



Image Description: Six MNEA board members in front of a sparkly backdrop smiling at the camera

Minnesota Evaluation Association

2023 Annual Report

Prepared by Molly O'Connor, MS
President of the MNEA Board, 2023



Overview

Thank you to all of the Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA) members and our all-volunteer board of directors who made 2023 a great year! This year, the MNEA board of directors aimed to support our members and the broader evaluation community through centering connection and community building. We did this by offering casual monthly Making Connections events, more formal events such as our Semi-Annual Gala and the 2023 MNEA (UN)Conference, and much more.

It has been such a joy and honor to be the MNEA President and a member of this board. 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.

Our New Mission, Vision, Values, & Equity Statements

The following statements have been in development since 2021, drafted in 2023, and then finalized after a public comment period at the end of 2023.

VISION: MNEA envisions a collaborative community where evaluators help build a more just and equitable society to ensure the liberation of all.

MISSION: MNEA provides a multidisciplinary platform for evaluators to strengthen knowledge, skills, and connections in service of advancing equity through evaluation in Minnesota and beyond.

VALUES:

- **Equity & Justice:** While diversity and inclusion are necessary, they are not sufficient to create equitable and just outcomes for all. MNEA believes evaluators are positioned to be advocates for change.
- **Critical Reflection:** MNEA believes in the importance of engaging in critical dialogue and self-reflection in order to better serve our communities.
- **Person-Centered:** MNEA honors the whole person, and the people involved in our community, by centering wellness and joy while uplifting opportunities for professional growth.

2023 Board Members

Molly O'Connor
President

Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro
Past President

Alissa Jones
President Elect

Robin Phinney
Secretary

Sam Storck-Post
Treasurer

Ava Yang-Lewis
Program Co-Chair

Spectra Myers
Communications Co-Chair

Carolina De La Rosa Mateo
Communications Co-Chair

Veronica Seifert
Membership Chair

- **Accountability:** Acknowledging historic harms is an important step in ensuring a just and equitable society. MNEA aims to take steps to understand and address these harms at the individual, community, and societal levels.
- **Community Relationships:** MNEA prioritizes promoting and creating opportunities to build relationships and meaningful connections among evaluators and the broader community, particularly groups that evaluation and surrounding industries have historically excluded and systematically marginalized.
- **Accessible Knowledge:** MNEA desires to foster opportunities for the exchange of evaluation knowledge, skills and perspectives to maximize access among a broader community of practitioners and scholars, particularly those the field has systematically excluded.

EQUITY STATEMENT: The Minnesota Evaluation Association (MNEA) acknowledges that evaluation has contributed to the systematic oppression of peoples and knowledge systems - including LGBTQ2S+, persons with visible and invisible disabilities, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous, Black/African American, and other Communities of Color. Ending the resulting inequities requires a commitment to working internally and externally to unlearn patterns of white supremacy, imperialism, coloniality, racial and gendered capitalism and neoliberalism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, ableism, and others. We aim to highlight alternative ways of knowing and being, and to move the field and practice of evaluation away from its oppressive roots and toward liberation.

It is also important to note that a **Land Acknowledgement** was developed and finalized in 2021-2022, thanks to the leadership of Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro. [You can check out our Land Acknowledgement here.](#)



Image Description: One of our Communications Co-Chairs, sitting at a table with her computer during MNEA's 2023 (UN)Conference

Membership

For the last 3 years, over 180 members benefited from our free COVID-19 Financial Hardship Membership. With the help of this membership type, our active membership peaked in 2022 at 443 active members, and the 180 COVID-19 members had the same benefits as any other MNEA member (attend events, utilize our member-only resources, get discounted tickets for our Gala and 2023 MNEA (UN)Conference, and more). The **COVID-19 Financial Hardship Membership officially sunsetted on December 1st, 2023**, and our numbers reflect the loss of this membership. MNEA membership is currently at 333 active members. We will continue offering a **free membership type through our newly created Community-Funded Membership tier**.

