The background of the top half of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. It features a central globe-like shape with various colors including teal, blue, and white. Overlaid on this are golden, ornate arches and patterns that resemble architectural details or traditional motifs. The overall effect is a complex, layered visual.

# TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

**Rob D. van den Berg**

**Cristina Magro**

**Marie-Hélène Adrien**

EDITORS



**IDEAS**

KNOWLEDGE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NETWORKING

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Van den Berg, Rob D., Cristina Magro and Marie-Hélène Adrien (eds.). 2021. *Transformational Evaluation for the Global Crises of Our Times*. Exeter, UK: IDEAS.

ISBN (paper): 978-1-9168982-0-2

ISBN (electronic): 978-1-9999329-9-2

Assistant editor: Zuzana Vozárová

Copy-editing: Ann Shildneck

Design: Nita Congress



## CHAPTER 10

# Towards an International Evaluation Academy as an Agent of Transformational Change

LINDA G. MORRA IMAS

**Abstract.** For decades, the value of evaluation professionalization has been debated. A prolific evaluation literature is now available. This chapter puts forward a transformational concept designed in part to promote evaluation professionalization: an international evaluation academy (IEAc). The 2019 International Development Evaluation Association Global Assembly, held in Prague, culminated in approval of a declaration that supported exploration of an IEAc initiative to act as a platform for innovation, creativity and collaboration in pursuit of evaluation professionalism and influence. This chapter summarizes the pros and cons of professionalization; examines responses to an international survey that confirm broad-based support for the IEAc concept, including a focus on professionalization and outlines what the IEAc is about and some ways it will address evaluation professionalization.

## Introduction

For several years, the debate on the status of the profession of evaluator has been a driving force in the community of evaluators and has fed controversies between partisans of the adoption of mechanisms and means of professionalization and defenders of the status quo (Jacob and Boisvert 2010).

This familiar-sounding quotation comes from Jacob and Boisvert's seminal synthesis on the professionalization of evaluation published in *Evaluation* in 2010. The article was published after the Canadian Evaluation Association launched its ground-breaking Credentialed Evaluator designation in 2009. More than a decade later, the arguments for and against evaluation professionalization outlined in the article remain current (table 10.1), yet articles and blogs debating the value of evaluation professionalization continue to abound (e.g. Gauthier 2019; Heider 2015; 2018; Morra Imas 2010; 2017; Picciotto 2011; Quesnel 2010; Schwandt 2017; UNEG 2016). In parallel, a broader case for evaluation transformation is being made in response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Ofir 2020; Patton 2020; Van den Berg, Magro and Mulder 2019). These global challenges raise broader questions about professionalization and call for holistic evaluation approaches that look for interconnections between the global and the local.

This more comprehensive agenda may explain why adoption of the Canadian Evaluation Association's credentialing process by other evaluation organizations has been limited. Similarly, the customized processes of professional development, involving self-assessment and self-reflection regarding competencies, backed up by voluntary peer review processes sponsored by the United Kingdom Evaluation Society and the European Evaluation Society, have not had much traction<sup>1</sup>. Evidently, evaluation organizations, even mid-sized ones such as the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), with 400 members, lack the resources to operate a credentialing process.

Although progress on professionalization has slowed since 2010, the visibility of evaluation increased when the United Nations declared 2015 the Year of Evaluation and approved regular tracking of the universally endorsed SDGs. In the same year, a global evaluation agenda (EvalAgenda) was endorsed. EvalAgenda visualized a world in which evaluation would be

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<sup>1</sup> The European Evaluation Society suspended its version of the Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review process in 2020.

**Table 10.1** Synthesis of Arguments on Evaluation Professionalization

Pros	Cons	Challenges
Strengthening the field and establishing some boundaries for the profession	Homogenizing evaluation and restricting diversity	Difficulty defining the specificities of the field of evaluation
Increasing evaluation training offerings	Reducing training offerings	Difficulty identifying and verifying the expertise and contribution of the evaluator
Enhancing and improving the status and prestige of evaluation	Restricting or blocking access to the profession	Need to create new structures or organizations
Facilitating selection of evaluators and improving quality of conducted evaluations	Turning evaluation in on itself	
Protecting the public		
Avoiding problematic or unethical behaviour		

Source: Jacob and Boisvert (2010).

an integral part of *all* government, civil society and private sector development efforts, and although only 20 evaluation associations were in existence in 2000, the number has since exploded. EvalPartners<sup>2</sup> has identified 145 active associations or networks, of which 103 are at the national level.

