

RESPONSES TO SAMEA BOARD QUESTIONS: JERUSHAH RANGASAMI

Fanie Cloete

What they would suggest SAMEA do more to fulfil its mission to promote M&E in SA? Ie what concrete projects or new or changed activities should SAMEA engage in to achieve its strategic goals better.

I feel very strongly that some effort needs to go into establishing a professional association with registration and accreditation, so that evaluators have to be registered professionals to practice. This will help to ensure that M&E activities that are undertaken are of a high quality (which will also help with the “reputation” of M&E out there) and that those who are conducting such activities have been made aware of appropriate conduct and evaluation standards that should be upheld.

I also think that we should implement a regular seminar series or TED lectures or something similar that is for ongoing interactive professional development. This should be a fairly structured programme that caters for people at various stages of their M&E careers.

Finally, some focused networking activities would be useful – these should be regional and fairly structured, and a coordinator should be appointed to run these.

Such coordinated activities will require more funding, which indicates the need for a clear fundraising strategy.

Benita Williams

1. How much time per week you anticipate spending on board activities? Is your work context supportive of this if this should happen during work time?

I would be able to commit to about a day or two a month. I would prefer to have a set role, plan my SAMEA time upfront and then spend that dedicated time on board activities, rather than conducting ad hoc activities. If I plan my time in advance and schedule things into my diary, I am able to meet those commitments, even if they are during the day. As I run my own company, I don't really have “work time” as such. I work when things need to be done!

2. If a fellow board member consistently misses board meetings and does not deliver on commitments, what would you suggest to solve the problem?

The board charter should state what the repercussions are for board members not meeting obligations. Usually, board members set out the terms together and they are automatically “fired” if they do not meet the requirements that they commit to. I also think that having at least two people per portfolio is good as the one can encourage and put pressure on the other member of that mini-team, rather than this responsibility always falling on the chair.

Raymond Basson

1. How do you envisage evaluation field building may happen to expand evaluation as field in SA?

There needs to be further awareness building campaigns which are targeted to ensure that we are reaching the desired audiences. This will require further PR, much of which can be arranged at no cost. Using existing networks (eg Sangonet, SANGOCO, SARIMA) is another way to get targeted messages out.

2. Do you think evaluators in SA should be encouraged to reflect on their practice to formulate an indigenous conception of evaluation best suited to this country and thereby add to evaluation thinking internationally?

Absolutely. I think that some focused forum time during the evaluation conference and possible sector-specific reflection sessions throughout the year would be hugely beneficial in this regard. In addition, SAMEA should make the best use of South African delegates who are attending international evaluation conferences. As a delegate to AEA last year, I tried to contact some colleagues to see if there were any particular African or South African evaluation issues that I could raise and whether I could maximise my time there by representing certain of our causes. The response was very limited and I felt like I could have and should have been doing more for the field in our country while I was there. With some additional thought from the Board, other strategies could also be identified.

3. If these are important, how may SAMEA best promote both processes?

See above.

Mark Abrahams

What is it that you can bring to the Board, given all the desires, demands, and 'dreams' of a bigger, better and more 'effective and efficient' SAMEA

A fresh and innovative approach to evaluation and a passion for the use of technology in evaluation. I am also a strategic macro-thinker and have a passion for and natural strength in network building. I will also bring bucket loads of energy!

Errol Goetsch

What are the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing M&E practitioners in South Africa, and given each of these, how can or will SAMEA respond?

I will not be able to do this question justice in a few lines, but I list some of my thoughts:

Strengths: An exciting and evolving field, a growing awareness of the need for M&E, an existing network (SAMEA) to build upon.

Weaknesses: A lack of clear frameworks, not enough focus on evaluation standards, limited opportunity for accredited training and professional development, limited opportunity for sharing and learning from each other, a lack of peer review and “quality control” in the field, a lack of understanding of the real costs and timeframes for evaluation activities, competition amongst each other rather than collaboration

Opportunities: Technology for M&E, the development of a South African or African journal where we can start to publish and share with each other, getting M&E embedded in the corporate giving space, social entrepreneurship models(which need to be evaluated and learnings shared)

Threats: many researchers or development practitioners (or even project managers) conducting “evaluations” without really knowing what they are doing, what evaluation standards and methodologies are, what best practices to follow etc, a focus on monitoring rather than evaluation, international donors exiting South Africa which is going to reduce development funds in the country which will reduce M&E spend accordingly, government paying huge salaries for M&E staff which limits the pool of independent evaluators

There are various strategies to address these issues and these would be best developed collaboratively in a strategic planning session.

Candice Morkel

What are your thoughts on the current direction being taken in public sector M&E (as driven primarily by the National Dept of PME), and how can/should SAMEA add value to this? What is your opinion around how to maintain the integrity and professionalism of the discipline amongst practitioners and service providers, without stifling its growth and expansion? What role should SAMEA play in this regard (if any?).

As mentioned above, I believe that we need to treat evaluation as a profession, by providing certification based on members meeting certain criteria and then mandatory ongoing professional development as it is such a rapidly evolving and growing field. The public sector M&E, in my opinion, is still largely focused on monitoring, which is a good first step; however, they soon need to be promoting evaluation and driving impact evaluations so that we have a real chance at assisting development interventions to be effective. In addition, I think that it would be beneficial for the department to “endorse” or promote a few good practice frameworks. A lot of M&E that is happening is ad hoc and lacks any underlying theory.

Nomsa Dube

1. It is evidently clear that there is a need for M&E to be recognised as a distinct profession. Is it possible for SAMEA to initiate a certification system similar to the one in the project management field where there are PMPs and the Six Sigma belt system? If so what strategies would you employ to put such systems in place?

I think that any certification system should be straightforward and use best practices from other professions (such as law, accountancy, architecture). We would need to do further research into what is the most appropriate for our field.

2. Any plans or suggestions to expand SAMEA our geographical coverage and also include professionals from other African countries outside South Africa?

I think that expanding our reach into other African countries is vital. SAMEA could consider country chapters (each with their own coordinator) and should definitely have a searchable database of those interested in the field or able to provide services from other countries, as well as service providers who can work in these countries. We could also structure a programme for SA companies and M&E units to offer internships/fellowships for African colleagues to come and learn from us on the ground (and vice versa).

Victor Madziakapita

What strategies will they bring to the Board for fund raising so that the Board can be able to organize activities that benefit the members without charging anything to the members?

Firstly, I do not think that it is necessary to make everything free. If activities are well coordinated and valuable to members, I believe that they will pay for them.

However, SAMEA can subsidise these through charging professional fees for certification and ongoing professional development (as other professional bodies do) and by developing and implementing an active fundraising campaign. I have extensive experience with fundraising and will be able to offer some further ideas in this regard.