TEN Virtual Institute 2024

Evaluation in Action: Learning from Practice and Community

Over 30 sessions featuring from **emerging and experienced evaluators from across Texas who will share their stories, lessons, and recommendations** on how to use evaluation theory in action, and how to make evaluation more relevant, useful, and impactful.

SCHEDULE
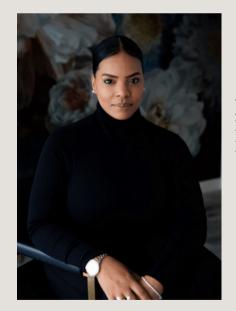
Thursday, April 25, 2024
9:00 am - 4:30 pm CST

Immediately following the conclusion of Virtual Institute join us at 5:30pm CST for Local Meet-Ups across Texas hosted by friends of TEN including current and past Board Members!

REGISTRATION

General admission:
$50 as member
$75 as non-member

Student admission:
$25 as member
$35 as non-member

KEYNOTE

Meme Styles
President & Founder
Measure

Visit <u>Texas Evaluation Network</u> for more details

REGISTER NOW!

Welcome & Keynote: 9:00 - 10:15am

Welcome from Jennifer Mineo, TEN Board of Directors, President

Jennifer Mineo is the Director of Evaluation at the Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF). She leads evaluation activities and provides thought partnership and implementation support of applied research at the foundation. Jennifer's background is in health services research and program evaluation, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. Over the last 20 years, she has worked in public health with local, state and non-profit organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate community health programs. Jennifer's approach to all evaluation work is rooted in social justice. She holds a doctorate in Public Health and a master's degree in Social Work.

Jennifer Mineo
Texas Evaluation Network (TEN)
President, 2023-2024

Keynote address featuring Meme Styles, Founder & CEO of Measures

Introducing Meme Styles, the visionary President and founder of an award-winning social justice nonprofit, who's making waves in the realm of diversity, equity, and inclusion research. With a remarkable 15 years of experience in organizational leadership, research, and community organizing, Meme is a true powerhouse. Her commitment to fostering a more equitable and just society is evident in the numerous social justice-focused programs and projects she's spearheaded in both Texas and California. Drawing on her own lived experiences and tireless energy, Meme inspires others to join her in the fight against racism. But her impact doesn't stop there. As a Social Science Research Council, Just Tech Fellow, Meme is at the forefront of solving for anti-racist technology. Her pioneering work in this area is helping to shape the future of tech, making it more inclusive and equitable for all. With an impressive educational background that includes a Bachelor's of Science in Communications, a Masters Of Public Administration with a concentration on National Security, and a Certificate in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from Cornell, Meme is a true trailblazer. She's also certified in Performance Measurement through George Washington University College of Professional Studies and is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree at Liberty University. And on top of all that, Meme is a devoted wife to a US Veteran and a loving mother of four. With her unique blend of expertise, passion, and fearlessness, Meme Styles is a true visionary of the afro-futuristic world.

Meme Styles
President & Founder
Measure

Professional Development Workshops & Panel Discussions
(60 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 1: 10:30 - 11:30am

1. Texas Funder Collaborative - Building the Bench of Evaluators in Texas

This panel discussion is a follow up to last year's session highlighting the Texas Funder Collaborative Building the Bench in Texas Initiative, which sought to explore what it will take for funders to support a diverse field of evaluators in Texas and the practice of evaluation in service to equity. Drawing upon approximately 120 survey responses, 40 interactions with evaluators through focus groups and interviews, and data from over 25 academic programs in Texas, this session will share lessons from evaluators across the state about the practice of evaluation and how to make it more impactful. Following a high level review of results from the environmental scan, session participants will discuss implications of this work for supporting formal and non-formal evaluator training in evaluative methods and skills; access to and participation in professional networks; capacity building support for community-based organizations in evaluation; and recognition and repair of power dynamics between funders and evaluators that can inhibit robust community-oriented evaluation. Ultimately, this session seeks to leverage learning from the community of evaluators across Texas to benefit evaluators and the populations they serve.

Presenters:
- Brita Blesi, Director of Learning and Evaluation at Houston Endowment
- Angela Cruz, Associate at Ross Strategic
- Nadine Dechausay, Senior Director of Learning and Insights at Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT)
- Briana Martin, Research and Evaluation Associate at the Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF)
- Jennifer Mineo, Director of Evaluation at the Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF)
- Janelle Roberts, Senior Associate at Ross Strategic

2. Evaluating Community Coalitions: A Participative Approach

This workshop is relevant to evaluation practice as more and more evaluators are being asked to assist coalitions with their evaluation needs. When evaluators partner well to engage in evaluation with coalitions, the coalitions gain valuable information they can use for planning and action. When it is not done well, or the evaluator measures from afar without including the coalition members, coalitions just end up with reports that sit on shelves gathering dust. This hands-on, no slide workshop will engage participants in group discussions, case studies, and other exercises to share information and techniques for engaging in evaluation with community coalition members. It will include how to evaluate the coalition functioning, as well as how to work with coalition members to design and implement evaluation of their initiatives. Participants will learn how to collaboratively select and design various measures and methods that can be used with coalition members to determine how well their coalition is working. The presenter will share a framework developed from theory and practice that is useful to guide evaluation. The workshop will also share methods that can be used with coalition members to gather data for assets and needs assessments, to design and implement evaluation plans to assess process and outcomes for coalition initiatives, methods to engage in collaborative data analysis, and ways to share data and evaluation results with community coalitions and the larger community. Because of the short time available for this workshop, the presenter will not be able to go in depth on each topic, so each participant will receive a PDF e-workbook with workshop content, exercises, forms and templates, and a list of resources. This workshop will build evaluator competencies in the methodology, context, and interpersonal domains as defined by the American Evaluation Association.

