

**ATLANTA-AREA EVALUATION ASSOCIATION**

# 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

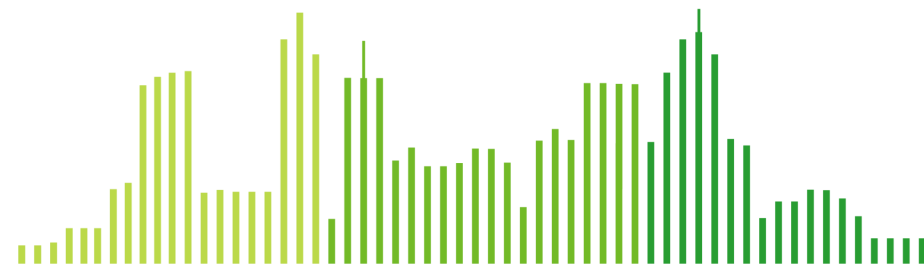
## ● Methods

- Pro Bono Program overview
- Committee structure
- Pro Bono Program pilot year

# Who we are

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.



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# AaEA Pro Bono History

*“what funders require”*

∞

*“the days of not evaluating programs are over.”*

*(Alaimo, 2008, p. 79)*

## 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)

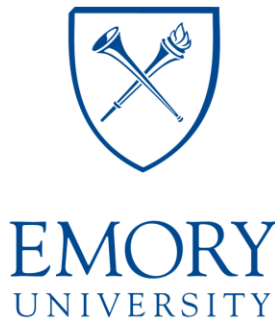
- *“I find myself always talking about our evaluation work and all that we are learning.”*

– Beth Vann, Executive Director (Preskill, 2008, p. 138)

- Alaimo, S. P. (2008). Nonprofits and evaluation: Managing expectations from the leader's perspective. In J. G. Carman & K. A. Fredericks (Eds.), Nonprofits and evaluation. New Directions for Evaluation, 119, 73–92.
- Preskill, H. (2008). Evaluation's Second Act A Spotlight on Learning. American Journal of Evaluation, 29(2), 127-138.
- Preskill & Boyle (2008). Insights into evaluation capacity building: Motivations, strategies, outcomes, and lessons learned. The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation Vol. 23 No. 3, 147-174

# Pro Bono in Atlanta

## The perfect storm

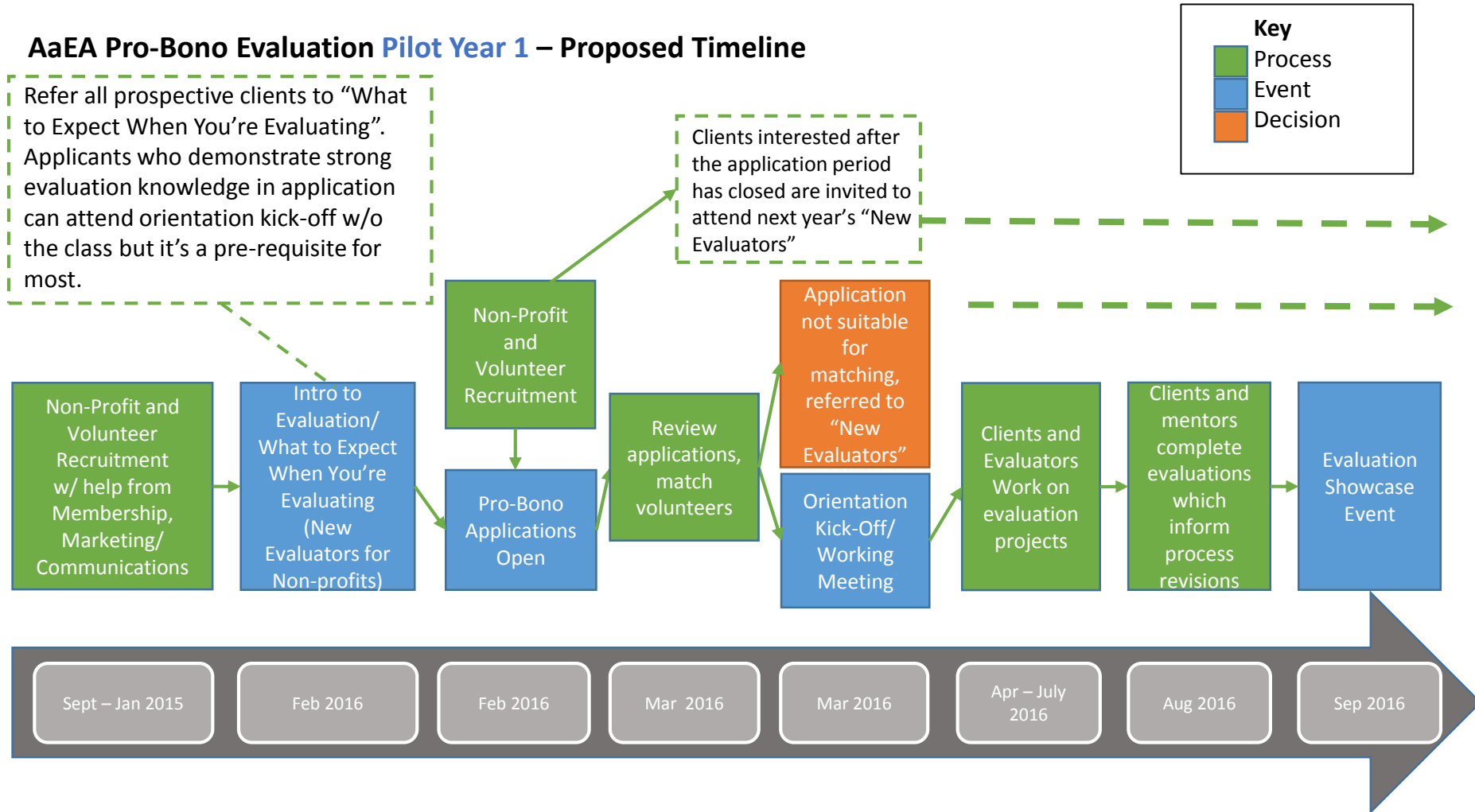


Spelman College



# Pilot Timeline

## AaEA Pro-Bono Evaluation Pilot Year 1 – Proposed Timeline



# Recruiting Evaluators

## 2 Roles:

- Pro Bono Committee Members
- Pro Bono Evaluators

### Pro-Bono Committee Interest Form

How would you like to be involved with AaEA's pro-bono efforts? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Committee Member  
☐ Volunteer Evaluator

Please enter your name

Please enter your email

Submit

### 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](mailto:probono@eval-atl.org)

## Informational Webinar

Attendance:  
7 interested participants,  
5 committee members



You're Invited!

**AaEA** Atlanta-area Evaluation Association

## "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
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Ponce de Leon Library  
(980 Ponce de Leon Ave)

Email [probono@atl-eval.org](mailto:probono@atl-eval.org) for more information!

## Required Training: Introduction to Evaluation

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.

