



# President's Brief



President Lana Rucks

Greetings!

The theme for this year's conferences is *Driving Change* which was identified as a natural evolution from last year's theme of *Effective Storytelling*. If you participated in the spring exchange, one of the many messages you may have taken away is that evaluators using their work to drive change is not an ancillary task but is essential to demonstrate value of what we do.

I recently had a conversation with a National Science Foundation (NSF) program officer who shared with me that some within NSF are questioning the overall value of evaluation because they are not seeing evidence of how evaluation is impacting programmatic level changes. He suggested that evaluators play a "mentoring" role to project teams to help them use evaluation for strategic decision-making.

Feedback such as this emphasize the critical of evaluators role in catalyzing change. It can be challenging to embrace this responsibility particularly because so many of us come from a research tradition which encourages us to have an arm's length relationship with this type of involvement. However, we need to embrace this component.

Through the resources in this newsletter, networking with other evaluators, and the presentations at the fall conference, we will continue to provide resources that will help all us to drive change in our work.

Lana Rucks, Ph.D.  
OPEG President

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## **New Member Introduction: Dr. Aviva Vincent**

Written by: Cheryl Marcus and Dr. Aviva Vincent



New Member Dr. Aviva Vincent

OPEG is a not-for-profit organization for educational and charitable purposes. Through our practices and the relationships we seek to build, we are always excited to introduce new members to the OPEG community of evaluators. In this edition, we are pleased to welcome and introduce, Dr. Aviva Vincent in her own words.

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Throughout my youth, I was the one to ask "...but why?" – and, not be satisfied until I challenge myself to find an answer. Years later, I learned that there is a field and a career for people who seek to know "why?". Research and evaluation are careers for the *why, how do we know, and are you sure?*

I am a veterinary social worker and serve as the Director of Program Quality at Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. In this position, I am responsible for supporting our team of therapeutic riding and driving instructors, and engaging in rigorous research and program evaluation to ensure we are offering our community the highest quality of services. I am the founder and co-chair of the human-animal interactions work group with the National Association of Social Workers, Ohio chapter. I hold a doctorate from the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University where I continue to teach in the social work program, and in the Veterinary Social Work certificate program at the University of Tennessee.

My field of research focuses on the biological impact of the human-animal bond. Specifically, my dissertation research (2019) sought to explore the feasibility of measuring the impact of therapy dogs on children towards reduced fear and anxiety in stressful situations by measuring salivary analytes (e.g. oxytocin, alpha-amylase, and cortisol). I am continuing this line of research by applying the same methodology to a larger sample in the dental clinic with therapy dogs, and at the therapeutic riding stable.

Though this may sound very far from program evaluation, I assure you, it is not. We agree that it is important for programs to offer outcome and output data. To date, the majority of data from human-animal interaction programs and research is outcome data. In my research agenda, I strive to increase the rigor of program design, implementation, and evaluation by ensuring the integration of output measures from the outset. As a macro social worker, I am dedicated to, and invested in pursuing rigorous research and evidence-based practice; we cannot get to EBP without quality research. A primary focus of my professional career is in program design and evaluation – they go hand in hand.

As a new member of OPEG, my expectation for membership is to be networked in to a broad base of like-minded, evaluation oriented, professionals. I appreciate access to resources and tools that challenge me to think critically and produce the highest quality of work I can. And, I look forward to opportunities to share the fruits of our collective work with each other to both highlight our aligned fields.

I look forward to meeting more of the OPEG community. More information about me, and research/work can be found at [www.avivavincet.com](http://www.avivavincet.com). Thank you for welcoming me to the membership. Please reach out with any questions, comments, or to connect.

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Thanks for joining us, Aviva! We look forward to getting to know you!