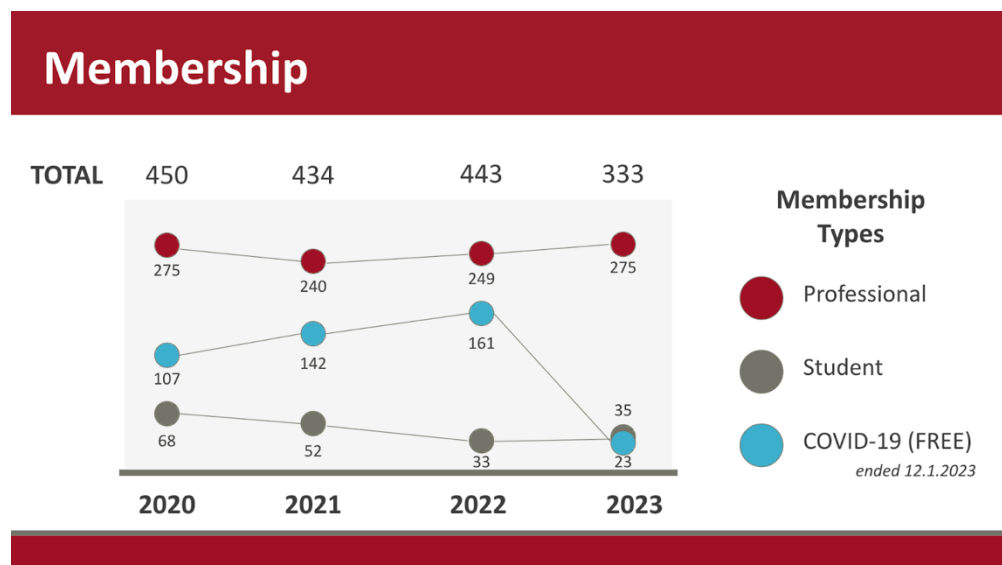


Image Description: A graph showing the totals of professional, student, and COVID-19 (FREE) memberships over the last 4 years

Another exciting membership update is that **the MNEA Board approved to add another board member position: Membership Co-Chair**! Little do you know, but the Membership Chair holds a lot of the behind-the-scenes administrative tasks. Historically, we have only had one membership chair, but it was decided to add a second because it was too much to hold for one person. We are excited to see how this new board position shakes out!

Lastly, you might have already heard, but MNEA is increasing its membership dues. This is because of general inflation, maintaining our online subscriptions, and other increased expenses, which allow MNEA to continue offering in-person, hybrid, and online events.

The new prices are as follows:

Membership Type	OLD Pricing	NEW Pricing
Professional (Individual)	\$25	\$35
Professional (Organization/Bundle)	\$20	\$30
Student	\$10	\$10
COVID-19 Hardship (FREE)	FREE	-
Community-Funded (FREE)	-	FREE

Table 1: New versus old membership pricing

Programming

In 2023, MNEA’s Program Co-Chair, 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 transitioned to offering in-person options, though the board will continue 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 (and beyond!).

We have been focusing on a range of evaluator competencies, and prioritized connection, creative/art-based evaluation methods, and much more. We had very high attendance this year, even from non-MNEA members. If you missed any recorded events, and are a MNEA member, you can find them in the [MNEA member portal](#)!

The following table shows the list of programs offered in 2023:

Date	Title
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MNEA Gala & Business Meeting (Rescheduled from Dec 2022) ● Make Connections - A Monthly Series #1 (VIRTUAL)
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make Connections - A Monthly Series #2 (VIRTUAL)
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Systems Thinking for Evaluation Practice ● Making Connections - Happy Hour at La Doña Cervecería #3
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creative Evaluation & Engagement ● Making Connections - Morning Coffee #4 (VIRTUAL)
May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intro to Arts-Based Methods for Evaluators: Photo Elicitation ● Making Connections - Lunch at Breaking Bread Bakery #5
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using Ethnotheater as a Tool for Change ● Making Connections - Virtual Lunch #6
July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making Connections - Butter Bakery Summer Friday Hangout #7

September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making Connections - Morning Coffee at Makwa Coffee #8 ● The MNEA 2023 EVALUATION (UN)FILTERED Conference!!
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MNEA Board of Directors Application Q&A - Evening Session ● Making Connections at AEA 2023 #9 ● MNEA Board of Directors Application Q&A - Lunch Session
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making Connections - End of year Happy Hour at Blackstack Brewing #10
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MNEA Annual Business Meeting (VIRTUAL)

Table 2: The date and titles of MNEA’s 2023 programming



Image Description: Four photos from MNEA’s 2023 (UN)Conference

Additional Local Affiliate Activities

In addition to the programming mentioned above, 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. This year, Molly C O’Connor, MNEA’s 2023 president, helped facilitate the LAC conference session and attended the Annual LAC AEA Breakfast.