- American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators: <http://www.eval.org/d/do/20>
- The Program Evaluation Standards: <http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=103>

# Volunteer Application

## **Application content:**

Overview

Volunteer Information  
Evaluation Experience

Interest Areas

Availability

Evaluation Team role preference

## *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-profits



Match volunteers with non-profits

# Pro Bono Pre Kick-Off Meeting

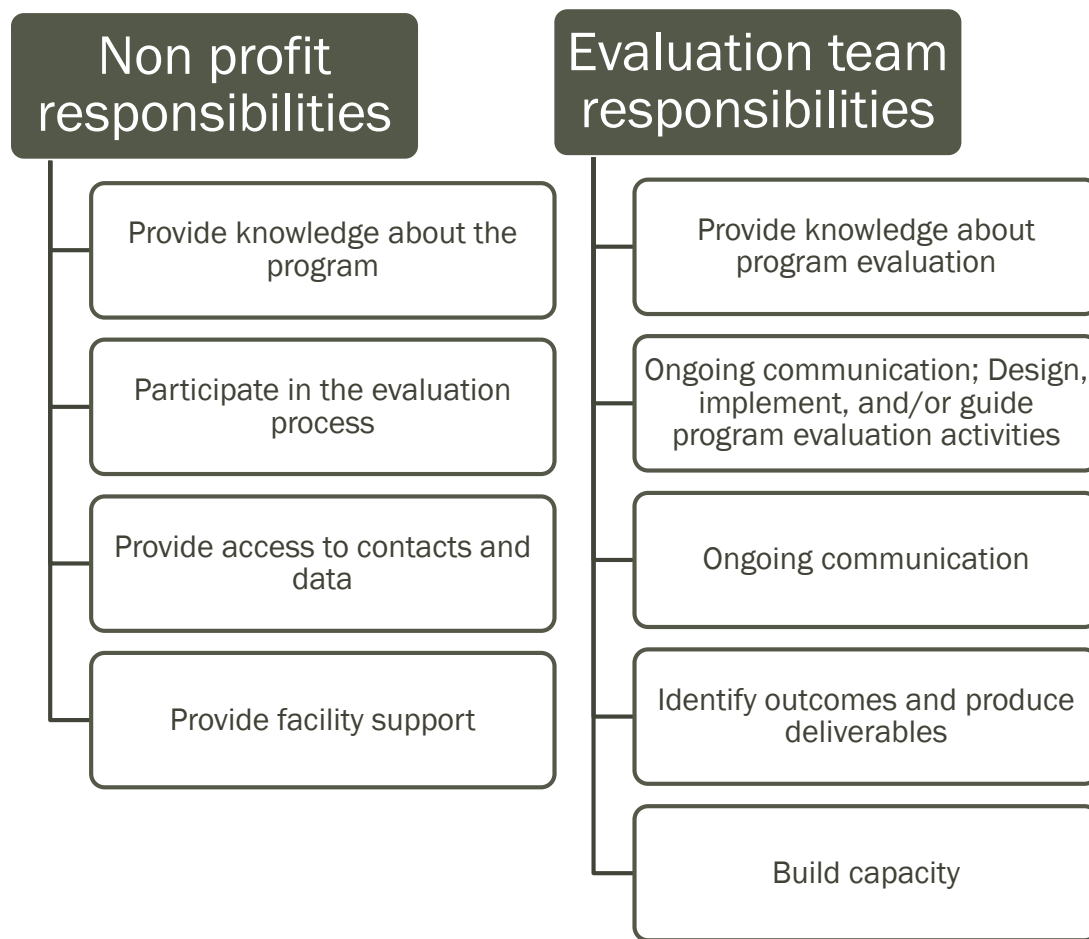
## Orientation Call for Volunteer Evaluators

### 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

# Pro Bono Pre Kick-Off Meeting

**Expectations:** Establish an agreement (MOU) among all partners concerning their respective roles and responsibilities.



# Kick-off and Orientation





# 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



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!*



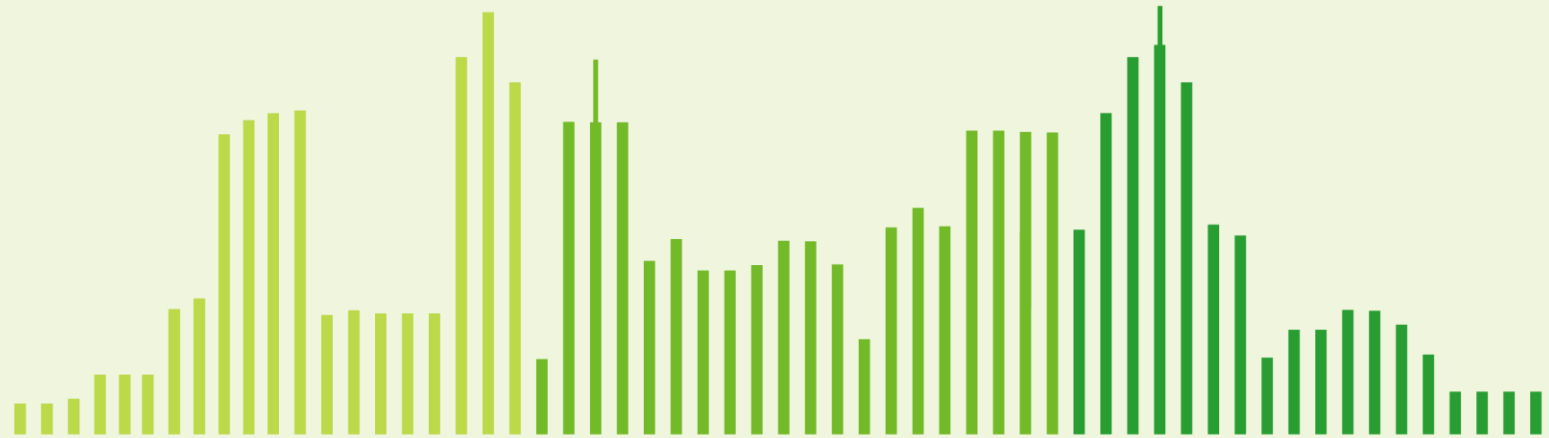
## Purpose:

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



And of course....

**Evaluation!**



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# The AaEA Pro Bono Evaluation Program: **Pilot Outcomes**

