did non-profits increase skills related to evaluation?
Rate your ability to explain a program logic model to a colleague

- Poor: 0%
- Fair: 0%
- Good: 17%
- Excellent: 50%

BEFORE Involvement with AaEA Pro Bono Activities

NOW
- Poor: 50%
- Fair: 17%
- Good: 33%
- Excellent: 33%
Rate your ability to develop a program logic model

- Poor: 50%
- Fair: 17%
- Good: 33%
- Excellent: 50%

BEFORE involvement with AaEA Pro Bono Activities

NOW involvement with AaEA Pro Bono Activities
What kinds of projects and deliverables were feasible to complete in 12 weeks?

How well did the deliverables meet expectations?

How do the non-profits plan to use the deliverables?
“Being able to engage employees at various levels of responsibility in building the logic model was an excellent opportunity to build consensus around program goals to create clarity around processes.”

The product deliverables are useful to my non-profit.

- **83%** Strongly Agree
- **17%** Agree

Strongly Disagree Disagree
The IRC responds to the world’s worst humanitarian crises, helping people to survive, recover and reclaim control of their future.
### Connect to Success Program

**For Out-of-School (OOS) Youth 16-24**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goizueta Foundation grant funding</td>
<td>Ongoing case management and mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time instructor: English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Civics</td>
<td>• Recruit and enroll youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time Career Readiness Coach</td>
<td>• Develop individualized service plans based on youth goals and barriers to career advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time Coordinator</td>
<td>• Make referrals for ESOL, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Education Development (GED)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Youth Futures Team</td>
<td>coursework and social services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Community Partnerships</td>
<td>• Provide intensive, long-term support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal IRC Referral Resources re: Employment, ESOL, Civics, Health and Wellness</td>
<td>Match students with advancement opportunities &amp; adjust IRC programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expand ESOL courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop OOS soft-skills curriculums and sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assign internships and job upgrades to youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make referrals to IRC continuum of education classes that fall outside the OOS curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing Youth Training on Career Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deliver coursework: low-intensity (at local site) and high-intensity (at IRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand external community partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build job-upgrade sites with partnering employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build internship sites with partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify available services with social service partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify barriers and recommendations for program improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased knowledge of education and vocational system, specifically:</td>
<td>Improved Career Readiness Skills</td>
<td>More independently navigate US educational and vocational system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• American culture in the workplace</td>
<td>• Advance professional experience and technical skill sets</td>
<td>• Complete GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requirements for popular vocational certifications</td>
<td>• Complete more IRC courses in ESOL, ABE, GED, Civics</td>
<td>• Complete vocational coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requirements for entry into US education system</td>
<td>• Advanced gains in English proficiency</td>
<td>• Complete post-secondary educational coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgraded jobs:</td>
<td>Improved quality of life</td>
<td>Improved career prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Higher wages</td>
<td>• More short-term career goals achieved</td>
<td>• Higher wage potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shorter commutes</td>
<td>• Increased participation in social services</td>
<td>• More options for career advancement and parallel job moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More flexible schedules</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved career prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved job acquisition skills:</td>
<td>Improved Well-Being</td>
<td>Improved Socio-Emotional Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interviewing skills</td>
<td>• Increased self-confidence</td>
<td>• More long-term career goals achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job search techniques</td>
<td>• Increased sense of support from IRC and community</td>
<td>Decreased severity of depression in OOS Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resume building techniques</td>
<td>• More ambitious, realistic goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial literacy</td>
<td>Placement sites advocate for refugee youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• English proficiency</td>
<td>• Expand number and diversity of youth placements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement sites improve attitudes toward refugee youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement sites advocate for refugee youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All 6 non-profit respondents indicated they would

- **Participate** in the AaEA Pro Bono Program for another project.

- **Recommend** the AaEA Pro Bono Program to another community-based non-profit looking for evaluation support.

Overall we had a positive experience participating in the pilot.
Pilot showed proof of concept

1. Non-profits and AaEA members are interested in this opportunity.

2. Teams worked together well.

3. Teams can complete discrete projects in 12 weeks.

4. Non-profits and evaluators alike had a positive experience.
Considerations for next cycle

Process
- Geography for matching
- Leadership buy-in
  - Letter of support?
  - Sign MOU?
- Team lead orientation
- Workplan submission
- MOU as living document
- Troubleshooting process
- Monthly check-ins
- Summer timelines

Conceptual & Evaluative
- Revisit logic model
- Develop pre-test
- Consider follow up re: use
- Apply capacity building framework
- Continue learning from other pro-bono programs
- Adjust application and survey
- Discuss sustained interest vs. dependence
Striking the Right Balance

Independent Consulting

Pro Bono Capacity Building
Committee & Volunteers

- Carolyn Acker
- Dayna Alexander
- Marta Bornstein
- Perri Campis
- Korrine Chiu
- Janelle Clay
- Nicole Dally
- Meagan Davis
- Karen Debrot
- Paula Egelson
- Stella Ejikeme
- Joanna Galaris
- Sarah Gill
- Brittnée Hawkins
- Melissa Jennings
- Brittany Marshall
- Charlotte Newman
- Tat'yana Kenigsberg
- Dan Kidder
- Caren Oberg
- Margaret Paek
- Chris Peters
- Brandy Peterson
- Nakeva Redmond
- Marvin So
- Cagney Stigger
- Maureen Wilce
- Donjanea Williams
Thank You!

Contact information:
Erin Lebow-Skelley and Sarah Sliwa
AaEA Pro Bono Committee Co-Chairs
probono@atl-eval.org

atl-eval.org