

Minnesota Evaluation Association Annual Board Report



Melissa Chapman Haynes, PhD
Board President 2018



Recap of 2018

It has been a privilege and honor to be the President of the Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA) for 2018. This local affiliate of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) is one of the oldest evaluation organizations in the United States, predating AEA and often serving to bring together Minnesota's historically active evaluation community. MNEA has been an AEA Board-approved local affiliate since 2004.

During graduate school, while living in Iowa City, I developed and committed my passion to the field of evaluation. There is no local affiliate in Iowa and I was ecstatic to become part of the Minnesota evaluation community after moving here in 2010. Initially, I found it difficult to connect with the evaluation community, living a version of the expression: "Minnesotans will give you directions anywhere except their own house." Fortunately, this changed over time though I have kept it in my heart to invite attendees of our events to introduce themselves to someone they've not yet met. We have also been intentional about how we invite individuals to volunteer on our Board and about the content and timing of our programming. My hope is that many new connections were made during the 14 events that were hosted in 2018.

Our Board worked hard to infuse energy and opportunities for our local evaluation community to connect and grow. I am grateful for having served as President alongside a Board that had such a high level of creativity, commitment, and a proclivity for humor and fun. The collective efforts of the 2018 Board are detailed in this report to our membership. Thank you all for consistently showing up and volunteering your time and energy to our local community of practice.

2018 Board Members

Melissa Chapman Haynes,
President

Nicole MartinRogers,
President Elect

Sarah Cohn,
Past President

Maira Rosas-Lee,
Secretary

Erica Orton,
Program Co-Chair

Claire Dunlap,
Program Co-Chair

Veronica Deenanath,
Treasurer

Ellen Wolter,
Communications Chair

Razeena Shrestha,
Membership Chair

Kate Diamond,
Student Representative

Hanna Ruth,
Student Representative

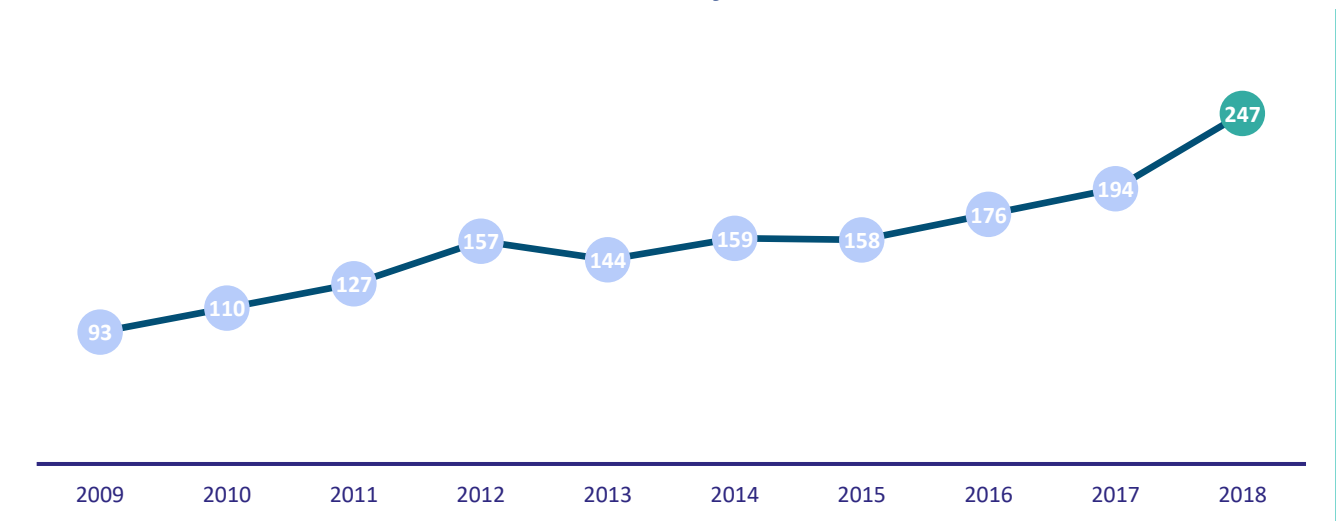
Membership

In 2018 we continued a membership trend that was set in motion over the past decade. At the end of 2017 our membership was 194, up from 176 at the end of 2016. By December 2018 the MNEA membership was up to nearly 250 members strong!! Since nearly all of our budget is from membership dues, this increase will allow us to continue to provide consistent and creative events.

A key component of the 2018 strategy was to be present and active – let’s make opportunities for our members and potential members to engage in our community. As an “outsider” to the Minnesota community this had a particularly special place in my heart. For example, the entire Board consistently communicated the benefits of membership, especially during events.