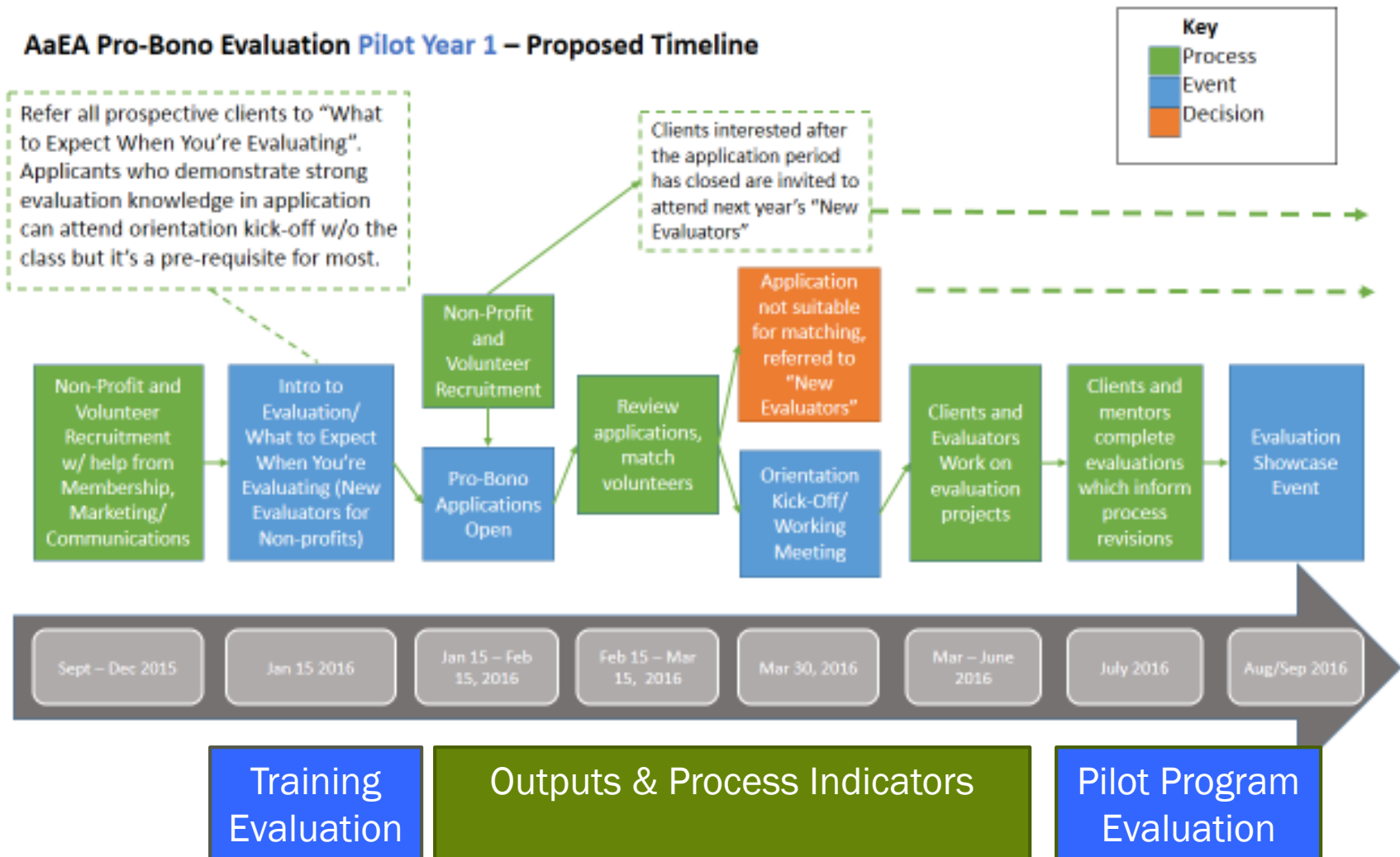
Sarah Sliwa, PhD

AEA 2016

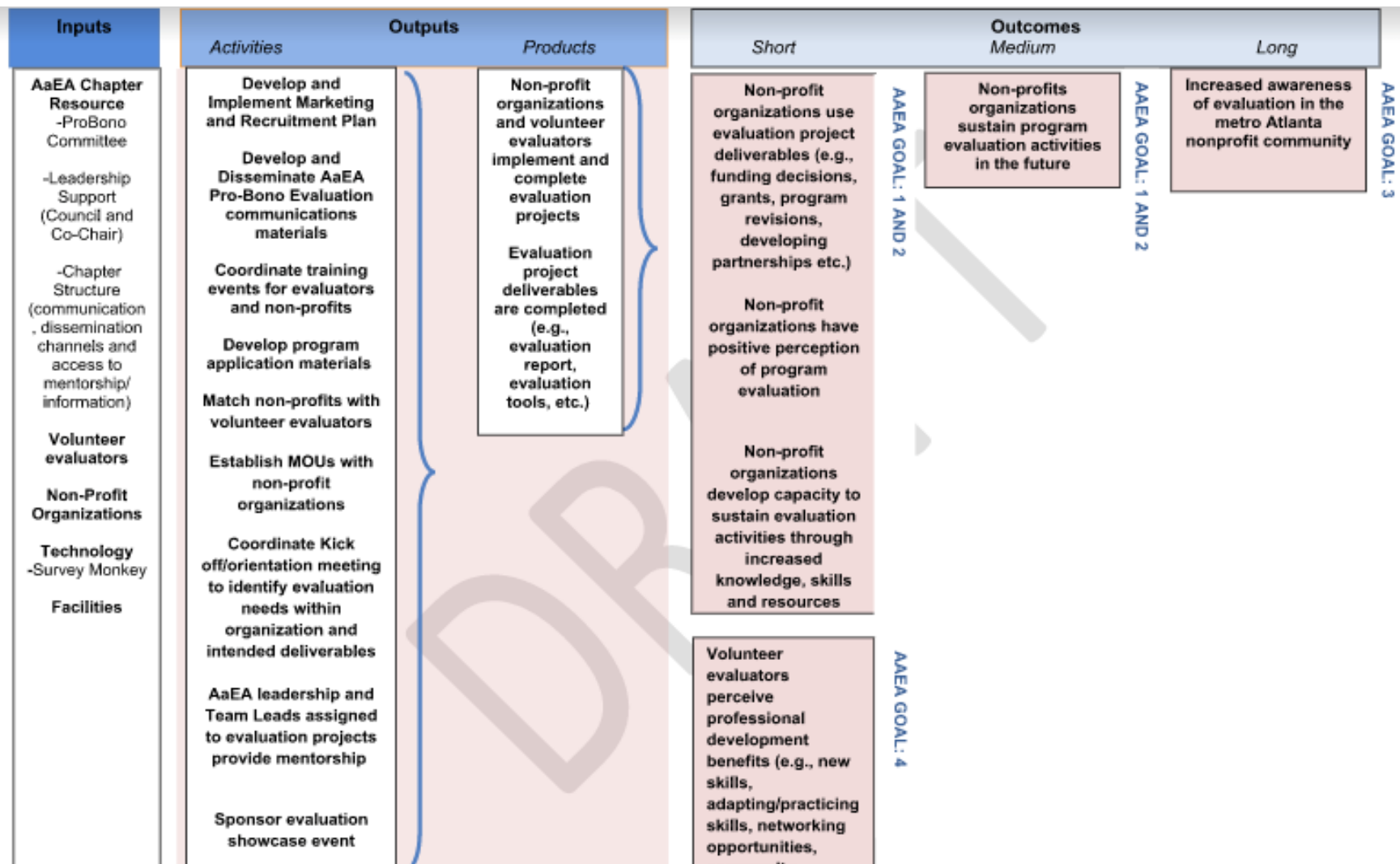
October 28, 2016

# Data Collection Points

## AaEA Pro-Bono Evaluation Pilot Year 1 – Proposed Timeline



# Pro Bono Logic Model



# 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

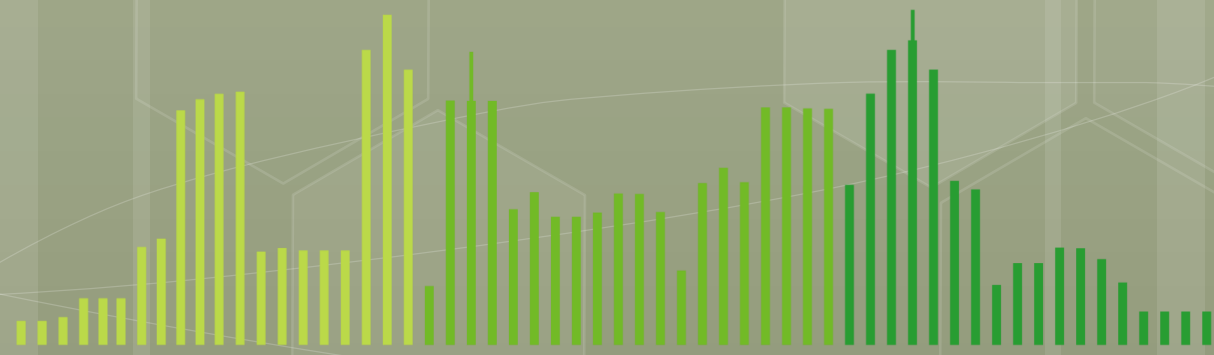
## ◉ Short-Term Outcome Questions

- 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?**

