



Principles of UNEG's Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) Seminar

The following definition and principles are to assist in defining the EPE, its purpose, objectives, topic selection, presenter selection, attendees and format, as well as provide guidance on logistical matters. The EPE Organizing Committee for 2012 drafted the principles while planning for the seminar after noting that while UNEG has organized EPE seminars since 2007 no policy, definition and/or guiding principles had been formally developed by UNEG or previous EPE Organizing Committees. The UNEG Bureau provided input and additionally comments were currently encouraged virtually and at the EPE session in Rome, 23-24 April 2012.

This document has been adopted by UNEG Heads on 26 April 2012 at the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2012.

Background

1. Since 2007, UNEG has organized annual Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) Seminars. The general objectives of these seminars are to allow United Nations (UN) evaluators to share experiences, practices and lessons relevant to evaluation in the UN, as well as to advance the evaluation practice in the UN and hence the EPE sessions are generally organized in an informal setting. Given the nature of the event, the opinions expressed at EPE are the personal thinking of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNEG or UNEG Members involved.
2. The EPE Seminars are organized by a UNEG inter-agency Organizing Committee (OC) established after the UNEG AGM of each year based on nominations of individuals by Heads of UN Evaluation Offices. The OC is responsible for planning and organizing the subsequent year's event. As the OC plays both a substantive and organizing role, it is a rule that the EPE host agency should be represented within the OC.
3. A policy, definition and/or guiding principles have never been formally developed for the EPEs. The following definition and principles are to assist in defining the EPE, its purpose, objectives, topic selection, presenter selection, attendees and format, as well as provide guidance on logistical matters. The principles are guided by the goal of enhancing the utility and reach of EPE, while maintaining its nature as a forum for a frank exchange of positive and negative experiences, emerging practices and challenges between UNEG members.

Proposed Definition of EPE

4. The 2011-2012 EPE OC developed a proposed definition and included it in the preamble of the survey sent to all UNEG members seeking inputs on the topics and formats for the EPE 2012. This definition was further enhanced with feedback from the UNEG Bureau and is as follows:

The objective of the EPE is to facilitate regular learning and exchange of experience amongst UNEG members (including those carrying out or managing evaluations according to the practices in different UN organizations) in order to improve the credibility and utility of UN evaluations and contribute to advancement of the evaluation function. EPE is a platform for sharing information and experiences related primarily to evaluation approaches and

methodologies and enables peer learning and support. EPE functions as a community of practice amongst UN evaluation practitioners and fosters peer support and learning on a continuous basis during and between EPE annual events.

5. This proposed draft definition was posted during the EPE 2012 on 23-24 April session in poster format providing an opportunity for participants to discuss and comment. It was also posted on the UNEG website for virtual comment. *[The definition and the principles in this document represent a synthesis of feedback incorporated. These general EPE principles were approved and the definition was adopted at the 2012 AGM.]*

Topics, Formats & Programme

6. The topics for the EPE vary from year to year, and depend on numerous factors such as the discussions at the previous EPE and AGM regarding the focus for the coming year, UNEG priority areas, as well as any topics that may be of particular interest to the UNEG.
7. The EPE OC utilizes surveys as a way to identify topics, sent to all UNEG membership seeking proposals, noting such items as potential topics, themes or principles; formats; and criteria for selection. The survey data identifies the top preferences in terms of topics and preferred formats for the session. This data helps to serve as a starting point for planning the EPE and sending out a request for expressions of interest on the topics identified.
8. The EPE OC selects the of expressions of interest after reviewing the submissions based on pre-determined criteria according to the themes of that years EPE, for example, relevance to the theme, potential for learning, practical application, and usefulness for a diverse UNEG audience. As well as taking into account, the potential complementarities and synergies between sub topic presentations within the overall programme.
9. The approach taken at the EPE is as interactive as possible to encourage exchange, questioning and learning. Thus although individual and panel presentations may be used, these should be well balanced with other, more interactive formats including small group discussions, posters, materials exchange and opportunities for networking and discussions in plenary or in small break-out groups.

External speakers may be brought in if the topics under discussion would benefit from external expertise.

10. In order to involve UNEG members who are not able to attend the EPE, webcasting and other interactive electronic tools are employed to the greatest extent possible. For example, using webstreaming software so there is the possibility to virtually attend the event.

EPE AUDIENCE

11. The EPE is opened to all UNEG membership. It is for each individual evaluation office/unit to propose topics, presentations and individual participants. Each participant is responsible for delivering presentation according to the modalities and quality criteria determined by the EPE OC.
12. In addition, M&E staff from UN organizations may participate in the EPE invited by UNEG members.
13. Non-UNEG members may be invited to the EPE as external experts when and as identified relevant by the OC, i.e. to add additional expertise to the topics of EPE event. Following the OC advice, the UNEG Bureau, in consultation with UNEG Heads, will determine the adequacy of external experts.
14. Other participants may participate in the EPE as observers, if identified relevant by the respective year's OC and being approved by UNEG. To facilitate this occurring, the UNEG Bureau should be contacted.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE EPE

15. The proceedings of the EPE have a few set parameters,
 - a. **The opening of the EPE:** this may be done by the UNEG Chair and/or the vice-Chair or by the Head of evaluation unit from the host agency, after agreement between these parties.
 - b. **Duration:** the EPE session is scheduled for two working days preceding the AGM. The agenda includes EPE topics for the majority of the time with time also scheduled for discussion on such items as summary of each session and discussion of EPE related issues, for example, ideas for next year's session, by the participants.

- c. **Utilization of technology:** the EPE will utilize technology to allow as many remote UNEG participants as possible, such as webinar or web streaming software.
- d. **Venue:** a room for 70-90 people plus break-out space for smaller group discussion/peer exchange. Webcasting facilities may be needed.
- e. **Website:** there is a designated space on the UNEG website for the EPE to distribute all relevant information on the event as well as necessary logistic information. The site is password-protected and only accessible to UNEG members and those external participants for whom a UNEG account has been created. The OC workspace on the UNEG website may additionally be used as a forum for peer exchange between events as appropriate. The EPE website is supported by the UNEG Secretariat and UNDP's IT Specialist.

REPORTING & EVALUATION OF EPE

16. The EPE OC reports on the proceedings of the EPE in three ways:

- i. Presentation to the Annual General Meeting on the EPE directly preceding the event;
- ii. Drafting a summary report of the proceedings of the EPE sessions noting such items as chairs and rapporteurs, presenters, format, summary of each presentation, synthesis of discussions; and
- iii. Drafting a process and lessons learned report of the EPE for that year that notes the deliverables, preparatory steps, themes, formats, challenges, lessons learned and good practices.

17. The EPE OC also undertakes assessments of the EPE sessions through short, self-administered surveys of participants, the results of which are included in the above-mentioned reports.