

**Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA)  
2016 Annual Report**

**2016 Board Roster**

Randi Nelson, President  
Ann Zukoski, Past President  
Sarah Cohn, President Elect  
Harlan Luxenberg, Treasurer  
Maira Rosas-Lee, Secretary  
Emily Subialka Nowariak, Communications Chair  
Gifty Amarteifio, Member at Large and Membership Chair  
Al Onkka, Program Co-Chair  
Elizabeth Scott, Program Co-Chair  
Valerie Franz, Student Representative  
Anna Rodell, Student Representative

**Finances**

Harlan Luxenberg, MNEA Treasurer, reported a beginning balance for the 2015 fiscal year as \$7,549. Annual revenue from memberships, donations, and earned income (in 2016 this consisted of non-member event fees) was \$4,180. Expenses increased \$2,621 to \$3,215 largely due to an increased cost for the membership website we use, because the number of contacts we have exceeded our previous level. As of December 2016, the MNEA cash on hand totals \$8,514; up \$965 from the 2015 year-end balance of \$7,549.

**Programming**

MNEA Program Chairs Al Onkka and Elizabeth Scott organized six events throughout the year, with the help of their Program Committee members. The events were in line with the trend for offering four to six events that provide professional development and networking opportunities for MNEA members and the wider evaluation community. The 2016 MNEA events were:

1. Ignite Session: Non-traditional Technology Tools for Evaluation.  
**Date:** January 21, 2016  
**Hosted by:** Kirsten Anderson and Anne Betzner  
**Location:** Wilder Foundation, St. Paul
2. Advancing Equity through Evaluation.  
**Date:** February 24, 2016  
**In partnership with:** University of Minnesota School of Public Health;  
**Panel members:** Siday Ly-Xiong - MN Department of Health; David Everett - MN Department of Human Services; Nicole Martin Rogers - Wilder Research; Brother Mao Jernigan - Cultural Wellness Center; Sheila Nezhad - Rainbow Health Initiative  
**Location:** McNamara Alumni Center, University of Minnesota
3. Making Meaning of Multiple Datasets.  
**Date:** May 17, 2016

**Presenters:** Eric Billiet, Minnesota Department of Education's Expanded Learning Specialist and Maira Rosas-Lee Minnesota Department of Education's Results Measurement Specialist

**Location:** Neighborhood House, St. Paul

4. Summer Social.

**Date:** July 19, 2016

**Location:** Town Hall Brewery, Minneapolis

5. Social at AEA.

**Date:** October 26, 2016

**Location:** Atlanta at the conference hotel

6. Making a Career out of Evaluation.

**Date:** November 9, 2016

**Speakers:** Melissa Chapman Haynes, Professional Data Analysts; Renae Youngs, Minnesota State Arts Board; Leah Goldstein, The Improve Group; Anna Rodell, Collective Progress

**Location:** University of Minnesota Campus

### **Communications**

Emily Subialka Nowariak, Communications Chair, maintained the MNEA website and regular communications with MNEA members through emails, website updates and social media postings regarding:

- MNEA programs and event invitations and updates
- Job openings and requests for proposals (RFP)
- Conferences, seminars, and workshops related to evaluation practice and theory
- General membership news

In 2016 she led a redesign of MNEA's website, updating the design concept, streamlining content and making it more mobile-friendly. She also created a formal process for job postings and event communications to ensure timely communication and created an informational MNEA PowerPoint presentation that can be used to promote the organization. Emily oversaw and managed MNEA's email communication via info@mneval.org. She was the primary point of contact receiving news and updates related to evaluation jobs and other opportunities directly from MNEA members and evaluation community at large.

### **Membership**

Gifty Amarteifio summarized active membership numbers for 2016. MNEA had a total active membership of 176 at the end of the year, consisting of 93 Professional Members, 30 Student Members, and 53 Organizational Members. Membership numbers increased from 2015 to 2016 across all types of memberships. This growth speaks to the efforts of the board to recruit new individuals and organizations and sustain an active group. The extent to which MNEA can grow the organization directly affects the quality of services they can provide to their membership. In 2017, efforts will be geared towards continuing to increase the number of active members by reaching out to new networks and informing them of the benefits of membership. MNEA will

continue to work to meet the needs of current members to increase the likelihood they will renew their membership.

### **Partnership and Affiliate Activities**

Randi Nelson, President, welcomed participants to the 2016 Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI) Spring Training. She also represented MNEA at American Evaluation Association Local Affiliates Collaborative (LAC) monthly conference calls and the Affiliates Breakfast at the annual AEA conference.

### **2016 MNEA Member Survey Results**

Randi Nelson, the 2016 MNEA President, made the following recommendations to the 2017 board on 1-12-17, based on the results of selected items from the 2016 MNEA member survey. The survey was approved by the entire board and emailed to all current MNEA members between May 24 and June 3, 2016 using Survey Monkey. A total of 92 members responded to the survey which was a higher response rate than in past years. Members who completed the survey could enter a drawing for a free annual membership. The last member survey was conducted in 2013.