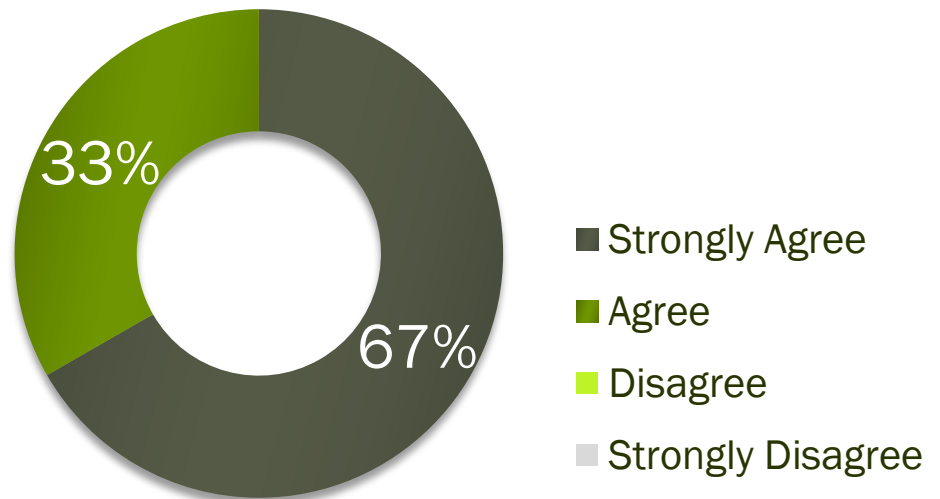


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# Non-Profit Expectations (6/7)

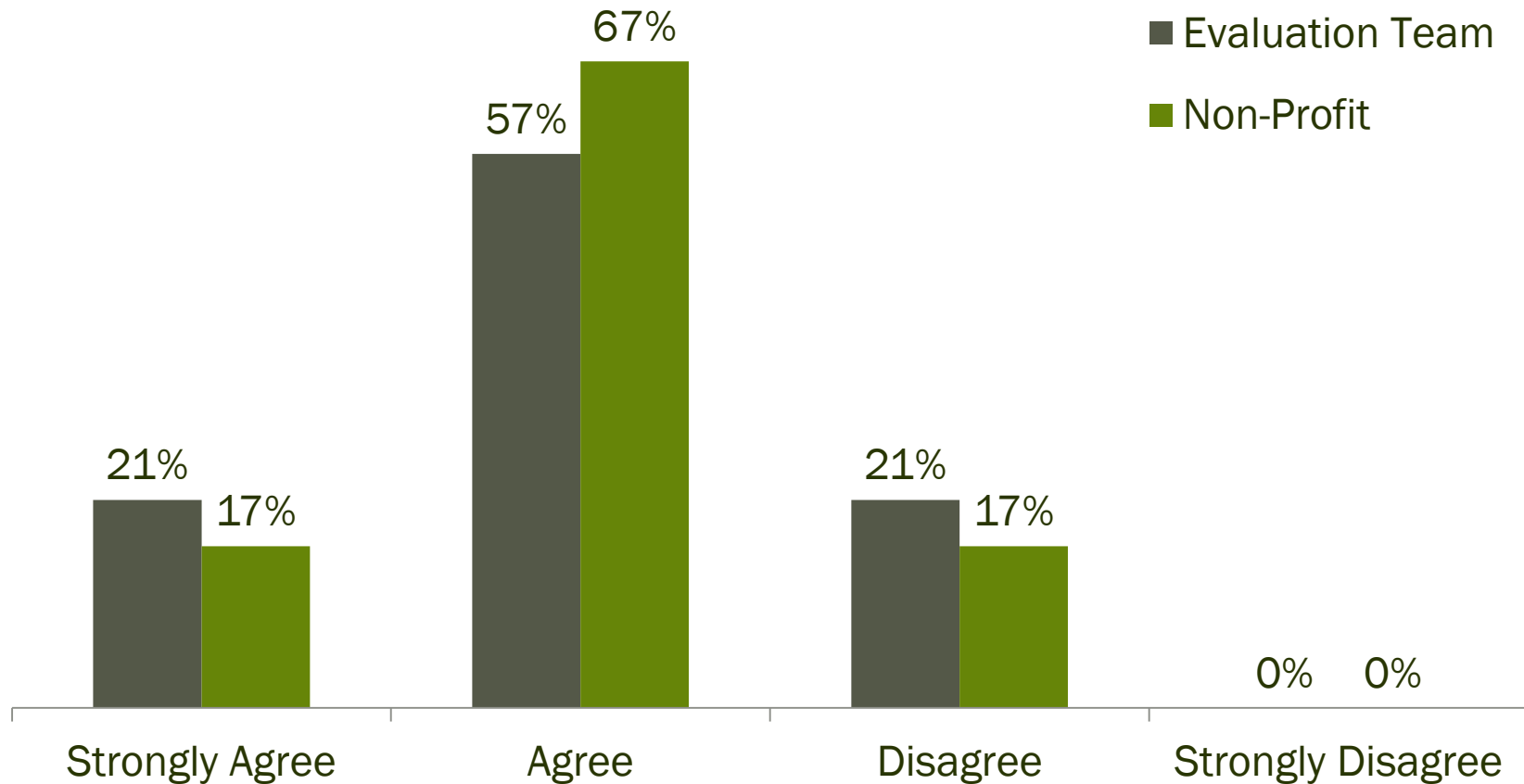
“You guys did a fantastic job with setting expectations. My main issues were the fact that my own time, and organization, were limited in the amount of time that I was able to put into the evaluation project.”