The International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) was created in 2003 with a mission 'to increase public awareness and globally validate evaluation and support voluntary organizations of professional evaluation (VOPEs) in contributing to good governance, effective decision-making and strengthening the role of civil society'. Its main activity has been to encourage and support organizational capacity building for evaluation organizations. Although the IOCE has been effective in this role, with about half of the countries in the world yet to be served by a national evaluation society, it seemingly still has a large job ahead.

<sup>2</sup> The IOCE and the United Nations formed EvalPartners, whose members are civil society organizations and VOPEs.

In 2015, IOCE launched a catalytic effort to advance the professionalization of evaluation. The initiative aimed to increase access to information on evaluation professionalization, provide a platform for an inclusive discussion on professionalization and facilitate cooperation on professionalization initiatives. Documents were collected and put online<sup>3</sup>, but discussion participation and general interest was low. In 2017, the IOCE attempted to revive the programme and formed the IOCE Professionalization Task Force, which met with no more success and concluded that it was too early to aim for a unified approach to professionalization. In line with the EvalA-genda, the focus shifted to supporting individual VOPEs and recognizing their diversity.

In another development, Julnes and Newcomer (2018) proposed sponsorship of a national evaluation institute to the American Evaluation Association. They envisioned it as a vehicle for supplying expert guidance on evaluation to governments, private and civil society organizations and other stakeholders, but the idea has had little take-up. In 2019, at its annual meeting, the association put together a group to discuss global core evaluation standards. Participants agreed on the concept of 60 per cent of evaluation standards being core standards, with the rest leaving room for cultural and organizational differences. Again, follow-up action has been limited.

In 2020, the Asian Pacific Evaluation Association sponsored an inter-regional initiative for the professionalization of evaluation. As part of this project, a survey was conducted of the requisite conditions for professionalization in six countries – India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan and Western Balkans. This involved, for each country, systematic examination of institutional mechanisms and systems for evaluation in the public sphere, the existence and role of professional associations of evaluators and facilities for education and training in the field. That the study used this framework in all six countries makes it particularly useful.

The survey findings were encouraging.

- All surveyed countries had evaluation associations, although they were active to varying degrees.
- Most had strong monitoring systems.
- An environment conducive to evaluations was gradually emerging in the surveyed countries, and the demand for evidence was growing.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ioce.net/professionalization>.

Nevertheless, the overall conclusion was that, in most countries, professionalization of evaluative function and practice, in terms of development of competency frameworks, educational programmes focused on evaluation and implemented national policies on evaluation, was not in evidence. For example, there are no full-fledged academic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) courses in any Indian university leading to a masters or doctoral degree. Sri Lanka has taken steps towards professionalization in having a strong monitoring system, offering a postgraduate diploma in M&E conducted by faculty of graduate studies at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and an approved national evaluation policy and strong evaluation society, but evaluation has not yet been adopted in the public sector. The Kyrgyz Republic is struggling to develop an evaluation culture, and capacities are low. The Philippines has a national evaluation policy but a weak M&E system with little demand and has no universal guidelines or competencies or specific M&E training. In the Balkan countries, use of evaluation is minimal, and M&E systems are weak, as are evaluation capacities. Kenya is a relatively bright spot with its active, new Evaluation Society of Kenya, and various universities and institutions provide M&E education and training, although its national M&E policy has been in draft form for longer than 10 years. In all, the study reinforced that there is a vast unmet need for evaluation professionalization.

