



Newsletter

Fall 2007

President's Message

The Oregon Program Evaluators Network (OPEN) is one of the oldest affiliates of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). A decade ago, OPEN was formed by a small group of program evaluators who saw a need for a group focused on program evaluation. A decade later, OPEN is one of the strongest affiliates of the AEA. 2007 marks a great year for OPEN in terms of the numbers of events offered, our partnerships with other groups and in our outreach to potential members. OPEN is at a crossroads, however.

We need more involvement from our members to help us survive. Volunteering with OPEN has many benefits, including:

- * Looking great on the CV
- * Expanding every volunteer's contact pool for future jobs and projects
- * Learning new skills
- * Volunteering is just great for the karma!

How can you help OPEN in 2008? Please consider serving on OPEN's council or on an OPEN committee. Most council members are new to volunteering with OPEN, so if you have not yet volunteered with OPEN please don't think that disqualifies you!

Council members dedicate an hour per month for a council meeting and volunteer another five hours during the month for varied tasks. OPEN Council positions include the roles of Financial Officer (keep our checkbook current), Secretary (keep our meeting minutes current and in one place- the secretary is NOT stuck with taking all the minutes!), and a President Elect (keep the place running). Each of these positions is for one year with the exception of the President Elect (PE). The PE becomes the President in the following year, so the PE is a two year commitment.

OPEN also has a planning committee, which meets monthly for an hour. As part of this committee, you can help plan events and do outreach to new members. This committee is a lower level commitment than the council positions and is a great opportunity to learn a bit more about the current state of evaluation in Oregon and southwest Washington.

You'll get to know evaluators from other firms and agencies, and will help develop the field of evaluation via trainings and partnerships. We're looking for self starters on this committee, and also evaluators with those important "other" skills- website development, marketing, and other non profit organizational links (to increase our collaborations for events, and our pool of potential members).

The time commitment for the planning committee varies by what the time each volunteer has to give. You can volunteer for two months to help pull off a single event, or volunteer for a full year and help with multiple events. This is a great group for students, or for those looking for a job in evaluation as you'll meet all of our speakers and work with evaluation agencies to put on the events.

To learn more about any of these opportunities, please contact OPEN President Pamela Clark at clark_pamela@yahoo.com.

The Logic of Logic Modeling

By Chari Smith, OPEN Newsletter Editor

Kari Greene did a virtual sit down with me to talk about logic modeling. She currently does program design and evaluation services for the Oregon Department of Human Services. On November 15th, she will be doing the OPEN brown bag meeting on Logic Modeling. You do not want to miss this!

Q: What is logic modeling?

A: Logic modeling is the process of creating a visual representation of a program or intervention. This process – broken down to the most basic level – addresses the questions “What are you doing? Who are you doing it with? What resources do you have to do it? And what are the effects of what you’re doing?” Relationships are drawn between these questions, helping identify the theory or logic behind the program inputs, elements and the intended outcomes.

Q: Why do you think it’s so important?

A: I think many of us – whether we’re evaluators, program managers, researchers or funders – don’t take the time to sit back and look at the big picture in a reflective, thoughtful way. Instead, we’re busy getting the work done related to the program. Yet we fail to realize that while we might be working very hard, we might not be achieving what we set out to achieve. Logic modeling can help identify why a program is not reaching the intended goals or what is missing in order to achieve the expected outcomes.

By gathering together the main stakeholders on a program, logic modeling facilitates focused and productive communication about the program. At the end of a logic modeling session, I’ve heard people say “this is the first time we’ve actually discussed what ‘success’ is for our program and what we think we’re doing all day.” That’s why I refer to this as logic modeling – which emphasizes the process – instead of focusing solely on the logic model as a product.

Q: What’s the most common mistake people make regarding logic modeling (if any)?

A: People often get hung up on creating the perfect logic model that’s “right” but they don’t see that it’s usually at the sacrifice of a meaningful process. To me, the logic model itself is not as important as the process of logic modeling. I think that people sitting down together, working as a group to identify a shared vision and the key programmatic components and outcomes is much more important than a pretty picture that may or may not accurately describe the program. And a logic model will never be “right” because it will change and shift depending upon who is helping to create it, what that group’s shared vision is, and the motivation behind creating it at that time.

Q: Why should program evaluators understand logic modeling (how does it link to the evaluation)?

A: The first step in most evaluations is program definition – logic modeling is an easy, valuable process to use when defining a program to evaluate. Evaluators can use logic modeling as a planning and communication tool throughout the evaluation process. It’s possible to have multiple logic models for a single program “nested” on top of each other and each used for a different purpose. One might be to uncover the program theory while another can be used to detail the evaluation design and data collection process. In fact, a direct link is evident between many of the Program Evaluation Standards (as identified by the Joint Committee on Standards) and logic modeling, from Stakeholder Identification to Context Analysis.

Q: Any final thoughts on the subject?

A: I guess I’m reminded that even when I’m starting an evaluation project on little time, little money and little sleep, I still find logic modeling helpful to orient myself to the project. It doesn’t have to be a big deal and it’s a logical thinking process that comes very naturally to most evaluators. I just need to remind myself not to make it into a bigger deal than it needs to be...

Brown Bag Session
Logic Modeling led by Kari Greene
When: November 15th
Time: Noon
Place: CubeSpace, 622 SE Grand Ave, Portland
More info: clark_pamela@yahoo.com