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)

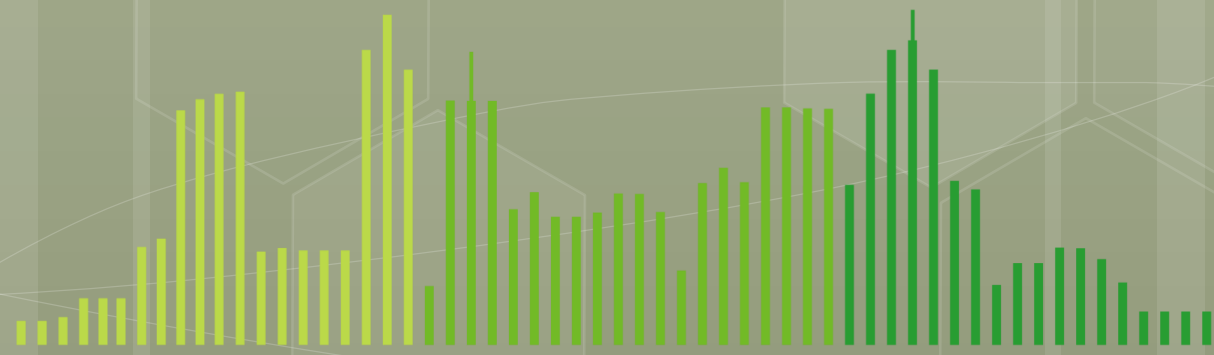


# Expectations & Timelines

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



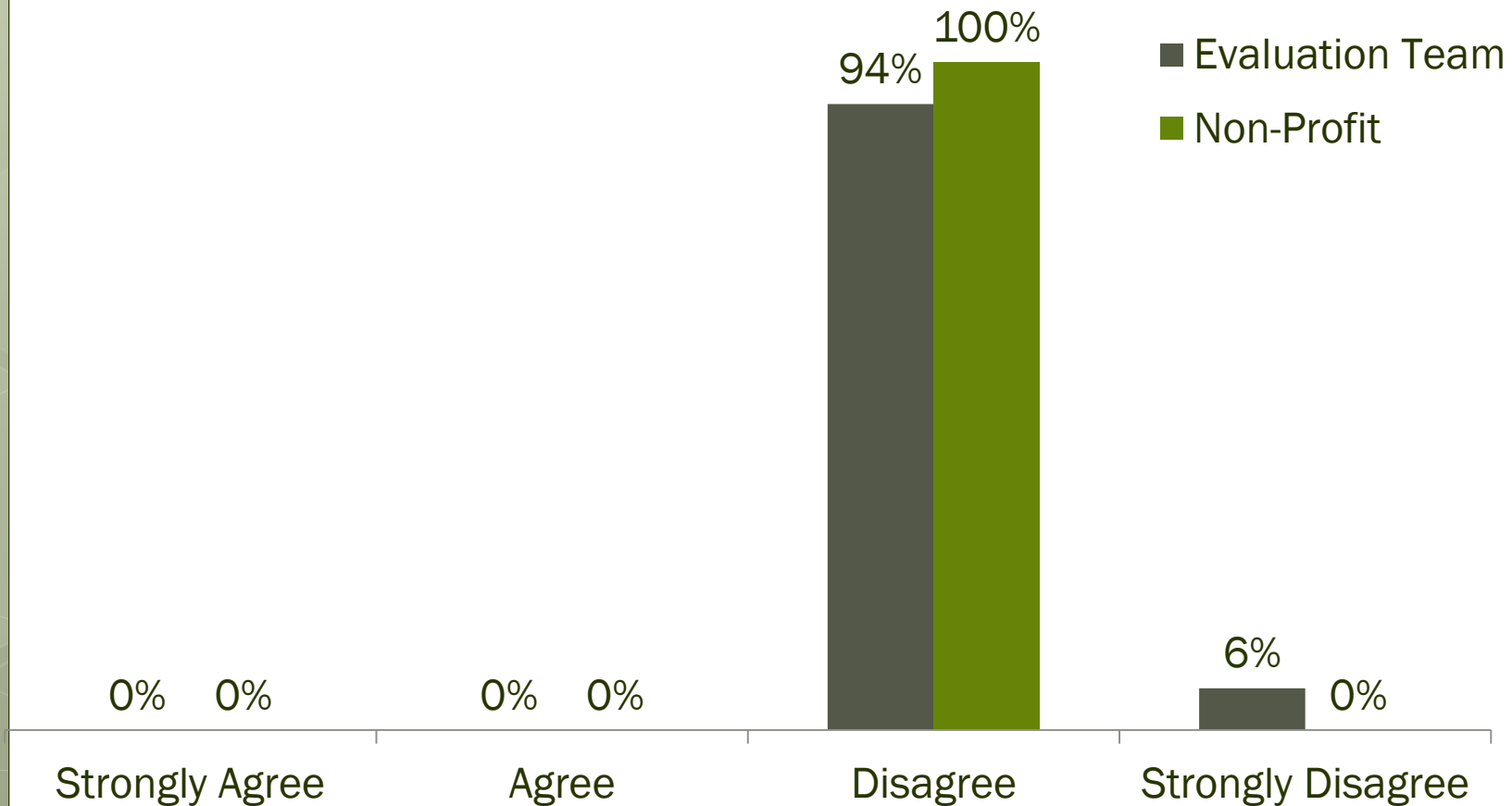
# How did participants feel about the time commitments required?



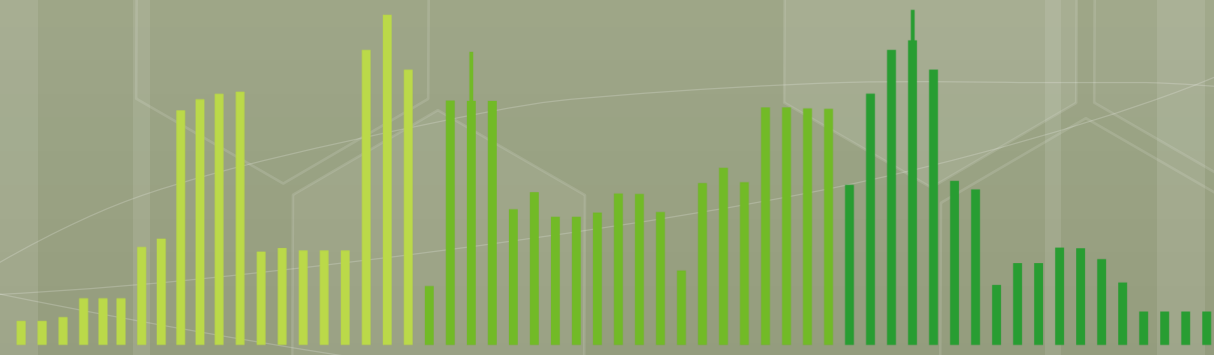
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# Time Investment

My involvement was too time intensive



**How well were teams able to  
work together?**



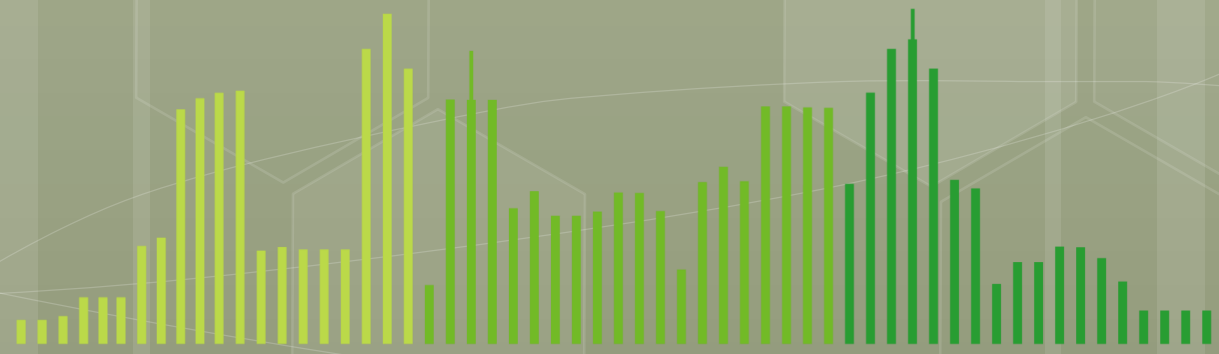
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# Teams Collaborated Well (17/20)

- “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?