Although the survey covered only six countries, recent reviews of M&E in Africa and Latin America (Gounou and Perez Yarahuan 2019) and in the small island developing states in the Caribbean and the Pacific (Baptiste and Iese 2019) echo the above findings: There is progress. For example, most Latin America governments formally recognize M&E activities. Since the 2010s, countries cooperating in the Twende Mbele programme – Benin, Uganda, South Africa – have made a significant effort to mainstream evaluations in the work of government. Each, for example, has a national evaluation policy. Nevertheless, in most African countries, monitoring is strong, but evaluation systems and processes are often missing or misunderstood for their role in the SDGs. In Latin America, in the past 20 years, capacities have been built, information on public programmes has been gathered, programme logic models have been developed and evaluations have been delivered, but progress has not been homogeneous in terms of consistency and quality across countries, sectors and time. The use of evidence to increase the effectiveness of programmes and policies is weak, and the authors note that progress is politically fragile, citing the case in Mexico of the conditional cash transfer programme, PROSPERA, a heavily evaluated programme that was cancelled despite numerous evaluations showing positive results.



Baptiste and Iese, discussing evaluation in the Caribbean and in Pacific small island developing states, indicate that the first challenges that evaluators working in the two regions face is the scarcity of M&E systems at the project level and nationally. They note the challenge of the limited in-country technical capacity of regional personnel to conduct evaluations.

In all, these studies confirm the conclusion of the Asian Pacific Evaluation Association study: there has been considerable progress, and bright spots along the way, but we are far from evaluation professionalization.

## The Prague Declaration

An impetus for the concept of an international evaluation academy (IEAc) was the gathering of evaluators, commissioners, parliamentarians and other evaluation users at the IDEAS Global Assembly, held jointly with the Third International Conference on Evaluating for Environment and Development in the Czech Republic from 30 September to 4 October 2019. At a workshop preceding the conference (Morra Imas 2019) and in conference presentations, the concept of an IEAc was explored. The conference event culminated in approval of the Prague Declaration, which among other things, supported development of an IEAc<sup>4</sup>, as discussed in the last chapter of this volume. As a follow-up to this historic declaration, a note was put forward that broadly outlined preliminary design ideas for an IEAc, taking into account the constructive deliberations that took place during a Global Assembly workshop and a parallel session informed by a concept paper (Morra Imas 2019).

The Prague Declaration expressed strong support for the social transformations needed to help implement the SDGs through participatory evaluation approaches that respect human rights, promote gender equality and live up to the 'leave no one behind' mission of the SDGs. It highlighted the need for evaluators to address the existential threats of climate change and other 'problems without passport' (Annan 2009). Global Assembly participants also concluded that, to live up to its potential in a world in which no individual, no community and no country exists in isolation, evaluation must be transformed through partnerships grounded in mutual trust, shared visions, ethical codes and mutually agreed professional standards. In this context, the declaration endorsed the proposed development of an IEAc committed to advancing professionalization; promoting interactions

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<sup>4</sup> See No. 6 in <https://tinyurl.com/bcm294k7>.

between science, research and evaluation; enriching the evaluation enterprise and intensifying efforts to build evaluation capacities at all levels.

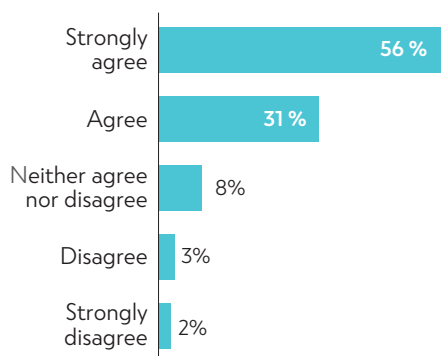
## Beyond the Prague Declaration

After the Prague Declaration was issued, questions remained as to the extent of practitioners' demand for an IEAc. This question was highly pertinent given the IOCE's failure to encourage debate and initiate action in support of professionalization. The broader concept of an IEAc along the lines sketched above was tested using a five-question survey that IDEAS sponsored in February 2020. It was sent to IDEAS members and other Global Assembly on Evaluation for Transformative Change and Third International Conference on Evaluating for Environment and Development attendees, as well as International Program for Development Evaluation Training listserv, Facebook and LinkedIn members and IDEAS LinkedIn members, going to an estimated 3,500 individuals. Responses were received from 458 individuals for an approximately 13 per cent response rate<sup>5</sup>.