Presenter:
- Dr. Susan M. Wolfe, CEO/Community Consultant at Susan Wolfe and Associates, LLC.

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations (30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 1a: 10:30 - 11:00am

1. Creating Safe Spaces for Lived Experiences

As of January 2024, more than 16,000 individuals in Harris County (TX) experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk, have received permanent housing or diversion services through Harris County's implementation of the Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP). Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR), are collaborating with Harris County to evaluate the program for continuous improvement and measure the impact on homelessness. The design phase focused on lifting the voices of those with lived experience, which in this case, are individuals facing severe housing instability. The project discussion will present our approach to gathering critical information from an extremely vulnerable population using trauma-informed and culturally responsive principles.

Presenters:
- Chelsea Whiting, Research Analyst at Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR)
- Ronald McCowan, Ph.D., Senior Researcher at Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR)

2. Engage, Evaluate, Evolve: Empowering Change through Stakeholder Participation in Evaluation Methods

This session explores two distinct initiatives by Girl Scouts organizations, GSTOP and GSNETX, aimed at fostering stakeholder involvement in evaluation processes. The focus is on empowering change through engaging Hispanic families and troop leaders and evaluating the master plan for camping properties. GSTOP: Engaging Hispanic Families for Inclusive Programming Girl Scouts of Texas Oklahoma Plains (GSTOP) embarked on understanding and addressing effective outreach and inclusion of girls and families from Hispanic households. The research delved into perceptions, barriers, and opportunities for Hispanic girls' participation in Girl Scouts through three focus groups involving mothers, troop leaders, and Hispanic parents. The session will present findings, including identified barriers and opportunities, providing a roadmap for inclusive programming. Key research questions addressed non-Girl Scout Hispanic perspectives, strategies to increase participation, and factors influencing enrollment decisions. GSNETX: Masterplan Evaluation through Stakeholder Feedback Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas (GSNETX) is developing an updated master plan for camp properties, recognizing the importance of stakeholder input. Utilizing stakeholder surveys and in-person focus groups across major communities, GSNETX aims to understand the desires and opinions of girls, caregivers, and volunteers. The presentation will highlight key findings, place of action based on the results and showcasing the impact of involving stakeholders (caregivers and girls) in the planning process.

Presenters:
- Claudy Jean Pierre, BS, Research and Evaluation Lead at Girl Scouts of Texas Oklahoma Plains
- Rhonda Williams, Ph.D.., Director of Impact & Evaluation for the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas (Dallas)

3. Evaluation of United Way of Greater Houston's Integrated Client Journey (ICJ)

The United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) established the Integrated Client Journey (ICJ) infrastructure to create a system that links services provided to individuals across multiple nonprofits in order to be able to maximize efficiencies in service delivery and improve the financial stability and conditions of Houston area residents. United Way's coaches (called "navigators") determine whether a client is "ready" for the ICJ program. If determined ready, navigators provide additional resources, services, and support for multiple needs and setting goals, while those who are not yet ready still receive services to meet basic/immediate needs without being fully encompassed in the ICJ with a Navigator. Using secondary data analyses, the Kinder Institute for Urban Research's role is to identify predictors of client success in the program, including how United Way's navigators determine clients' readiness to enroll in the ICJ program. Our findings will inform United Way's direction of resources and operation of the program.

Presenters:
- Brad Selsberg, Research Analyst at Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University
- Lee Williams, B.S.Ed., M.A., Ph.D., Research Analyst at Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations
(30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 1b: 11:10 - 11:40am

1. What if the whole team knows about the log frame? The need for "translation" of MEL materials to improve the evaluation processes within the organizations

Systematizing project information to explain the trajectory between the planned and the accomplished is easy when roles are well-defined. How aligned is the communication of the project teams? Throughout the presenter's MEL career, they have seen that management and MEL tools are not presented to the teams and we need to diminish this mismatch. We all know the efforts needed for a well-done fieldwork but everything can disappear without evidence. There is no magic solution, dialogues and knowledge diffusion are necessary. A world where program managers, MEL staff, and technical teams work together since the beginning is the perfect scenario for a more transparent design of the path between goals and activities. This is an exercise in disseminating the logical-causal relationship within the scope of the project, to which I am dedicating myself and seeking to be closer to people in writing proposals, discussing the theory of change, developing a logical framework, and preparing a MEL plan.
Presenter:

- Isabella Cunha, Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning Senior Specialist at TechnoServe Brazil