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# Fall Conference 2019

## Driving Change

The Fall Exchange is OPEG's opportunity for evaluators to gather, network, and showcase innovative ideas in diverse areas. Join us at the OU Inn in Athens,

Ohio on September 27, 2019 for a day-long engagement with colleagues and professional development.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

## **Keynote Address for OPEG's Fall Conference: Dr. John Hitchcock**

### **Using a Mixed Methods Perspective and Large Datasets to Address the Tensions between Internal and External Validity: Implications for Program Evaluation in Rural Schools**

This address will present a continuation of aspirational thinking around the use of large datasets and the mixed methods paradigm to yield new ways to engage in program evaluation, and more broadly, social science research. The address will begin with a primer on broad tensions between internal and external validity within the context of the evidence-based intervention movement in education. It will then shift to an overview of how different federal, state and privately funded datasets might begin to be merged and analyzed using visual approaches to develop a deep understanding of context, before, during and after an evaluation. Such inquiry is conceptualized via a mixed methods perspective to take advantage of different ways in which social scientists engage in causal inference and generalize and transfer findings. Finally, to establish the potential practicality of these ideas, their possible use will be described with respect to evaluations conducted in the context of rural K-12 schools.



**John Hitchcock, Ph.D.**

Principal Associate, Social & Economic Policy  
Abt Associates

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# **EVALUATION TIP**



**Rob Moore, M.P.H.**

Principal  
Scioto Analysis

## **How much does Ohio evaluate the costs and benefits of its public programs?**

Written by: Robert Moore

One of the most dynamic tools policymakers have to evaluate public programs is cost-benefit analysis, a systematic tool for evaluating the economic costs and benefits of policies.

Cost-benefit analysis is standard practice at the federal level, [required by the President](#) to be conducted on every proposed regulation with an estimated economic impact of \$100 million or more. Cost-benefit analysis has also been deployed successfully at the state level, most comprehensively by the [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#), which has carried out meta-analytic cost-benefit analyses on about 400 different state-level proposed and active policies and programs.

In order to assess state-level use of cost-benefit analysis, the [Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative](#), a collaboration between the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, carried out a study in 2013 on the prevalence of cost-benefit analysis at the state level. They found that Ohio carried out a total of 16 “partial cost-benefit analyses” from 2008-2011. This gave Ohio decently high marks compared to other states, but still only amounted to four cost-benefit analyses carried out per year, none of which followed all cost-benefit analysis best practices.

This spring, Columbus policy analysis firm [Scioto Analysis](#) conducted [a study](#) to see if Ohio had improved its cost-benefit evaluation in the seven years since the original study period. We collected studies through surveys, website scans,

and interviews, replicating the methodology of the original Pew-MacArthur study. We then supplemented this primary data collection with some secondary data analysis of key pieces of state infrastructure that can impact the quantity and quality of evaluation in the state.

Overall, we found that the quantity and quality of cost-benefit evaluation had not changed much over the past decade. We were able to identify 27 “notable analyses” conducted from 2012 to 2018, just one study shy of reaching the same four-study-per-year benchmark of the 2008 to 2011 period. None of these studies were best-practice cost-benefit analyses with full accounting and monetization of costs and benefits against a baseline, discounting, sensitivity analysis, and disclosure of assumptions.

Among these studies, about half assessed policies in the economic development or health/social services fields, with the other half covering transportation, environment, housing, criminal/juvenile justice, and education topics. Most of the studies were carried out by the State Auditor’s office and the Greater Ohio Policy Center, an economic development-oriented think tank, with the balance of the studies mostly carried out by the Department of Taxation and a smattering of think tanks.

The secondary data we analyzed unearthed some illuminating findings about Ohio’s policy analysis infrastructure. Ohio has less R1 research universities and think tanks per capita than any of its neighboring states and less legislative staff per capita than all of its neighboring states besides Indiana. These suggest Ohio has relatively less current capacity for high-quality policy analysis.

Cost-benefit analysis is a key tool for analysis of public policies that is prevalent at the federal level and in many states. These data suggest Ohio has the room to improve public policy evaluation through its use.

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# Operational Changes in Wild Apricot

**Paying OPEG using Wild Apricot Payments**

Because of newly added fees by Wild Apricot, OPEG no longer uses PayPal to process payments. When visitors to the OPEG website click the "Pay online" button while applying for membership or registering for an event, they will be directed to a secure Wild Apricot payment screen to make the payment. An example from another organization follows:

**Los Angeles Book club**  
<https://la-bookclub.wildapricot.org/>

Enter credit card details

Card number

VISA    Mastercard    AMEX    DISCOVER

mm / yy    CVV ?