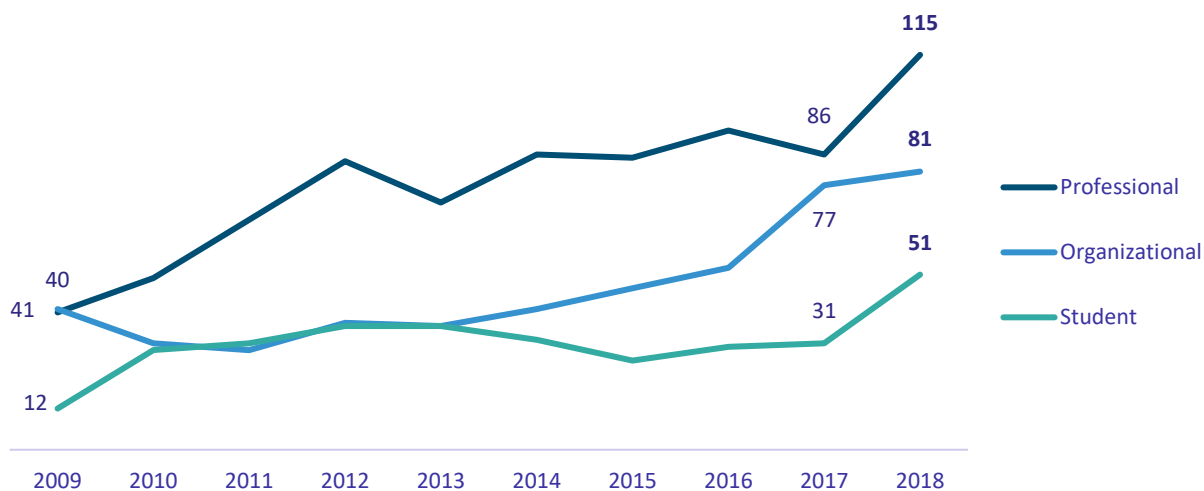
Our membership chair was present at many events, encouraging attendees to become a member. Mid-year the membership chair started to send a follow-up email to non-members who attended events, inviting them to become a member. Reminders were also sent to individuals whose memberships had recently expired but had not been renewed.

MNEA's membership has consistently grown, almost *tripling* the number of active members over nine years.



MNEA offers three membership categories: professional, organizational (five or more memberships at a discounted professional membership rate), and student. The majority of MNEA members have historically been professional members, and this continues to be true.

All membership categories have seen an increase in the total number of active members over nine years. Nearly 80% are professional or organizational members.



With the American Evaluation Association’s annual conference coming to Minneapolis in 2019, along with our continued push to offer quality programming, we expect membership numbers to continue to rise. We strive to be inclusive; however, we know we can always improve. We strongly encourage all members to reach out to share opportunities for us to strengthen our work and better serve our members and the broader evaluation community.

Programming

The MNEA Board was successful in planning and hosting 14 events. The size and format of these events varied, with 544 registrations across all events. The Board hosted one event in a webinar format. Moving forward, the Board plans to explore having multiple events with remote participation options, which would help MNEA to fulfill its mission to serve all of Minnesota, not the Twin Cities metro area exclusively.

Date	Title	Number of registrants
March 14	MNEA project management series: Software demo (Trello) <i>Featuring: Tiffany Thayer</i>	18*
April 9	Navigating complex political contexts in evaluation <i>Hosted by Kate Diamond and Melissa Chapman Haynes</i>	28
May 9	American Public Media (APM) tour (members-only) <i>Lead by APM staff</i>	20*
May 9	American Public Media – Results of the ground-level survey <i>(what do Minnesotans think about the state or our state after the elections?)</i>	100
June 7	Advanced Qualitative Findings (webinar) <i>Hosted by Nicole MartinRogers and colleagues at Wilder Research</i>	75
July 18	2020 Census in Minnesota: What do evaluators need to know? <i>Featuring: Susan Brower, State Demographer</i>	37
Sept 12	Translating Agile project management into evaluation practice <i>Hosted by Melissa Chapman Haynes</i>	46
Sept 26	MNEA project management series: Running effective meetings <i>Hosted by Melissa Chapman Haynes</i>	18*
Oct 10	Meet the local evaluation organizations series (part 1) <i>Featuring: PDA, Rainbow Research, TerraLuna, Wilder Research, Improve Group</i>	96
Oct 18	Evaluation and changing political landscapes panel <i>Student-led event featuring: Eric Moore, Jodi Sandfort, and Paul Mattessich</i>	45
Nov 1	Connect with MNEA at the AEA annual meeting <i>Social/networking event, hosted by Melissa Chapman Haynes, Veronica Deenanath, & Erica Orton</i>	11
Nov 8	AEA Debrief with MNEA <i>Hosted by Maira Rosas-Lee</i>	10
Nov 28	MNEA project management series: Project Charters <i>Hosted by Melissa Chapman Haynes</i>	17
Dec 17	Reflect and Gather with MNEA <i>Hosted by Melissa Chapman Haynes and Razeena Shrestha</i>	23

*Indicates capacity of the space was reached.

