

Minnesota Evaluation Association: 2022 Annual Report



Prepared by Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, MA
President of the MNEA Board, 2022

Overview

Thank you to all of the Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA) members and our all volunteer board of directors who made 2022 a great year! The MNEA board of directors aimed to support our members, fellow board members, and the broader evaluation community (and adjacent/evaluation-curious colleagues) through a centering of reflexive practice to uplift connection, wellness, and rest; and I am really proud of how this was put into practice through the opportunities and communications from and within the MNEA community.

It has been such a joy to be the MNEA President and a member of this board. I truly admire the thoughtfulness, commitment, and support offered by my fellow board members, as well as the engagement and energy from our MNEA community. This report summarizes the year by highlighting our activities, our opportunities for growth, and reflecting on what this means as MNEA continues to evolve and expand.

Mission and Vision

The mission of Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA) is to promote and improve the theory, practice, understanding, and use of evaluation and its contribution to the community. The purpose of this organization is to:

1. Promote evaluation as an integral component of human services, education, health, criminal justice, and other fields.
2. Promote the understanding, use and benefit of evaluation results in organizational planning and program improvement.
3. Provide a regional, interdisciplinary forum for professional development, networking and exchange of ideas related to evaluation and local evaluation issues.
4. Promote dialogue among evaluation stakeholders (evaluators, funders, consumers) about the benefits of evaluation research.
5. Promote diversity and equity as essential for excellence in evaluation principles and practice.

2022 Board Members

Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro
President

Claire Dunlap
Past President

Molly O'Connor
President Elect

Robin Phinney
Secretary

Hue Schlieu
Treasurer

Kassira Absar
Program Co-Chair

Ava Yang-Lewis
Program Co-Chair

Spectra Myers
Communications Co-Chair

Naaïma Khan
Communications Co-Chair

Carolina De La Rosa Mateo
Communications Co-Chair

Alicia Ranney
Membership Chair

Tom Wade & Clare Pillsbury
Student Representatives

Mission, Vision, Values Refresh

The MNEA board of directors spent a great deal of time in 2021 and 2022 making space for reflection and discussion around the current mission and vision of MNEA, what we strive to exemplify as our organizational values, and how/which values and mission principles are showing up in our programming, policies, and practices. This self-evaluation, co-occurring with the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest due to continued harm toward Black and Brown individuals and communities, contributed to the board's identifying and addressing the need for intentional connection, rest, and wellness.

The MNEA board reflected on how this looks both externally and internally. Internally, it incited our board to:

- Shorten monthly board meetings;
- Take intentional time off from board duties, with support from fellow board members;
- Holding space for open, honest, and curious conversations around challenging topics and leading with a person-first board membership - including time for self - and group-reflection;
- Creating additional board roles to increase support and optimize capacity;
- Fostering supported connections through monthly meetings between the board presidents (sitting president, past president, and president-elect) with each individual board member;
- Fostering supported connections for the board presidents through bi-weekly check-ins as a team;
- Leading every board meeting with a time for checking in and grounding ourselves in space together.

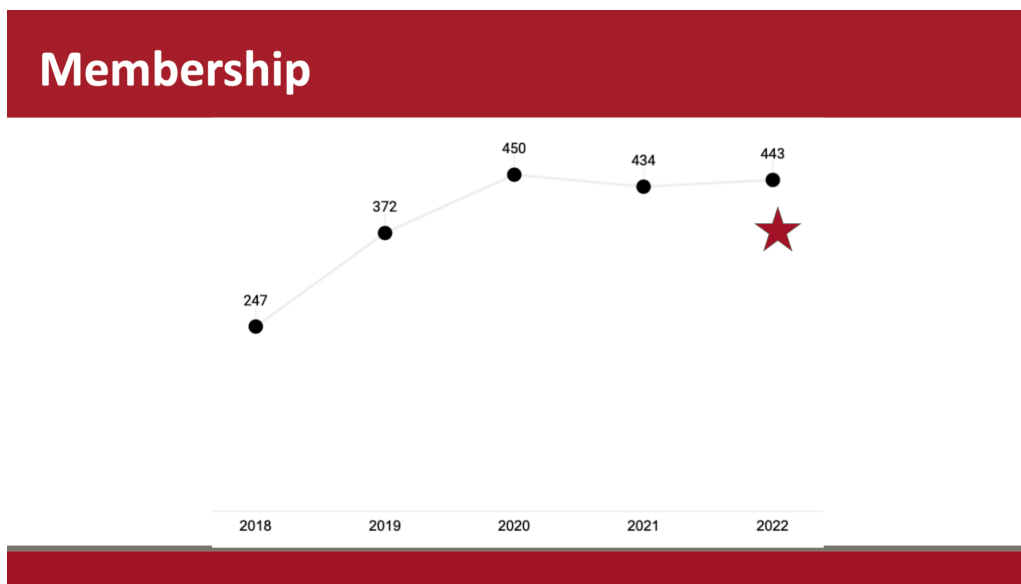
Externally, this incited our board to refresh our organizational mission, vision, and impact, as well as develop clear values/guiding principles. This included:

