



21 October 2015

RE: SAMEA 2015 5TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE – EMERGING EVALUATOR FEEDBACK

SAMEA Board members, co-hosts, sponsors and partners

I deem it a privilege and honour to have been selected from hundreds of emerging evaluator applicants and recognise this to be a rare and promising opportunity. I consider this as a building block in my mission to arrive at my destination of being an “Evaluator”.

1. Pre Conference Workshops:

1.1 Theory of Change Capacity Building

I considered this to be a very informative and educating workshop. Although I had a basic understanding of the TOC process, this workshop brought to light new methodology and practices. With that being said, the workshop could've been pitched at a slightly higher level than what it was presented. The group interaction & participation allowed by the facilitator created an opportunity for skills & knowledge transfer between attendees. Relationships and networks were built both on a national and international level and I will continue to nurture these relationships.

1.2 Innovations In Evaluation

At this workshop, there was a diverse group of attendees from all spheres of government, private consultancies, both locally and abroad. This gave me a broad spectrum of evaluations in general. As an emerging evaluator and not being exposed to evaluations, this opened up my mind as to what an evaluation is, as well as the creative methods of conducting an evaluation. The facilitator, Ms. Patricia Rogers made me realise that M&E is an ever developing and evolving discipline. Innovation is not something that cannot be taught, it's something we apply in our daily lives, consciously or unconsciously. Through this workshop I also learnt that it's not always possible or practical to use the innovative methods available due to capacity & budget constraints amongst others. However, what I took away from this workshop is that a good evaluator must use intuition, experience and innovation when conducting an evaluation.

1.3 An Introduction To Randomised Impact Evaluations

Although brief, in this half day workshop I learnt new terminology and terms. The presenter alerted me to the fact that not all evaluations always have a true impact on a programme, project or people. The media paints a “nice” picture of a programme, however did the programme really change people’s lives for the good.

2. Conference and Plenary sessions

The various sessions by the respective experts and role players in the M&E field gave an overall and global perspective of where M&E is currently and where it is heading. This also gave delegates an opportunity to deliberate and voice their opinions. In the Emerging Evaluators plenary sessions I realised that in my current organisation, M&E are years behind. One of the presenters shared his ideas and philosophy on how to let M&E land successfully in one’s organisation and make management understand the value M&E adds to an organisation. I now have a view of where my organisation should be heading when it comes to M&E.

3. Travel, accommodation and logistics

Flights and accommodation was very well organized.

I would suggest a briefing session with the emerging evaluators explaining their and SAMEA’s expectations prior to the commencement of the workshops/conference. This would be beneficial to both parties as it will allow the scholarship recipients an opportunity to network amongst each other and share any challenges, constraints, ideas and experience in their respective environments.

4. Mentorship & Development

The organisation where I am currently employed does not have a fully capacitated Monitoring and Evaluation unit. Although I participate in compliance monitoring, my exposure to M&E is very limited. In the past two (2) years I have developed a keen interest in the M&E field. Therefore further mentorship and development by passionate M&E practitioners would be a challenge for me at my current employer. In Prof. Richard Levin’s conference summary and closing, he stated a continued support to the development and mentoring of emerging evaluators from SAMEA, its partners and sponsors. This conference has shed new light and encouraged me to pursue my passion of eventually improving lives through M&E practices.

Once again thank you for the opportunity.

Regards

Riyone Goliath