2. Assessing Stakeholder Perspectives on the Texas No Wrong Door System for Long-Term Services and Supports

The No Wrong Door (NWD) System is a statewide network to support the growing number of older Texans needing long-term services and support (LTSS), yet many older adults do not have access to such services. As an offshoot of the person-centered planning movement, the NWD System is premised on ensuring that no matter where individuals first interact with the system, they are guaranteed comprehensive information, assessment, and services. The primary goal of this work is to identify strategies to optimize coordination between and awareness of the entry points of this system. To derive understanding from experiences with the NWD System, we launched a statewide survey from September to December 2023. The survey will help the Health and Human Services Commission create a consumer-driven, cost-effective, and efficient system. Several methodological tools (e.g., telephone, mail, and Internet) were utilized for increased accuracy and response rate. Survey target audiences included people with disabilities, veterans, adults aged 50 and over, family caregivers, and LTSS providers. Ease of applying for services, the reasonability of time spent applying for services, and timeliness of services were among the lowest scoring statements. The top three concerns related to accessing LTSS included a confusing system, not knowing where to get help, and long wait times for services. Our results form the blueprint for facilitating access to care at the community and agency levels throughout Texas to ensure vulnerable populations obtain a high quality of life. Recommendations for the NWD system include effective community outreach and streamlined application processes for services and supports.
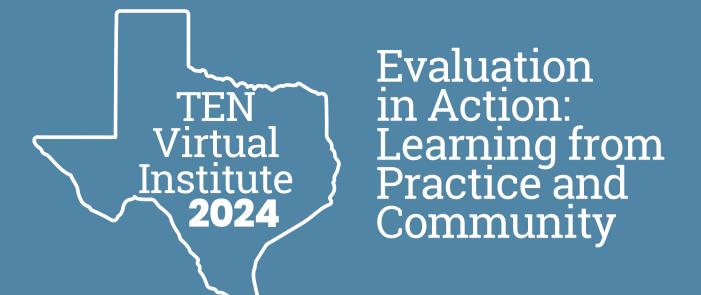
Presenter:
- Dr. Sara Murphy

3. Evaluation Methods to Support Scaling an Existing Program

This session will describe the evaluation methods used and lessons learned developing a new theory of action and recommendations for scaling an existing internal teacher certification program in a large east coast school district. Participants will leave the session with tips for conducting a document review, implementing a theory of action workshop, and creating high-level process maps. Participants will also learn how the evaluation team built connections across different areas of expertise in the district (e.g., teachers, human resources staff, executives in human resources and strategy) to guide the development of relevant and impactful recommendations. The presenter will discuss how the team adapted common evaluation methods to address these prospective questions about how a program could work, rather than the more typical retrospective evaluation questions about whether a program was effective. The presentation will emphasize the context within which the project was conducted, specifically, a nationwide teacher shortage, and how that impacted the evaluation design and the interpretation of the results. The presentation will also include samples of resulting work products, e.g., the original and new theories of action, the process map, and recommendations for system monitoring, so participants will have concrete examples they might integrate into their own work.

Presenter:
- Dr. Cathy Malerba, Executive Director of Research and Evaluation at Gibson Consulting Group

Lunch Virtual Meet-Up: 11:45 - 12:45pm

Join us for a virtual meet-up over lunch to meet and greet with Board Members from TEN.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with TEN Board Members in a fun and casual way! In this virtual lunch meet-up, you will get to chat with different Board Members from all over Texas in small breakout rooms. You will hear about their experiences with TEN and how they are creating a sense of community and belonging through their involvement. This is a great chance to network, learn, and share with some amazing people who are passionate about TEN! Board Members participating include Brita Blesi, Jessica Davison, Alberto Espinoza, Yueyue Fan, Jennifer Hughes, Jennifer Mineo and David Osman.

Professional Development Workshops & Panel Discussions (60 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 2: 1:00 – 2:00pm

1. Elevating Participation to Partnership

As issues of equity and power dynamics are raised within the field of evaluation, stakeholder involvement is becoming an increasingly important aspect of program evaluation. However, common stakeholder engagement efforts that frame the goal of stakeholder involvement as 'empowering' or 'giving voice' to marginalized or oppressed groups can be problematic. The language continues to situate power in the hands of the professional evaluator who 'invites' participation and makes decisions for stakeholders based on his/her/their interpretation of stakeholders' experiences, rather than recognizing already existing agency. Additionally, knowledge and models used by evaluators to navigate stakeholder involvement are often focused on ways to transform those individuals or organizations, which can be rooted in epistemological oppression. In an effort to rethink the evaluator/stakeholder relationship, BIPOC Arts Network and Fund (BANF), supported by Houston Endowment and the Ford Foundation, is partnering with Working Partner to support a unique community storyteller evaluation approach. The evaluation places the role of 'privileged knower' into the hands of the community storytellers (with Working Partner providing methodological and facilitation supports) and utilizes the qualitative Outcome Harvesting process to identify changes in arts organizations participating in the Houston Cultural Treasures Initiative. This panel presentation will discuss the evaluation process to date and invite discussion from the audience about ways to address bias and develop rigor in the evaluation to identify verifiable outcomes.