Overall, the survey disclosed strong support for the concept, with approximately 87 per cent of 454 respondents agreeing (31 per cent) or strongly agreeing (56 per cent) that an IEAc should be set up to complement the work of associations (figure 10.1) and only approximately 6 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Extensive comments – about half of the respondents wrote comments – and offers of assistance helped in further planning and designing an IEAc.

Another of the survey questions asked about what functions an IEAc should have if it were set up: support for evaluation professionalism initiatives;

**Figure 10.1** Support for an International Evaluation Academy



Note:  $n = 452$ .

<sup>5</sup> The full report on the survey can be found on the IDEAS website: [www.ideas-global.org](http://www.ideas-global.org) (10March2020 IEAc IDEAS Survey Final Summary Report, <https://tinyurl.com/yjnm39nu>).

harmonization of evaluation principles, guidelines and norms across countries and regions; mentoring and other professional development support activities; recognition of evaluation excellence and distinctive contributions to the discipline; promotion of multidisciplinary evaluation research, approaches and methods, including physical and natural sciences; and other (to be specified). Respondents were to indicate which functions they would support.

Most of the 451 respondents supported each listed function. The most highly supported functions were support for evaluation professionalism initiatives (76 per cent of respondents indicating it should be included) and harmonization of evaluation principles, guidelines and norms across countries and regions and support activities (73 per cent of respondents agreeing). Responses to the mentoring and advocacy roles were also strong. The lowest support (52 per cent of respondents) was for promotion of multidisciplinary evaluation research, approaches and methods.

## A Strategic Challenge

Even with the survey findings showing strong support for an IEAc and the function of supporting evaluation professionalization within, some have still questioned the need for another potentially fragile evaluation organization further splitting funding for evaluation and possibly resulting in duplication of efforts. As discussed, IOCE has its hands full with building the capacity of VOPEs, and it does not provide an international voice on professionalization.

Also for consideration is IDEAS. Formed in 2002, IDEAS was conceived to help build an international community of development evaluators, and like most other evaluation societies, networks and associations, it has its own strategic priorities and agenda. IDEAS, again like evaluation organizations generally, has been underfunded and stretched to meet its own mandates, strategic objectives and workplans. Evaluation organizations are challenged in responding to national, regional or thematic connectivity needs. They have not been able to gather the resources needed to accelerate evaluation professionalization. They have only begun to focus on promoting systemic changes in the enabling environment.

Through its focus, global breadth of expertise, independence and stature, the proposed academy would support and complement the work of evaluation societies, networks and associations and partner closely with them. Its mandate would be to promote evaluation transformation, influence and professionalization. Its goal would be, among other things, to accelerate evaluation professionalization internationally. Although the goal

of evaluation is to create and disseminate knowledge for the public good, it cannot do so if it lacks influence.

Although evaluation has unique potential as a multi-discipline, a bridge across disciplines and a trans-discipline, it lacks the status, prestige and autonomy that other professions enjoy; it is not yet even listed in the classification of occupations that the governments of the world have adopted (ILO 2010). To climb towards the higher rungs of the occupation ladder, evaluation must overcome the following hurdles.

- High-quality evaluation education and training is scarce; evaluation has yet to be embraced as a mainstream academic discipline in most universities.
- Progress towards universal agreement on core (even using the 60 per cent rule already finding conceptual acceptance) guiding principles, ethical guidelines and competencies must be accelerated.
- The quality of evaluation work is highly variable, so commissioners frequently rely on other knowledge occupations to meet their needs.
- Most evaluation associations are too small to have a viable credentialing system.
- Young and emerging evaluators (YEEs) are not receiving the support they need to expand their evaluation knowledge and sharpen their skills.

To meet these challenges, the IEAc will undertake activities aimed at, for example, helping generate a larger supply of competent evaluators through targeted university advocacy and high-quality training programmes; securing a global consensus on core evaluator competencies through formal and mutual recognition; delivering brokering services to help commissioners identify competent evaluation practitioners; assisting evaluation associations with credentialing and increasing access to mentoring, peer reviews and tailor-made capacity-building initiatives aimed at YEEs.