We started the year with two new program co-chairs who quickly got up-to-speed on reviewing what had been done previously. To accommodate our growth in members and number of events, MNEA’s co-chairs developed new protocols and brought forward the following topics for the MNEA board to address the following: honorariums, costs of events, locations, and topics. Our program co-chairs took the lead in putting protocols in place to guide and support event planning.

Our Board developed a Google form that documented events for the year, which served as a useful reference point for the coordination of events and served as a more responsive companion to our Dropbox files. The planning of events involves multiple Board members, and so having a central location to co-create events should be encouraged moving forward. Separate sheets of our workbook documented locations, costs, contacts, room set-up, and the like. These minute details go miles for facilitating the hard work and limited hours of an all-volunteer working Board.

Partnership and Affiliate Activities

MNEA continued to have a presence in the broader evaluation community of practice by regularly participating in the Local Area Affiliate (LAC) community of practice. This includes monthly calls, and for the past two years many affiliates gathered for an in-person LAC pre-conference. In Cleveland, I facilitated a session on organizational and operational structures of LACs, and our group shared resources and ideas amongst each other as well as the broader LAC. The peer learning during these calls and in-person events has been invaluable.

In line with our mission to serve all Minnesota evaluators, I requested a list of AEA members from Zachary Grays from AEA mid-2018. Given the lack of affiliates in all but one of our neighboring states, we expanded our communications to include Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Western Wisconsin.

“Learning happens between and across communities, not just within them and is a continuous process...To create small scale change work through cohesive communities; to create big scale change, build a movement, by creating bridges between disconnected communities.”

- Helen Beven, Yorkshire & the Humber Leadership Academy

Communications

The communications chair serves as the regular, external-facing facilitator of MNEA activity and communications with our members and potential members. During 2018 our communications chair put new communications protocols in place. We also expanded the role of our secretary to support the communications efforts. We were able to put in place weekly emails with job, contracting, and professional development or networking opportunities and we started to think about revisions to our website. In addition, our outgoing communications chair has volunteered to lead social media efforts in 2019, starting with creating a MNEA Twitter account. The communications protocol aligned with the guidance that the program co-chairs had put together earlier in the year.

Finances

MNEA started the 2018 fiscal year with \$10,017.27 and closed December 2018 with \$11,268.95. This is on target with the projected balance set at the beginning of the year, and slightly exceeded the budgeted estimate. 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), and programming-related expenses such as food and beverage, or honorariums for speakers.

“You can’t train people to actually do an evaluation in a day, but you can bring them to understand what evaluation is, why it is useful, why they need to support evaluation, and how to find a competent evaluator.”

– Michael Quinn Patton

Organizational Development

The continued growth of MNEA, along with some planned expansion in activities that will be implemented in 2019, led to initial conversations about the Board’s capacity and existing structure as a 501c6. We have explored other ways to organize and fundraise and will continue to explore these opportunities moving into 2019. We also have committed

to providing programming that is connected to the AEA Board-approved competencies, found here: <https://www.eval.org/page/competencies>. There are many competencies that even formally trained evaluators have not received training on, and we have tried to provide opportunities for professionals at all levels to improve their practice.

The coordination and cohesion of the Board is what I am most proud of and I can only recognize the amazing skills and inclinations of my fellow Board members! Our collective planning efforts have led us to strategize potential and confirmed events for 2019, while still in 2018. I am extremely happy to hand the leadership role over to Nicole MartinRogers in 2019, and then to Maira Rosas-Lee in 2020. I have all confidence that the momentum we have been building will be extended, improved, and expanded on with the guidance of both of these leaders.

Advice to Future Board Members and Wishes for the Future

During the first Board meeting of 2018 I asked my fellow Board members to think about what they were passionate about, and how they would like to best contribute in the upcoming year. As an all-volunteer Board I elected to set this tone because people will show up and follow-through when they are excited. I encourage future Board members to reflect on what energizes them, and how that can translate into the work of the Board and our service to professionalizing our field.

My wish for the future of MNEA is for the momentum that has been building be sustained over time. When we provide opportunities for our community to connect, they come! Membership increases! And it's simply amazing to see the diverse sectors and types of evaluation being done in our region. However, it takes many hours to put together these events and my hope is that the capacity of MNEA can meet the needs and interests of our amazing local evaluation community.

The future direction of the Board rests on the commitment of the volunteers of this Board, and to our amazing community that is excited to show up when opportunities are provided for them to do so. Here's looking forward to 2019, the continued commitment of an outstanding Board, and the upcoming activities of the Local Area Working Group as we welcome evaluators from around the world to Minneapolis in November 2019.

Mission: MNEA exists to promote the theory, practice, understanding, and use of evaluation and its contribution to the community.

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 principle and practice.