Fay Crystal

Billing information

Address 1

Address 2

City

Country

State / province

ZIP / postal code

Phone

**Details**

Invoice #00054    \$8.00

- Registration for "Saturday book party" (9 Mar 2019 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Los Angeles Central)

**Total amount:    \$8.00 (CAD)**

Store card details for faster checkouts

Cancel    **Pay \$10.00 (CAD)**

From here, they can pay using any of the credit or debit cards that you have enabled as part of your [payment settings](#).

On the payment screen, the payer can choose to save their credit or debit card details for future transactions.

**Details**

Invoice #00054    \$8.00

- Registration for "Saturday book party" (9 Mar 2019 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Los Angeles Central)

**Total amount:    \$8.00 (CAD)**

Store card details for faster checkouts

The next time they register or renew membership from the OPEG site, they can choose to pay using any of their saved cards instead of entering the card

details again.

## Los Angeles Book club

 <https://la-bookclub.wildapricot.org/>

Select payment method

 VISA \*\*8803 [Remove](#)

 MasterCard \*\*1122 [Remove](#)

Other card

For more information on the one-click checkout feature, [click here](#).

After the payment is processed, the visitor is returned to the Invoices and payments tab on their member profile, where an invoice will appear, along with a payment entry, if the payment was successful.

For security reasons, credit card information is not stored in Wild Apricot and OPEG does not have access to this information. Instead, it is securely transmitted to AffiniPay where it is processed. AffiniPay then returns the status of the payment transaction, which is recorded in your Wild Apricot transaction details.

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## SAVE THE DATE

### Local Meet-Up (October 16th, 2019)

Columbus/Central OH Happy Hour meet-up is scheduled on October 16th at Seventh Son. Plan to join host, Megan Johanson and other OPEG friends at 5:30pm. Please RSVP with Megan at [megan.johanson@gmail.com](mailto:megan.johanson@gmail.com).

Note: The parking lot is small but there is free street parking on 4th Street. For more information about Seventh Son Brewing visit the website

<https://www.seventhsonbrewing.com/homepage>.

## 2020 OPEG AWARDS

Annually, OPEG recognizes two individuals for their contribution to the world of evaluation during the Spring Exchange. The awards and purposes are as follows:

- **Roberta O’Keefe Recognition Award:** To recognize an OPEG member involved with serving and promoting OPEG in an exceptional manner. Nominees must have held one or more OPEG offices or committee chairs; promoted OPEG programs at the local, regional, or state level; completed or engaged in several OPEG special assignments; and have been active OPEG members for 5+ years.
- **Evaluation Recognition Award:** To recognize an individual and/or special body of evaluation work. Nominees must have conducted quality program evaluation; promoted evaluation efforts at the local, regional, or state level; completed or engaged in an exceptional study; and conducted or participated in a number of evaluation studies.

The window for recommending someone for one or more of these prestigious awards is October 1 through December 15. Contact Lana Rucks at the [lrucks@therucksgroup.com](mailto:lrucks@therucksgroup.com) for more information. Visit the OPEG website to submit names.

## OPEG LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

Elections for officers and at-large members of OPEG's Board of Directors will take place in 2020. The Elections Committee (email Lana Rucks at [lrucks@therucksgroup.com](mailto:lrucks@therucksgroup.com)) will be soliciting nominations for open positions (president and member-at-large positions including a student member-at-large position). Please consider responding affirmatively to the Elections Committee as they build the Nominations Slate for the three-year period, 2020-2023. All newly elected offices take effect July 1 in the year of the election; except for the Treasurer whose office is effective September 1 in the year of the election.

Consider joining the leadership of Ohio's dynamic affiliate of the American Evaluation Association.

## CONFERENCE THEME FOR 2020

As our president, Lana Rucks, indicated in her message above, our conference theme for 2019 is "Driving Change." We encourage and urge contributions for helping us identify and select the theme for 2020. Send your suggestions to [lrucks@therucksgroup.com](mailto:lrucks@therucksgroup.com) by September 13.

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