- After many critical conversations, drafting an organizational land acknowledgement that includes a call to action tailored by the board member hosting each programming event. You can find our organizational land acknowledgement template - meant to be living language that evolves over time and with each person - here: [MNEA Land Acknowledgement](#);
- Garnering feedback from membership around membership fee structure preferences, and increasing accessibility through free and reduced membership for those who fees would otherwise be a barrier to membership;

- Aimed to recognize the diversity and disparities of access, formal evaluation education, and networking that exist for Populations of Color, Indigenous populations, disability populations, and immigrant/refugee populations, as well as others, as it relates to evaluation as a profession and resource. To address this, the MNEA board has practiced with more intention and mindfulness to conduct outreach to these communities, invite to programming as participant and/or facilitator, remove financial barriers by offering speaker stipends and free MNEA membership, and giving back to these communities through donations and utilization of community spaces for programming;
- Sought to engage students studying, or curious about, evaluation from local higher education programs, including creating the *Student Spotlight* on the MNEA website, to highlight students and create opportunities of connection for mentorship and/or work;

The MNEA board will be contracting with an external consultant in 2023 to facilitate the finalizing of our updated mission, vision, and values. We look forward to hearing the thoughts and feedback from membership!

Membership



It is exciting to see that the MNEA membership has grown steadily and substantially over the past decade, and continues to do so. In 2021 and 2022, we sought input from our members in a variety of ways. We conducted feedback surveys after each of our events to gain input on that event as well as ideas for other programming of interest to members. Additionally, we conducted a Membership Survey in 2021 to gain input from members on types of programming offered, communications, topics of interest, and membership rates. We used all of this feedback as we planned events in 2022 and beyond, as well as to adjust our membership rates structure in 2023 to both reflect indicated preferences and increase accessibility for those community members where membership would otherwise present a financial barrier. We will provide more information on this restructuring mid-2023!

Programming

In 2022, MNEA’s program co-chairs, with support from the rest of the board, used our members’ feedback to determine what topics, formats, and locations are most appealing for events. We slowly transitioned to offering some in-person options, though the board will be continuing to offer a mixture of both in-person and online programming options to create more accessibility for those who cannot/prefer not to attend in-person events, including those who are health compromised, those with disabilities, those without access to transportation, and those in Greater Minnesota, as well as others. We have been focusing on a range of evaluator competencies, and trying to address a variety of them in our programming while also expanding the breadth of topics related to evaluation that members may be or have indicated interest in. The following table shows the list of programs offered in 2022.

Date	Title
January 27, 2022	Community Engagement in a Changing World
March 28, 2022	How to Get Involved in MNEA Programming
April 22, 2022	APM Research Lab and MPR present on the Minnesota’s Diverse Communities Project
June	MNEA Book Club Session 1 (All about Love: New Visions by bell hooks)
July	MNEA Book Club Session 1 (All about Love: New Visions by bell hooks)
July	Fun in the Sun: MNEA and MN IBPOC in Evaluation Community of Praxis Summer Picnic (In-Person)
October	MNEA Presents Shiree Teng’s “Measuring Love”
October	MNEA Board of Directors Application Q&A Session
October	Making Connections - A Monthly MNEA Series (In-Person)
November	Making Connections - A Monthly MNEA Series (Virtual)
January 2023 (Rescheduled from December 2022)	MNEA Gala Night and Annual Meeting (In-Person)

Additional Local Affiliate Activities

In addition to the activities mentioned above related to programming and internal practice, we also continued to engage with and learn from the other AEA local affiliate organizations through the AEA Local Affiliate Collaborative (AEA LAC). This includes monthly virtual meetings, as well as participating in the planning and implementation of LAC-specific AEA Conference activities such as the LAC conference session and workshop. The MNEA board also strives to be a connect point for MNEA members to AEA by providing updates and sharing out communications and opportunities.