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# Meeting Evaluators' Goals

## Volunteer evaluator role provided opportunities to...

Apply evaluation skills in a “real world” setting	93%
Increase my familiarity with Atlanta-area non-profits	75%
Feel more connected to the community where I live	94%
Meet other Atlanta-area evaluators/ Peer-networking	87%

# Evaluators' Satisfaction

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

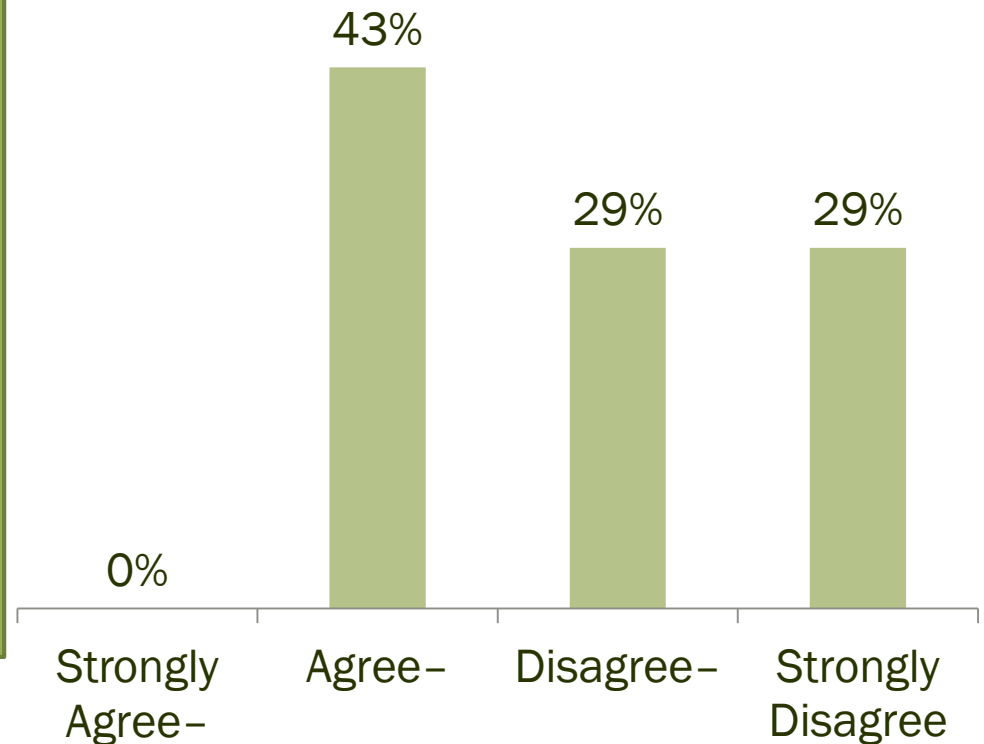
**100% of  
respondents would  
recommend to a  
colleague**

# Team Lead Experiences

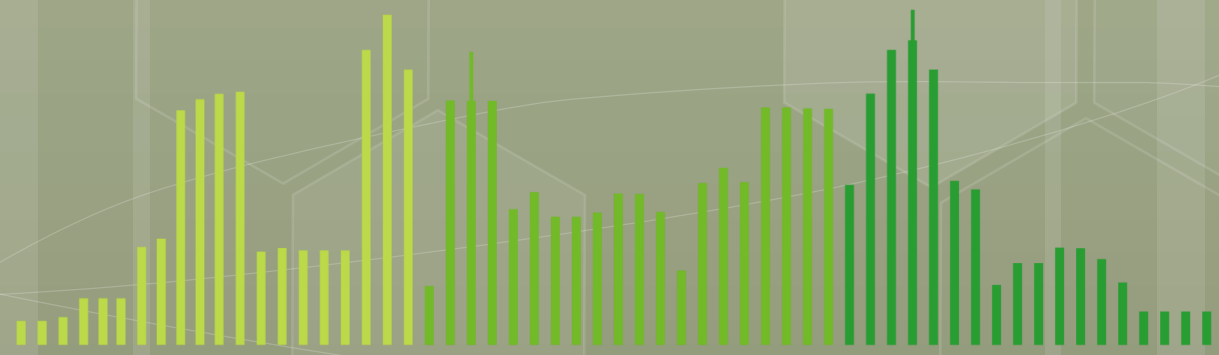
## Wish I had known...

“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”

There should have been additional training or support for team leads



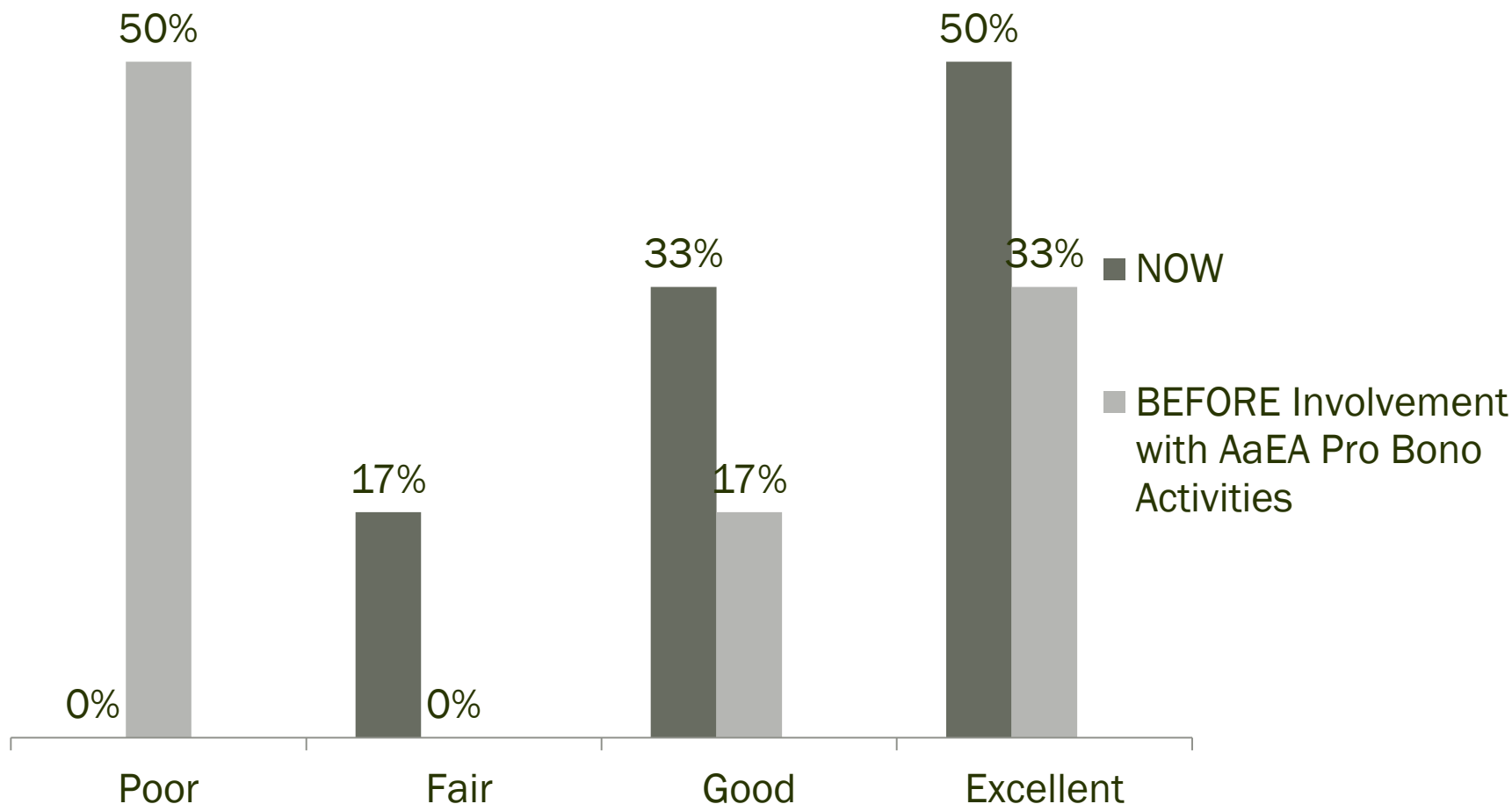
**To what extent did non-profits increase  
skills related to evaluation?**