As an academy that prioritizes evaluation transformation, it is imperative that the professionalization strand not be equated solely with credentialing. A primary line of effort for professionalization is identifying what the transformational evaluator looks like. How does that evaluator look and act differently from the traditional evaluator? What skill sets are implied? Should transformational evaluators seek to protect nature and advance human rights and responsibilities and have the skills and requirements to

do so? Should they aim for inclusiveness in evaluations by identifying and redressing the asymmetry of power relations embedded in evaluation practice? Should they commit to understanding and overcoming the drivers of violence and conflict, especially in evaluations of fragile countries and communities? These are the types of questions it is also important to address under professionalization in the transformation context. If there are to be transformational evaluations, we must have transformational evaluators.

## The Enabling Environment

The sociology of professions demonstrates that finding a place in the sun in the professional arena is a highly competitive venture (Abbott 1988). Globally, all evaluation associations and networks have a combined membership of about 52,000 (and this includes double counting of members who belong to more than one association, often regional and national). This membership is scattered over about 140 associations, most of which by necessity are focused on national issues only. IDEAS is the only association with a global perspective, being founded to address problems without passports.

Total membership in evaluation associations is about one-fourth the membership of the Institute of Internal Auditors (200,000 members). Evaluation, still seen as the new kid on the block, is marginalized. The wider public is poorly informed about what evaluation stands for. Although some governments are adopting evaluation as a standard requirement – and although parliamentarians are increasingly drawn to evaluation – unlike accounting and auditing, evaluation is not close to being universally viewed as a standard statutory requirement for all interventions in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Other disciplines (e.g. auditing, management consultancy, economics, econometrics, data science) encroach on the evaluation market. Some produce excellent evaluation work, and their contributions should be recognized, but as Dahler-Larsen (2013) has indicated, value-free social scientists who use the evaluation label to secure gainful employment should be challenged; evaluation is a vocation, and evaluations are public goods.

To protect and promote the evaluation brand, an IEAc would engage in public education and advocacy activities. It would help professionalize evaluation, fill the public information gap about evaluation and encourage routine use of independent evaluation for all social interventions across sectors and borders. Thus, it would be particularly active on the demand side of the evaluation profession.

## Filling a Gap in the Global Evaluation Architecture

The challenge that the bracing vision of EvalAgenda implies is three-fold: the evaluation enterprise is far too small and fragmented to rise to current social and environmental challenges, most countries are not very far along the road to professionalization and the enabling environment is not supportive of evaluation. An IEAc would recognize and address these strategic priorities. To help address the crises of a troubled, interconnected world, such as climate change, biodiversity extinction and other problems without passport, the academy would have a global reach, and thematic networks would operate across borders. At the same time, it would be firmly grounded in local communities and civil society. Regional, national and local chapters would be sponsored and supported.

Thus, an academy would help evaluation become more 'international in the sense of being at the same time more Indigenous, more global and more trans-national' (Chelimsky and Shadish 1997). So that this process unfolds effectively, the academy would encourage knowledge communities to break out of their comfortable disciplinary silos; reach out to allied disciplines and close the gap between evaluation, social science theory, behavioural research and other knowledge occupations.

An example of a specific gap in the global evaluation architecture was recently provided in a personal communication, with support for an IEAc to address it. A blog posed the following question: Have you been looking for online evaluation courses but don't know where to start? Mikkolainen (2018) researched online courses and found many, but generally, they were costly, offered no guarantee of quality, did not generate a credible certificate and were often episodic or one-shot efforts. She therefore saw a role for an academy that would provide expert reviews and deliver quality assurance certificates to evaluation training courses.

## Mission, Vision, Values and Guiding Principles

IEAc is being incorporated as a charitable organization in the United Kingdom. At this incipient stage, its focus has been on reaching a broad-based consensus about its mission, vision, values and guiding principles.