Presenters:
- Jessica Pugil, Principal & Founder at Working Partner LLC.
- Sixto Wagan, Project Director for the BIPOC Arts Network and Fund (BANF)

2. Tools Supporting Reflection on Partnership Health and Effectiveness for Collaborative Research in Education

Research-practice partnerships (RPP) in education and other forms of collaborative education research (CER) are increasingly viewed as an effective means of democratizing evidence use (Jackson, 2022), in that RPPs and CER seek to establish long-term, mutually collaborative relationships that forefront engagement with research, often with questions that are co-constructed by research- and practice-side colleagues based on practice-side needs (Farrell et.al, 2021). These forms of engaged research work to disrupt traditional narratives about what counts as evidence and who gets to make decisions about its collection and use (Ming & Goldenberg, 2021). Alongside this disruption of traditional ways of engaging in research comes a necessary shift in how the work and practices of RPPs and CER are measured and evaluated. In response to a need for a greater diversity of tools to help collaborative education research partnerships examine their contexts, outcomes, and partnership health in meaningful and impactful ways, the National Center for Research on Policy and Practice and the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships have collaborated with Erin Henrick, one of the developers of the five dimensions of RPP effectiveness framework (Henrick et. al, 2023), to develop a set of tools to assist evaluators in their efforts to engage RPPs and CER partnerships in learning together across research-, practice-, and community-side partners about where they are as a partnership and in what ways they would like to grow. This session will provide an overview of the recently released full suite of publicly-available tools (discussion activities, reflection prompts, mini meeting routines, and survey scales) and engage participants in structuring and applying the tools within one dimension using a detailed case study of an RPP.

Presenters:
- Kim Wright, Ph.D., Assistant Director of the National Network of Research-Practice Partnerships (NNRPP) housed within the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University
- Paula Arce-Trigatti, Ph.D., Director of the National Network of Research-Practice Partnerships (NNRPP) housed within the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations
(30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 2a: 1:00 - 1:30 pm

1. Bridging the Gap: Advancing Evaluation in a Philanthropic Ecosystem

In 2022, a group of Texas-based foundations assembled to fund Building the Bench, an initiative aimed at better understanding the landscape of evaluators in the state. Findings from the environmental scan show an increasing need for a diverse landscape of evaluators in Texas (Building the Bench in Texas Environment Scan, 2023). Formal evaluation development programs, such as fellowships, may be one solution to this demand. The Walton Family Foundation Strategy, Learning and Evaluation Department (WFF SLED) and Southern Methodist University's Center on Research and Evaluation (SMU CORE) have partnered to co-host the Advancing Evaluation in Philanthropy (AEP) Fellowship. The two-year program is geared towards offering early career evaluators exposure to both philanthropy and evaluation and building skills to help bridge these two settings. Specifically, the AEP fellowship provides opportunities for guided mentorship and networking, application of new and existing knowledge and skills through project work and sharing of knowledge gained through an individual capstone project. In this session, the audience will learn about the AEP Fellowship in detail and hear from two fellows about implementing evaluation practices in philanthropic spaces through two original projects—an evaluation of a regional after school program and a Capstone project focused on the use of standardized metrics for progress monitoring and measuring impact.

Presenters:
- Endaisia Love, BA, MEd, Advancing Evaluation in Philanthropy Fellow with Southern Methodist University Center on Research and Evaluation (SMU CORE) & Walton Family Foundation Strategy, Learning, and Evaluation Department (WFF SLED)
- Dr. Celeste Fernandez, Advancing Evaluation in Philanthropy Fellow with Southern Methodist University Center on Research and Evaluation (SMU CORE) & Walton Family Foundation Strategy, Learning, and Evaluation Department (WFF SLED)

2. Academic-Community Partnership: Collaborating on Evaluation Efforts in Rural Texas Communities

The Texas A&M School of Public Health (TAMU SPH) is currently working with five rural communities in Texas on the Well Being in Rural Communities project through the Hogg Foundation. The focus of the initiative is to support communities in advancing resilience and mental health through community capacity building efforts. Each of the five communities formed a community collaborative to address mental health. The specific role of the evaluation Learning Team (LT) at TAMU SPH is to provide support to increase the evaluation capacity of each of the community collaboratives. To achieve this goal, the Learning Team created training modules, interactive activities, and simple evaluation matrices to engage community members in the evaluation process. Initially, the LT had to focus on building trust and relationships with the community members. We also had to become familiar with the culture of the community, determine the needs and goals of the community, and establish a timeline that worked best for the community.

Presenter:
- Dr. Sara Mendez, Assistant Research Scientist at the Texas A&M School of Public Health (TAMU SPH)

3. Evaluating Community Access to and Use of Local Data in Bexar County, Texas

Community Information Now (CINow), a nonprofit local data intermediary based in San Antonio, will discuss the evaluation of an initiative to increase community access to and use of local data. The initiative consists of the online Bexar Data Dive platform (dive.cinow.info) and associated user supports, primarily trainings on both use of the platform and on data literacy in general. Grounded in a logic model, the mixed-methods approach uses a variety of instruments and approaches to better understand to what degree the community is accessing the data, access by different user types (e.g., entry-level vs. advanced users, and English- vs. monolingual Spanish-speaking users), platform ease of use, training effectiveness, user satisfaction with the tool and training, and how the data is eventually used and to what effect. The presentation will overview the evaluation design, early results, and a novel approach to use the evaluation for storytelling, and will invite participant input on ways to expand and improve the ongoing evaluation.

Presenter:
- Laura McKieran, Ph.D., Executive Director of Community Information Now (CINow) and an Associate Professor of Management, Policy and Community Health at the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in San Antonio

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations
(30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 2b: 1:40 – 2:10pm

1. Social work practice: The role of value education in eliminating racism

The United States is built on a legacy of racism and white supremacy that has consistently and significantly impacted the daily lives of millions of people (Grand Challenges for Social Work: Social Progress Powered by Science, 2020). Eliminating racism is one of the grand challenges of social work. Racism is still prevalent in our society today due to policies, bias, and discriminatory practices. While social work has played a significant role in promoting civil rights and equity, there's still a lot of work to be done both within the profession and for society. To address this, we propose to develop a model that will identify evidence and practice-based interventions aimed at ending racism and reducing the adverse outcomes of our history of racism. The main aim is to develop social work practice guidelines. Education is the key to the overall development of a nation. Value education plays a leading role in eliminating racism. In elementary and secondary education, value education is necessary. Eliminating racism is a complex and multifaceted challenge that social work continues to face in contemporary times.