2023 MNEA UnConference!

The MNEA board was very excited to begin planning in 2022 for the 2023 MNEA UnConference: Evaluation UnFiltered. Planning continues to be underway for this gathering opportunity. More details to come!

Communications

The MNEA board continued to expand the utility and function of the MNEA website, LinkedIn, and member listserv. The “For Members” page on our website highlights: job postings, member discounts to regional events and conferences, and current MNEA event materials, including recordings of MNEA’s webinars. The website also includes regular blog posts about current evaluation events and regional happenings, student spotlights, board members’ bios, information on evaluation events around the globe, and additional resources for evaluators such as our *Social Justice and Evaluation* page, including resources on Minnesota’s Indigenous populations.

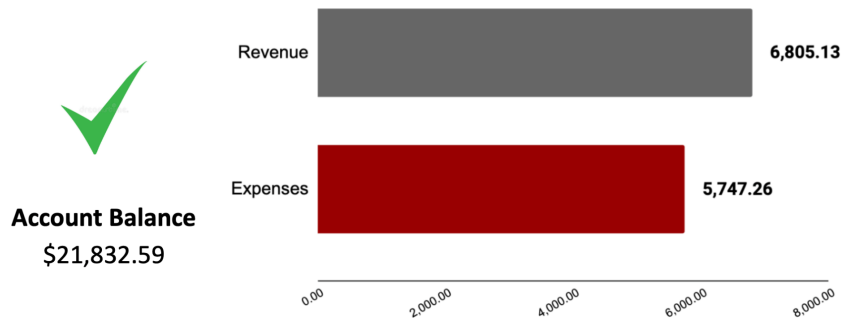
MNEA also continues to post current events and local happenings, through our MNEA member listserv, and on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3994194/>). Please make sure to follow us and **share** with your communities!

Going forward, MNEA is committed to sustaining our expanded communication efforts to our members, and we encourage all of our members to share information with the broader community through MNEA’s communication platforms. If you read an interesting article, blog post or publish one, please share it with MNEA. We would like to highlight how you are contributing to the evaluation community.

Finances

MNEA primarily receives revenue through memberships, and a small amount through charging for non-members to attend our programming events. Our major expenses include member-related business expenses (e.g., Wild Apricot website platform, Survey Alchemer, Zoom, etc.), and programming-related expenses such as honorariums for speakers. As the MNEA board considers the responses in the membership survey around membership fees, as well as our aim to continue to provide free/discounted memberships to those who would benefit from them, our financials are likely to look different in future years.

2022 Financials



Reflections for Future MNEA Leadership

In closing, I appreciated the chance to engage with the Minnesota evaluation community, and beyond, as the MNEA President, especially during a time of such growth and transition amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest/empowerment. I will be forever grateful for the grace and support from my fellow board members, AEA, and our MNEA membership during this time to shift “norms” and uplift difficult and important topics and conversations within and connected to evaluation.

After some reflection, the following are a few recommendations I have for the MNEA board and Minnesota evaluation community to consider going forward:

- Continue to explicitly acknowledge and address, within our sphere of influence, the gaps present within and connected to evaluation that diminishes access in a variety of ways (professional membership, “formal” education, career pathways, pay inequities, etc), erases critical voices and experiences - particularly Women of Color and Indigenous women in the field of evaluation, and dulls opportunities for growth and innovation because of preconceived filters and barriers within the field.
- Continue to increase accessibility and create pipelines for emerging evaluators, as members and board members, particularly those from underrepresented and overshadowed communities, through intentional outreach and inclusion, reciprocal communications, and removal of barriers (financial, geographical, requirements).
- Continue to center reflexivity and wellness through a person-first approach. Set aside time to reflect and consider what those reflections mean toward impact as individuals and an organization, and lead with a person-first approach that honors individuals’ capacity, life balance, and overall wellness.
- Continue to move “beyond” evaluation. We are multi-faceted individuals with a variety of interests and expertise that influence our evaluation practice. While skill-building is important, equally important is continuous learning around secondary and tertiary topics that intersect with evaluation - some examples: centering wellness for the self and community, utilizing emergent strategy principles, or understanding what the prison industrial complex is and what impacts it has.

None of these are novel ideas in any regard, and they are all pieces of the work the MNEA board is already doing, as well as MNEA members in their own spaces; so I just want to say *keep going, you're doing great.*

Cheers for now,
Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro/Biidabinikwe
2022 President