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# Evaluation Capacity Building

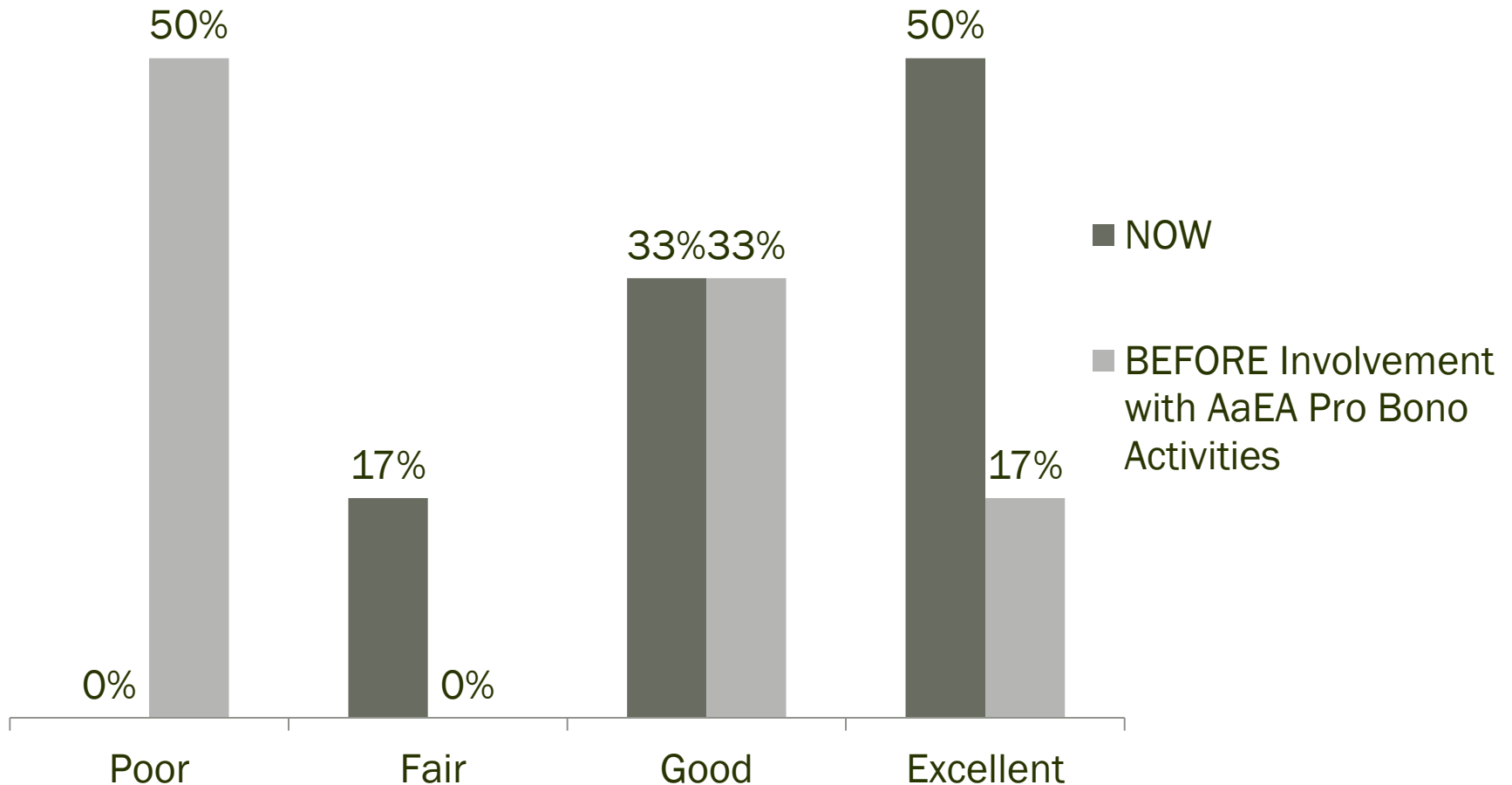
Rate your ability to explain a program logic model to a colleague





# Evaluation Capacity Building

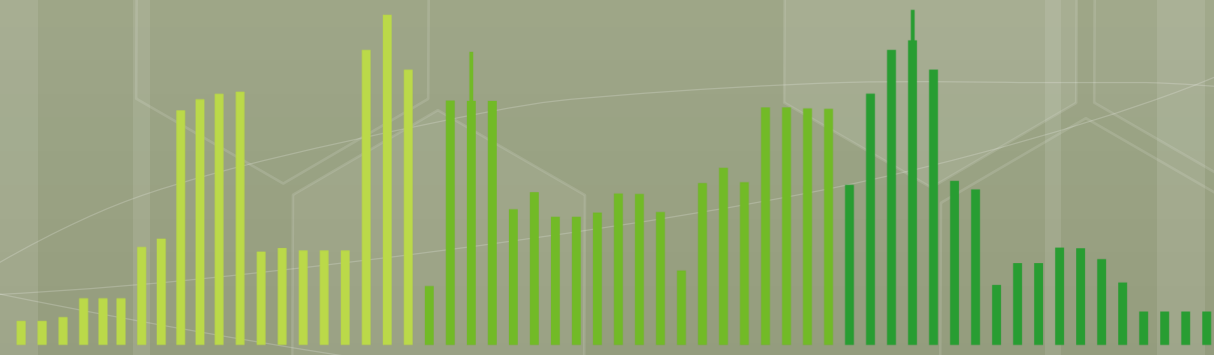
Rate your ability to develop a program logic model