Presenter:
- Mohit Prodhan is pursuing his doctoral degree at the School of Social Work at Stephen F. Austin State University

2. Assessments Audit: A Comprehensive Examination of School District Assessment Use

Student assessments are the primary tool that educators, policy makers, and evaluators use to evaluate student learning and adjust instruction to improve student learning. Because of this, assessment data can be a meaningful tool to improving systems, instruction, and student lives. However, the collection of assessment data comes at cost for school systems, educators, and students. Because the benefits of assessment use can be great and the costs can be high, it is important to periodically audit a district's assessment system. The Assessments Audit described in this presentation provides an inventory of the assessments system in one Texas district and specific recommendations for ways the district could reduce the burden of assessments on students and educators while retaining a powerful assessment system that can effectively guide teacher, school, and district-wide decision making. This interactive presentation will provide an overview of the study's guiding framework, data collection methods used, and analysis methods. In other words, we will describe how we identified how assessments were designed to be used and how they were used in practice. We will then describe the findings that came from this comprehensive review of the assessments system. There were ways in which the assessment system in district could be adjusted to create a more effective and more efficient system. We will describe these recommendations and the process by which recommendations were delivered. Finally, we will describe how findings and recommendations were used to drive changes in the district's assessment system.

Presenters:
- Dr. David Osman, Director of Research and Evaluation at Gibson Consulting Group
- Dr. Veronica Salgado Joyner, Executive Director of Research, Assessment, and Accountability at Garland ISD

3. Evaluator and Funder Reflections on Evaluating a Complex Voter Engagement Project

Human-centered design projects that consider community input and solutions can promote equity and innovative solutions to complex issues. However, these projects often involve multiple organizations, relationships, and continually changing timelines and strategies. This session will discuss the lessons learned from planning for and implementation of complicated evaluations that focus on learning from community engagement programming. Participants will learn about the challenges faced in evaluating a complex initiative (in this example, focused on voter engagement leading up to the 2023 election) and the strategies for mitigating those challenges. In this human-centered project, the funder engaged a design consultant to work with the community and non-profit partners in five voting deserts to implement neighborhood-based approaches to increase voter turnout. An evaluation consultant was engaged to document and learn from the implementation process and the feasibility of sustainability after the design phase. We are currently in year 2 of the project. Presenters will share lessons learned from the initiation of the project including tips for selecting and aligning partners and tips for contracting equitably on large and evolving projects. They will also share examples of how they navigated pain points throughout the first year of the project and adjustments that they are making in the final phase of the work.

Presenters:
- Sara Jones, Ph.D., Evaluation Officer at Houston Endowment
- Emily Drake, Partner at Learning for Action

Professional Development Workshops & Panel Discussions
(60 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 3: 2:15 – 3:15pm

1. Navigating the Complexities of Building Evaluation and Data Analysis Capacity at Nonprofit Organizations

In an increasingly data-driven world, nonprofit organizations are under growing pressure to not only implement impactful programs but also provide concrete evidence of their effectiveness. This panel discussion, co-presented with It's Time Texas and Unidos Contra la Diabetes, will dive into the challenges nonprofit evaluation and data professionals face in building evaluation and data management/analysis capacities. The session will explore the journey of nonprofit organizations as they evolve from not conducting any evaluation or data collection, to building basic evaluation and data collection capacities, and exploring how or when nonprofits are prepared to engage in more sophisticated evaluation and data methodologies and practices. We will discuss the hurdles these organizations encounter, including limited resources, skill gaps, and the pressure to meet the escalating expectations of various stakeholders. Our panelists, experts from the field of nonprofit management and evaluation, will share their insights and experiences, highlighting both successes and lessons learned. We will address key questions such as: How can nonprofits effectively manage stakeholder expectations while striving to enhance their data analysis capabilities? What strategies can be employed to balance the demands of rigorous evaluation with the realities of limited resources? How can partnerships and collaborations aid in overcoming these challenges? Through this panel, we aim to empower attendees with knowledge and strategies that can be applied in their own work, fostering a community of practice that supports continuous learning and improvement in the field of nonprofit evaluation.

Presenters:
- Alberto Espinoza, Knowledge and Learning Manager at PEAK Grantmaking
- Moses Arjona, Collective Impact Director of Unidos Contra La Diabetes

2. Investigating intersections of Evaluation and Human-Centered Design

In this professional development workshop presenters will explore with the participants how the Human Centered Design framework approaches research and possible intersections of interest to the evaluator community. We theorize that the Human Centered Design might be of interest as it embraces ambiguity and leans into methods that are customized to the context of problems, projects, processes, and organizations. After a brief description of the framework presenters will discuss approaches to problem framing and area opportunity funnels which are methods used to approach research problems in a design-forward way. The session will present a couple of methods that participants can explore and possibly apply into their own practice. Presenters will share how the use of methods brings a customized lens to their research provide opportunities to discuss participants insights and wonderings.