Preferences for Types of Programs and Events: MNEA should continue to focus programming on skill building and networking events based on the high proportion of members who said these benefits of membership were important or very important (88% and 65%, respectively). Other survey responses reinforced the importance of skill building and social events. Many members said they were interested or extremely interested in skill-building or professional development events such as roundtable discussions with experts (78%), webinars (71%), formal lectures or presentations (67%), and a multi-day conference (64%). Over half of respondents expressed a high level of interest in informal networking and social events (54%). Relatively few people expressed a high level of interest for in-person or online book clubs (32% and 20%, respectively).

Most members (63%) who responded to the survey had attended at least one MNEA event in the previous 12 months. Skill-building events were better attended than the socials. Open-ended responses to the question *How else could MNEA better serve you?* suggest we could add value to MNEA membership by adding links and resources to the website and conducting more events at more locations, including virtual events, to reduce the travel barriers to attendance.

Program and Event Logistics: The best time for offering events appears to be over lunch time (11:30 to 1:30) based on the high percent of respondents who selected this period (80%). However, since between 41% and 46% also selected other times, MNEA should consider offering programs at several different times of the day. Based on responses to a question about food options at events, MNEA could reduce costs of events—and therefore offer more events—by offering only light snacks and beverages or offering brown bag events where attendees provide their own lunch. These food and beverage options were acceptable to 66% and 64% of

respondents, respectively. About half of respondents (55%) wanted MNEA to pay for and provide a full lunch and slightly fewer (48%) were willing to pay for their own lunch if MNEA provided it. We may be able to increase attendance by announcing event dates sooner since most people said they did not attend events due to date conflicts (70%). Ideally, MNEA would offer a wider variety of events at different times to improve attendance since 37% said the time of day offered was a barrier to attendance and 36% said they were not interested in the topic.

### **Strategic Planning Event Highlights**

Since MNEA had not been through any type of strategic planning since 2011, the entire MNEA Board participated in a one-day strategic discussion event in June. The board discussed the strategic issues they believed MNEA needed to address in the next three to five years. Al Onkka, the current Program Co-Chair facilitated the discussion. The brainstorming and discussion resulted in the following eight issues the board determined would be important to address:

- Clarify who we want to serve
- Decide if we serve outstate MN
- Determine appropriate business model
- Strengthen board function
- Specify and communicate our organizational values
- Be deliberate in our role with other evaluation organizations
- Consider partnerships with other organizations
- Encourage more member engagement

The board continued to discuss these priorities during the remainder of 2016. At the same event, the Board reviewed the MNEA Mission statement to determine if it was in alignment with the MNEA's strategic vision. A committee was established to review the current mission statement and propose some options for possible revisions. A decision was deferred until 2017 due to ongoing discussions about strategic planning priorities and anticipated turnover on the board.

### **Board Activities**

Board members met monthly to conduct board business through in-person and virtual meetings. Major activities included:

- Updating and creating new elections materials, which included position descriptions, estimated commitment expected from board members, and an application form for members interested in running for board positions
- Gifty Amartiefo, the Membership Chair and Member at Large modified semi-annual member survey with input from the board and administered and analyzed the results. Randi Nelson created a one-page summary of results
- Gifty and the Emily Subialka Nowariak, the Communications Chair, collected and organized historical and current MNEA documents into cloud-based storage accessible to all board members

- Board members modified and created orientation materials for new board members
- A sub-committee reviewed MNEA by-laws with the intent of clarifying, removing redundancies, and streamlining by-laws to be supplemented by a policy manual to guide future board members
- Continued discussion of the role of MNEA as a professional organization and how it can leverage partners in the community to offer relevant and timely services to its members and enlarge and strengthen the evaluation community in Minnesota
- Ongoing discussion of programming efforts of the MNEA to provide relevant and interesting programming for members in a way that is sustainable both in terms of finances for the organization and capacity of the all-volunteer board. The Program Chairs discussed using a more formal proposal review process to identify and select MNEA members as presenters for future skill-building events.

### **Closing Remarks**

MNEA Board members have contributed tremendously to the ongoing work and management of the association in an effort to provide meaningful services and programming to its members. As with most volunteer working boards, it occasionally struggles to balance the demands of board participation with the demands of operating evaluation consultancies and businesses. The board is committed to providing effective governance so MNEA maintains its vital role in supporting the Minnesota evaluation community. You can help to support MNEA and its board by volunteering and making your voice heard through direct contact with board members and the MNEA LinkedIn group. Please reach out to share your views and expertise by presenting at events, offering skills-based workshops, helping to organize events by volunteering for the Program Committee, or running for board positions. It has been a pleasure to serve the MNEA and I look forward to seeing you at future MNEA events.

Respectfully submitted,

Randi Nelson, 2016 President