**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?**

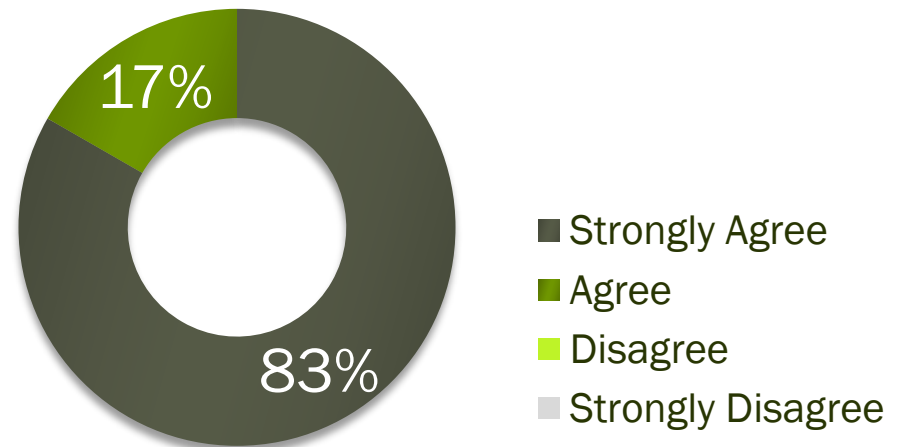


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# Non-Profit Views on Deliverables (6/7)

“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.**





**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

## Inputs

## Activities

Goizueta  
Foundation grant  
funding

Part time  
instructor: English  
to Speakers of  
Other Languages  
(ESOL) and Civics

Full time Career  
Readiness Coach

Full time  
Coordinator

Existing Youth  
Futures Team

External  
Community  
Partnerships

Internal IRC Referral  
Resources re:  
Employment, ESOL,  
Civics, Health and  
Wellness

### Ongoing case management and mentorship

- Recruit and enroll youth
- Develop individualized service plans based on youth goals and barriers to career advancement
- Make referrals for ESOL, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Education Development (GED) coursework and social services
- Provide intensive, long-term support

### Match students with advancement opportunities & adjust IRC programming

- Expand ESOL courses
- Develop OOS soft-skills curriculums and sites
- Assign internships and job upgrades to youth
- Make referrals to IRC continuum of education classes that fall outside the OOS curriculum

### Ongoing Youth Training on Career Readiness

- Deliver coursework: low-intensity (at local site) and high-intensity (at IRC)

### Expand external community partnerships

- Build job-upgrade sites with partnering employers
- Build internship sites with partners
- Identify available services with social service partners

### Program evaluation

- Identify barriers and recommendations for program improvement

## Outcomes

### Short

#### Increased knowledge of education and vocational system, specifically:

- American culture in the workplace
- Requirements for popular vocational certifications
- Requirements for entry into US education system

#### Upgraded jobs:

- Higher wages
- Shorter commutes
- More flexible schedules

#### Improved job acquisition skills:

- Interviewing skills
- Job search techniques
- Resume building techniques
- Financial literacy
- English proficiency

#### Placement sites improve attitudes toward refugee youth

- Expand number and diversity of youth placements

### Medium

#### Improved Career Readiness Skills

- Advance professional experience and technical skill sets
- Complete more IRC courses in ESOL, ABE, GED, Civics
- Advanced gains in English proficiency

#### Improved quality of life

- More short-term career goals achieved
- Increased participation in social services
- More free time

#### Improved Well-Being

- Increased self-confidence
- Increased sense of support from IRC and community
- More ambitious, realistic goals

#### Placement sites advocate for refugee youth

- Staff advocate for refugee-supportive policies
- Staff model inclusive attitudes in the community

### Long

#### More independently navigate US educational and vocational system

- Complete GED
- Complete vocational coursework
- Complete post-secondary educational coursework

#### Improved career prospects

- Higher wage potential
- More options for career advancement and parallel job moves

#### Improved Socio-Emotional Health

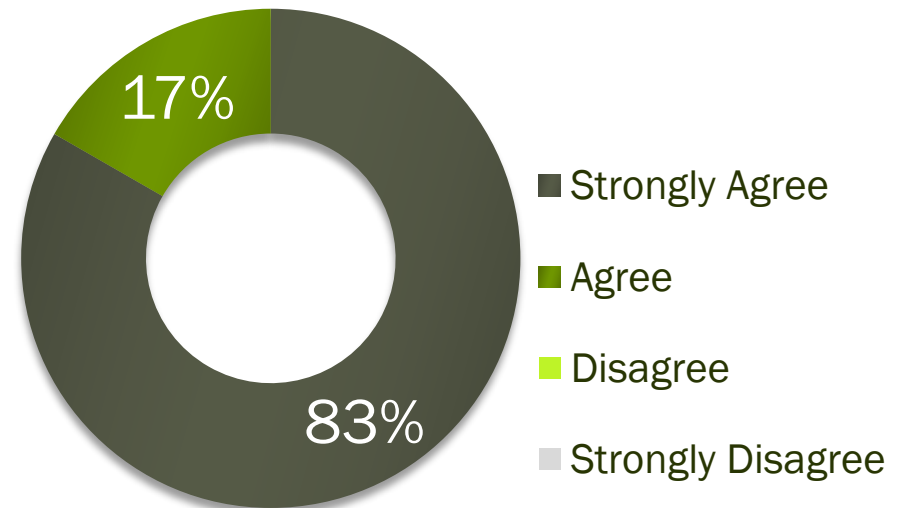
- More long-term career goals achieved
- Decreased severity of depression in OOS Youth

# Non-Profit Experiences (6/7)

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

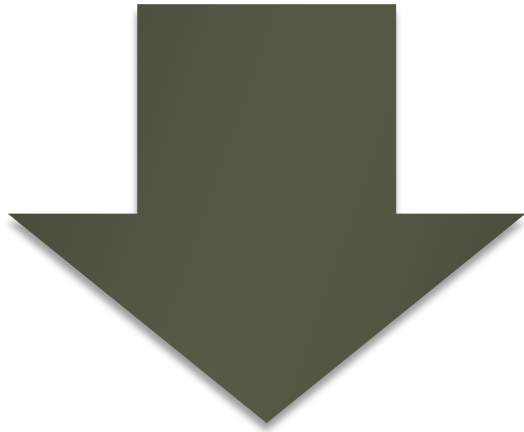
- Geography for matching
- Leadership buy-in
  - Letter of support?
  - Sign MOU?
- Team lead orientation
- Workplan submission
- MOU as living document
- Troubleshooting process
- Monthly check-ins
- Summer timelines

## 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



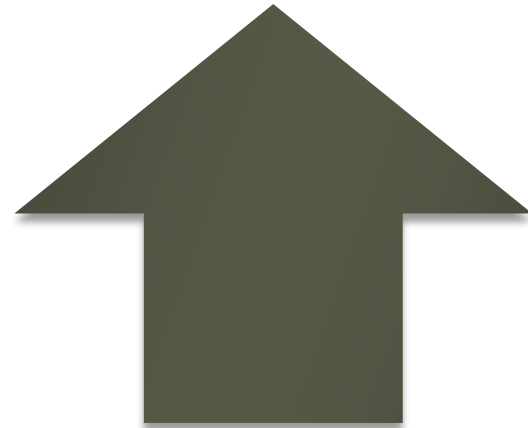
# Striking the Right Balance



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
- Brittnee 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*

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atl-eval.org