Presenters:
- Alain Mota, Human-Centered Design Researcher and Strategist at KIMOTA Design & Innovation
- Harrison Tassopoulos, Human-Centered Strategist at KIMOTA Design & Innovation
- Steven Kinder, Human-Centered designer and design entrepreneur at KIMOTA Design & Innovation, and Co-Founder of Good Coworking and Founder of Loftwall

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations
(30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 3a: 2:15 – 2:45 pm

1. Stakeholder Engagement from the Perspective of a Student/Emergent Evaluator

As an emerging evaluator who is completing a master's degree in Health Behavior and Health Education with a concentration in Statistics at The University of Texas at Austin, the presenter has learned about the essential role of evaluation in both research and practical application. In this session, she will discuss the importance of stakeholder engagement in evaluation as she has come to know through my experiences as well as challenges faced. Her session will focus on her experience in two projects and reflecting on these experiences, the presenter will highlight resource management as a significant challenge in her role as an emerging evaluator. This encompasses managing time, materials, extensive networks, as well as funding and considering how these resources are effectively utilized or potentially misdirected. Overall, attendees will takeaway the importance of gaining stakeholder perspectives and fostering active engagement.

Presenter:
- Andrea Arana is a masters candidate at the University of Texas at Austin

2. Evaluation with Partnership Research Principles: Coffee & Quality Case Study

The Kinder Institute for Urban Research and United Way of Greater Houston, in an effort to expand the data production and consumption capabilities of nonprofits in and around the greater Houston area, utilized partnership research practices to conduct an evaluation of the Angel Reach nonprofit. Angel Reach is one of United Way's funded partners providing a multitude of services, including supporting youth who are aging out of the foster care system. From June to November 2023, we used partnership research principles to better understand Angel Reach's clients across twelve focal life domains, including their status at entry and change over time. To research each of these areas, we used an array of quantitative techniques, including "basic" central tendency measures (e.g., mean) and percentages, in addition to more sophisticated analyses such as latent profile analysis and probability modeling. Our findings were two-tiered: First, we gained insight into particular features of Angel Reach's program; second, we learned lessons that can generalize across many nonprofits. Our findings and lessons learned highlight the promise of research-practice partnerships in the domain of nonprofit administration.

Presenters:
- Lee Williams, B.S.Ed., M.A., Ph.D., Research Analyst at Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University
- Katherine Perez, Ph.D., Research Analyst at Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University

3. Using the Monitor-Evaluate-Learning (MEL) Model in Program Evaluation for a Philanthropic Grant Awarded to a Catholic Congregation: Successes and Lessons Learned

A group of Catholic sisters were awarded a philanthropic grant to increase religious sisters' leadership to serve migrant and indigenous communities within the U.S. and Mexico. With the funding, a project was developed to form collaborations between religious sisters' efforts, congregations, and ministries to allow a more proactive, effective approach to serving targeted communities, especially in the healthcare, education, family services, and artisanal networks. The project is framed by three major components, (1) ministerial supportive requests through funding and/or student service-learning, (2) participation in virtual leadership training in which a university certificate can be earned, and (3) a project advisory board. Within the project, a program evaluation plan and its implementation are incorporated to monitor, evaluate, and learn from the created interventions. The Monitor-Evaluate-Learning (MEL) Model is an evaluation platform providing abilities to learn from practice within community. It poses successes and lessons learned in evaluation, especially with the involvement of various connections spanning the different sectors ranging from grant infrastructure, participants, and U.S. and Mexican communities. Overall, MEL fosters a systems-thinking approach that blends a nonlinear mode of social complexity and adaptability existing in dynamic organizations.

Presenters:
- Denise Peña Krohn, Ph.D.
- Ada A. González, Ph.D.

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations
(30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 3b: 2:55 - 3:25 pm

1. Texas ACE program

Texas ACE program's objectives are to improve student attendance, behavior, and academics while providing safe supplemental learning space for students and families who otherwise would not have such opportunities. The grant-funded program provides high quality supplemental enrichment activities that align with the regular academic program; programs are encouraged to deliver those activities in creative, hands-on, and exploratory ways. The samples included in this evaluation were nine schools representing 4 school districts in the Houston area. The districts represented were Aldine ISD, Clear Creek ISD, Fort Bend ISD, and Sheldon ISD. The present evaluation team of SLDS (Stat-Lab Data Services) used a mixed-method, utilization-focus approach that combines multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources from multiple reporters for triangulation, therefore significantly enhancing the validity and reliability of the evaluation (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2014). This evaluation will include interviews, observations, surveys, and other quantitative data provided by the school or district. Included in the school data were student attendance, behavioral incidences, and academic grades.