The MNEA board strives to be a connection point for MNEA members to AEA by providing updates and sharing out communications and opportunities during the monthly LAC meetings.

If you want to learn more about LAC, email info@mneval.org and we will get you connected!

Communications

I first want to say how thankful I am for our Communication Co-Chairs! They do so much, and I hope every time you see an email or website update, you remember our amazing volunteer comms chairs.

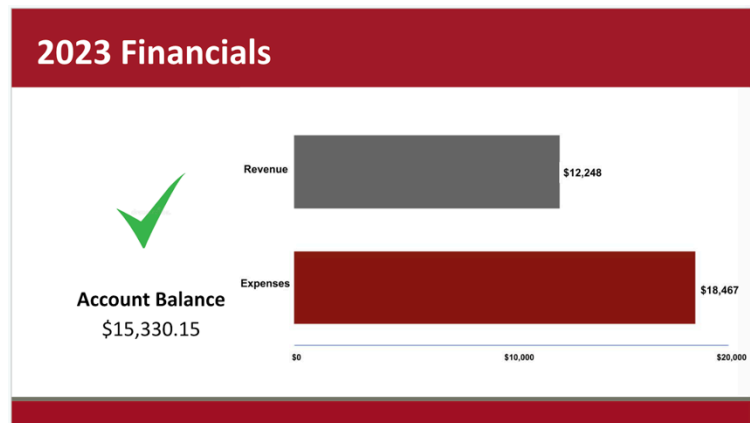
If you haven't seen it yet, check out our updated [About Us](#) page, as well as the new photos that give our website a new fresh look! If you didn't know, [the "For Members" page](#) on our website highlights: job postings, member discounts to regional events and conferences, and current MNEA event materials, including recordings of MNEA's webinars. The website also includes 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

2023 was an expensive year for MNEA! Our major expenses include member-related business expenses (e.g., Wild Apricot website platform, Survey Alchemer, Zoom, etc.), and programming-related expenses. For this year, we hosted two major in-person events (the Gala and the 2023 MNEA (UN)Conference), invited and compensated 4 speakers to lead virtual skills-based workshops, and hired an external consultant (Naaima Khan from [Create Good](#)—and a MNEA board alumna!) to help us finalize our mission, vision, values, and equity statement.



As for revenue, MNEA primarily receives this through membership dues and charging for events. Though, this year we experimented with having sponsorships to help offset costs for the MNEA 2023 (UN)Conference. This helped a lot, especially since we offered free tickets for members and non-members who otherwise couldn't afford to come.

Since 2023 was a high spending year, 2024 will likely be a less expense-heavy year. We hope the increase in membership dues will help fill our accounts again so we can host a big event in 2025 (another conference, perhaps!?). **We will be sending a membership survey** this upcoming year and we would love to hear what our members want for 2024, 2025, and beyond!!

Reflections for Future MNEA Leadership

I have really enjoyed being MNEA's board president. I have never been a president of a board (or anything for that matter!), so it was an honor to be invited in. I learned so much, met amazing MNEA members, and made lifelong friends and colleagues along the way. <3

As I pass the torch to our next president, here are some reflections for the MNEA board and the Minnesota evaluation community:



We are all connected

I prioritized making connections for my presidential term. I wanted to use my position to help our members (and non-members) reconnect after 3 years of isolation due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a community organizer, I believe in the power of Community Building and the importance of the individual.



Our impact ripples across geography & time.

I believe the choices we make have an impact. I hope the decisions I made as MNEA president created ripples. Ripples that will cross oceans and teach someone something new. Ripples that will cross decades and reconnect someone they met at an MNEA event. Ripples that will push MNEA's new mission, vision, values, and equity statement.



Be kind, especially to yourself <3

The work we do is not easy, especially if you are an evaluator practicing and advocating for equity and justice in your practice. Outside of work, we are whole humans juggling emotional and physical obstacles. If you find yourself feeling stuck or overwhelmed, remember to breath and remember you are loved. Because I love you, I believe in you, and I know you are trying your best!

Thank you for reading and I so look forward to crossing paths with each and every one of you.

Big hugs,

Molly C. O'Connor
2023 MNEA President