- *Mission.* The academy would act as a platform for innovation, creativity and collaboration in pursuit of evaluation's transformative impact, influence and professionalization.
- *Vision.* A world in which government, business and civil society are accountable, learn from evaluation and work together towards a healthy planet and societies that leave no one behind.
- *Values.* The academy would undertake to be self-reflective, open, respectful and honest in all its activities; strive for justice, diversity and tolerance and use the mnemonic ICCCI (integrity, compassion, courage, competence, inclusivity) to help keep its key values close.
- *Guiding Principles.* The academy would be responsive to the urgency of all the systemic changes needed to address the global crises endangering humanity and the health of the planet. It would seek to protect nature and advance human rights and responsibilities. It would respect the dignity and privacy of all evaluation stakeholders. It would aim for inclusiveness, in part by identifying and redressing the asymmetry of power relations embedded in evaluation practice. It would promote equity, gender equality, minorities and Indigenous peoples. It would commit to understanding and overcoming the drivers of violence and conflict, especially in fragile countries and communities. It would engage in transformational evaluations that make a difference. It would respect the subsidiarity principle in its work.

## Organization

The IEAc is an inclusive, ambitious and, above all, activist venture existing primarily to identify, encourage and support evaluation initiatives geared to transformational change. It is a three-tier corporate organization consisting of a three-member interim organizing committee and a 14-member interim board of trustees that set policy, determine business priorities and oversee all academy activities; a 50-member council that manages programmes and projects in support of the IEAc's thematic directions and fellows who perform the work of the academy through projects responding to council-led, board-approved programmes. It is supported by a small secretariat.

The core assets of the academy are its fellows – and the relationships and partnerships that it will nurture with academia, societies, associations and networks. Fellows will include eminent evaluation thinkers, highly experienced evaluators, mid-career practitioners and YEEs who would be a

special target group. Fellows will be entitled to include the academy designation on their business cards and correspondence.

Individuals can apply for fellowships on the academy website (soon to go live), and a fellowship committee of the board will review applications and admit qualified applicants. Consistent with the academy's value of inclusivity and its rejection of elitism, the only criteria for fellows to be admitted to the academy are significant involvement in evaluation and related activities such as research, education, training, practice and management; commitment to academy purposes and values and willingness and ability to volunteer time and contribute to academy goals.

### Initial Thematic Directions

The board has set the following initial thematic directions:

- *Evaluation research*: research on evaluation governance, management, models, methods and practices; science-based evaluation initiatives (e.g. complexity, systems thinking, mapping)
- *Evaluation advocacy*: promotion of sound evaluation policies, engagement with civil society groups, encouragement of corporate social responsibility-oriented evaluation
- *Evaluation education*: promotion of high-quality tertiary evaluation education in universities worldwide, especially in the Global South
- *Evaluation training*: incubation of innovative training projects focused on new evaluation frontiers, information technology, artificial intelligence, big data
- *Evaluation professionalization*: mutual recognition of guiding principles, professional ethics, competency frameworks, mentoring and professional development, support to YEEs' initiatives, prizes and awards
- *Transformational evaluation*: promotion of evaluations addressing transformational change, socially and environmentally sustainable development, Blue Marble evaluations
- *Evaluators without borders*: promotion of international evaluation exchanges, contributions to effective communications across evaluation cultures, amplification of Indigenous evaluation voices
- *Expert evaluation advice*: establishment of independent commissions, workshops, roundtables and expert meetings tasked with evaluation of critically important public policies and programmes; provision of independent, objective evaluation advice to improve



the validity, quality and social utility of evaluations in the public, private and voluntary sectors

The IEAc council is proposing and defining programmes for these thematic areas and asking the board for approval. The programmes will then direct all academy interventions (e.g. projects, events, commissions, transformational evaluations). Based on experience, some of these will be merged and others dropped or added. For example, evaluation education, training and professionalization might be merged into a single evaluation professionalization working group.

## Business Model

Learned societies and professional academies can take many forms. Active engagement with a wide range of stakeholders will be required to design and fine tune the right organizational model and to design the operating procedures, but under any conceivable scenario, the energy and ideals of fellows will lie at the core of the initiative, and it is envisaged that the academy will evolve organically in response to fellows' aspirations and their local needs. Numerous iterations and course corrections are likely before the organization takes final shape. This is only the start of a consultative process.

To further its value of inclusivity, the academy will not rely on fellowship fees to sustain its work. Funding will be secured mainly through public and private donations for targeted initiatives and core academy expenses. Some funds could be raised from brokering and quality assurance fees. Costs also will be contained through fellows' contributions of their time (e.g. minimum of 10 days a year) and smart use of information and communications technologies.