Presenters:
- Tonya Newton is currently pursuing her Doctorate from the Department of Education for Curriculum & Instruction at Texas Southern University
- LaShawn C. Tucker, LPC, CART, is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Counselor Education at Texas Southern University

2. Better Together: Building Local, Community-Wide Evaluation Capacity

The San Antonio Evaluator Pipeline (SAEP) project has two driving forces behind this project: 1) San Antonio does not have enough local evaluators for external evaluators to bid on RFPs nor fill in-house positions. 2) Increasing community-wide collaboration will facilitate knowledge sharing and those working in the evaluation system to be more effective and responsive in helping people enter and advance in the evaluation field. SAEP Project team has assembled a cross-sector roster of participants, including over 80 representatives from local education, independent school districts, nonprofits, for-profits, independent sole proprietors, and government agencies. Since the kickoff meeting March 1, 2023, the SAEP team has held lunch & learn sessions, distributed monthly newsletters, held working group meetings, and started two related sub-projects: Career and Skills Analysis and an Evaluation Community Landscape Analysis. Key informant interviews with professionals in the San Antonio nonprofit landscape have been conducted to better understand the key nonprofit organizations, the roles and responsibilities of "everyday evaluators," and potential professional development needs. Interview findings will be utilized to develop and administer a needs assessment survey to everyday evaluators in the San Antonio nonprofit sector. Key learnings from the key informant interviews will be presented.

Presenters:
- Dr. Kurt Steuck, Director of Evaluation and Research at Steuck & Associates LLC.
- Dr. Leigh Rauk, Senior Evaluation Associate with Collaborators Consulting Group (CCG)

3. Creative Connections: The Value and Potential of the Houston Cultural Districts

Throughout 2022, the seven Houston Cultural Districts undertook a collective visioning project, including an evaluation to better understand the collective quality of life and economic impact their Districts make on Houston. This evaluation proposes a framework for articulating value and potential of The Houston Cultural Districts, summarizes ecosystem needs that affect District operations and effectiveness, and identifies paths for continued evaluation as the Districts seek to monitor progress and understand their impact over time. This process was guided by the question "how are participants currently benefiting from Cultural District participation?", and incorporated a mixed methods approach including focus groups, a community survey, GIS analysis, analysis of public data and SMU DataArts Cultural Data Project, and an extensive review of existing research publications. The outputs of this project include a framework for articulating the intended outcomes and potential of the Houston Cultural Districts in the areas of Cultural Vibrancy, Community Cohesion, and Economic Development, a schema for understanding the seven Districts' unique value proposition and strengths, key findings from mixed-methods evaluation activities, and key lessons from a parallel planning and evaluation process.

Presenter:
- Jana Fredricks, CEO + Founder of Hatch Creative Strategy, and Chair of the Gulf Coast Evaluation Network

Professional Development Workshops & Panel Discussions
(60 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 4: 3:30 – 4:30pm

1. Evaluating Policy Campaigns and Community Organizing

Foundations are investing more in work to change policy and build grassroots power. A challenge for philanthropy and for nonprofits can be measuring this work and making the case that a nonprofit's activities contributed to outcomes. Policy change usually takes far longer than a single funding cycle, and the outcome is outside of the control of any nonprofit or coalition. This session is for evaluators who want to help nonprofits and philanthropy learn from their efforts to change policy, particularly in ways that build grassroots community power. The session will discuss evaluation and learning that centers equity and community participation. Several methods will be introduced that can be used to evaluate campaigns, including process tracing, an approach to within-case causal analysis used in political science and other social science disciplines. Participants will learn how to facilitate a campaign debrief with grassroots participants and nonprofit staff. After introducing principles for evaluating policy campaigns and organizing, the group will workshop how to evaluate a real-world case of a Texas policy campaign. This workshop does not require previous experience evaluating campaigns or organizing, and is appropriate for beginning, intermediate, or advanced evaluators.
Presenter:
- Dr. Lydia Bean, Founder and President of Equipa

2. Collaborating to Respond to HSI Contexts in STEM Education Evaluation

We assume the history of participation in STEM fields was built on a racist system in need of revision if minoritized people are to participate commensurate with US demographics. Much STEM programming and evaluation can center culturally responsive practices toward equitable outcomes for minoritized students. In this seminar, we share how we have learned and adapted to project contexts practicing culturally responsive evaluation and confronting issues of power, social justice, and inequities. Evaluators build trusting relationships with stakeholders, foreground values from the beginning, middle and end, include beneficiary voices, and manage power dynamics. We design surveys to measure as outlined in theories of change, integrate qualitative data to document lived experiences, and analyze data to expose inequities, reduce harm and strengthen culturally sustaining experiences for minoritized students. Workshop attendees are invited to small group discussions of vignettes we have designed to surface current challenges of culturally responsive evaluation.

Presenters:
- Elisabeth Johnson, Ed.D. of Liz Johnson Education Consulting (LJEC)
- Dr. Michelle Burd, Principal of Burd's Eye View

3. Baby Steps to Building a Measuring, Evaluating, and Learning Culture

Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative (HILSC) is a network of more than three dozen immigrant-serving legal services, social services, healthcare, advocacy and organizing entities. In 2022, HILSC embarked on a process to create a measuring, evaluating, and learning (MEL) framework for our network to better display the impacts of our collective work beyond quantitative data usually reported by providers. They identified several projects that involved several partners in our network as a starting point but were immediately stymied. There was a lack of understanding that number of people served does not demonstrate impact of the work. There is also the challenge that none of the partner organization has staffing capacity to engage in MEL work given the velocity of the work involving immigrants. MEL work was seen as the latest flavors that funders want to impose on already overloaded nonprofits. To begin the cultural change, HILSC began with training our own staff on the various prerequisite understanding of MEL work using the process of developing a theory of change (identifying the right problem, creating the vision of success, developing the inputs/activities to engage in and categorizing the outcomes to measure). The process of undergoing a strategic planning for the organization provided the opportunity to bring the theory of MEL into practice for staff, as well as highlighting the practical application of MEL as HILSC engage our partners in the process of developing the final strategic plan for the collaborative.

Presenters:
- Zenobia Lai, Executive Director of Houston Immigration Legal Services (HILSC)
- Thalia Flores Werner, Director of Strategic Learning at Houston Immigration Legal Services (HILSC)

Paper/Project & Student/Emerging Evaluator Presentations (30 Minute Concurrent Sessions) - Round 4a: 3:30 – 4:00pm

1. But what do teachers think? Centering teacher stories in a program evaluation of a district-mandated reading initiative through longitudinal focus groups

School district instructional leadership seeks to improve students' reading abilities and growth trajectories. As a result, districts across the US are engaging in the debate about "best practices" for teaching reading and adopting approaches described as "evidence-based" to improve student outcomes (Castles et al., 2018). This revision reflects a shift from a Balanced Literacy approach (Heydon et al., 2004) to instruction guided by what is called the Science of Reading (SOR) (Shanahan, 2020). Woulfin and Gabriel (2022) argued that "with this new wave of SOR advocacy and policy, policymakers, reformers, advocates, and educational leaders place pressure on teachers and other educators to rapidly change the content and pedagogy of their reading instruction" (p. 326).Using an ecological and mixed methods approach, we examined one district's multi-year effort to transform K-12 reading from balanced literacy to a science of reading approach. In this presentation, we will focus on how six longitudinal focus groups with more than forty K-12 ELA/R teachers enabled us to collect their stories about how the new reading initiative interacted with their instructional ecosystem, or the different layers of support (e.g., intellectual, practical, and material) that they needed to be able to transition to SOR-aligned reading instruction.

Presenters:
- Dr. Lisa McCulley, Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment at Resources for Learning (RFL)
- Dr. Judy Jennings, Senior Consultant at Resources for Learning (RFL)

2. Evaluating Mood with Every Step: Methods for Measuring Mood and Walking across Greater Houston

The Kinder Institute for Urban Research (KIUR) builds better cities and improves lives through data, research, engagement and action. Health is one of five areas of focus for the institute, which works in direct partnership with agencies and organizations that can use research, data and policy analysis in meaningful ways to implement solutions to critical challenges facing the nation's fifth-largest metro. Its research agenda is jointly developed with these partners. KIUR worked with a nonprofit, Fit Houston, to measure mood as impacted by walking. Fit Houston's mission is to inspire vibrant bodies, minds, and communities through physical activity. The organization's core objective is to promote health equity and support active, healthy lifestyles. Walking is a form of physical activity that is free, easy, low impact, and helps maintain good health. It reduces inflammation and can pay off greatly in preventing and controlling chronic disease. Fit Houston's #WALK30 health campaign reminds Houston's residents to walk thirty minutes a day for their health. Fit Houston facilitates walking groups that provide a safe and supportive environment for exercise and social interaction. Fit Houston wanted a way to start to measure the impact of physical activity (walking) on mental well-being. KIUR created a Qualtrics survey for Fit Houston's walking groups to measure mood states before and after a walk.
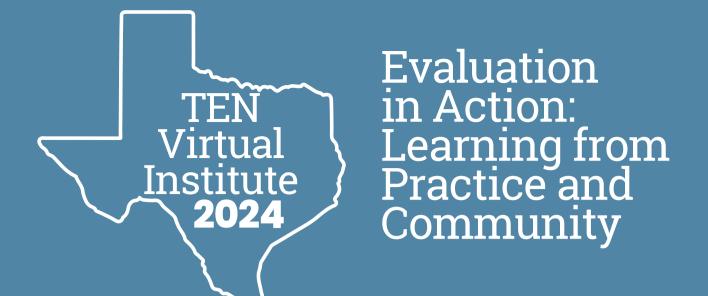
Presenters:
- Daniel Potter, Ph.D., Senior Director of Research at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University
- Lharissa Jacobs, Founder and Executive Director of Fit Houston

3. Evaluating the Evaluator: A critical Analysis of the "City Year" Educational Equity Program Evaluation: City Year 2019/2020

The growing interest in integrating social, emotional, and academic approaches to enhance the quality of education and student outcomes has become a top-priority objective for achieving excellence in various educational contexts. Since its inception in 1988, City Year has made a significant contribution to educational equity. The organization recruits diverse teams of young adults to serve as full-time AmeriCorps members in public schools across the United States. It primarily partners with high schools that have low graduation rates, as well as the middle and elementary schools that feed into them. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 3,000 City Year AmeriCorps members served in 350 public schools across 29 U.S. cities. This session presents a critique of the City Year Evaluation reports for 2018-2019.

Presenter:
- Sharfeddin Sherif is a Phd. student in Organizational Leadership in Education at University of Incarnate Word 2019-2024

TEN Virtual Institute 2024

Evaluation in Action: Learning from Practice and Community

Local Meet-Up: 5:30pm start

Following the Institute, join us for local meet-ups in cities across Texas including Austin, Dallas, Houston, Lubbock, Rio Grande Valley (McAllen) and San Antonio.

Don't miss the chance to connect with your fellow attendees at the Local Meet-Ups happening right after the Virtual Institute! Starting at 5:30pm CST, you can join a fun and friendly gathering in your city, hosted by some of the amazing people who support TEN, including current and past Board Members. This is a great opportunity to network, connect and re-connect with folks across your community! Find out more upon registration for the Institute.