The academy proposes to sponsor and oversee evaluations geared to transformational change and to set up independent commissions, workshops, roundtables and expert meetings tasked with evaluation of critically important public policies and programmes. Just like other academies, the IEAc will deliver remunerated expert evaluation services. Given its commitment to the *subsidiarity* principle in all its work<sup>6</sup>, the academy will not

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<sup>6</sup> Subsidiarity is a principle of social organization that holds that social and political issues should be addressed at the most immediate (or local) level that is consistent with their resolution. It is a general principle of European Union law (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarity>).

compete with individual practitioners and private consulting firms that cater to the growing demand for *user-directed* evaluation services controlled by evaluation commissioners. It will steer clear of fee-dependent evaluations funded by decision makers.

This leaves wide scope for arm's-length funding from foundations, private individuals and the like for the provision of independent *evaluator-directed* activities. Such activities have generally gone by the wayside as user-directed evaluations have come to dominate the evaluation scene. In engaging in such activities, the academy may seek to collaborate with scientific academies, evaluation associations and societies.

The academy has secured funding for a small grant programme to support council members' and fellows' creative and path-breaking initiatives. Specifically, the small grants programme will make small (\$10,000 or less) financial contributions to volunteer-driven activities that hold promise for upscaling in line with board-approved strategies. Such grants would facilitate design of projects and events geared to transformational change and to the design, incubation and implementation of activities that support academy goals and priorities towards fulfilment of its charitable objects.

For example, grant requests would be entertained for fellows' preparatory work required for eliciting and organizing independent commissions, workshops, roundtables and expert meetings; pilot interventions in new and untested activity domains and catalytic work that may lay the foundation for innovative evaluation education, training and professionalization programmes and advocacy campaigns.

Grants might also facilitate advanced policy research work and sponsorship of high-quality academy publications. Grant applications will be subject to a peer review process managed by council members before submission to the Board Operations Committee (or a subcommittee) for approval. Proposed grant activities will be aligned with the thematic strategies of the academy and its values and principles. Due diligence processes will be put in place before the small grants programme is formally launched.

## Conclusion

The IEAc has been proposed in part to accelerate evaluation professionalization, increase evaluation influence and transform evaluation practice. A brief survey that IDEAS conducted on the concept of the academy found strong support for it and a focus, among other things, on professionalization. Although the partnership process is just underway, the mission,

strategy, guiding principles, values, organization, thematic strategies and business model of the proposed academy have been sketched out. The strategies include a strong focus on evaluation professionalization. The academy has a working board and a large, active council that is translating the thematic strategy into programmes. Incorporation as a charitable organization is well underway, and its website will soon be live and ready to take fellowship applications. It has a strong mandate and an opportunity to transform evaluation professionalization.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. It has been facilitated by other crises as climate change, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation, and increased inequity and inequality. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change call for transformational change of our societies, our economies and our interaction with the environment. Evaluation is tasked to bring rigorous evidence to support transformation at all levels, from local to global. This book explores how the future of the evaluation profession can take shape in 18 chapters from authors from all over the world, from North and South, East and West, and from Indigenous and Decolonized voices to integrative perspectives for a truly sustainable future. It builds on what was discussed at the IDEAS Global Assembly in October 2019 in Prague and follows through by opening trajectories towards supporting transformation aimed at solving the global crises of our times.

*By combining practical experiences with perspectives drawn from new initiatives, this book offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change on the global stage.*

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*Across continents, educational systems, and historical complexities, this book builds up the language we all should speak about our field. A mandatory read for all young evaluators.*

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*After reading these chapters you will have a sharper look at what is relevant when managing or doing an evaluation, and you will notice that 'business as usual' will no longer be an option.*

Janett Salvador, Co-founder of ACEVAL, Former Treasurer of ReLAC

*This book offers original, visionary discourse and critical perspectives on the challenges evaluation is facing in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.*

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Published by: IDEAS, 2021  
ISBN (paper): 978-1-9168982-0-2  
ISBN (electronic): 978-1-9999329-9-2

