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## New Call to Action Series Addresses Urgent Issues in Philanthropic Evaluation

October 20, 2020 - The Funder & Evaluator Affinity Network (FEAN) today released the [FEAN Call to Action series](#): five briefs, decision tools, open letters, discussion guides, and more that address urgent issues in the philanthropic sector and provide actionable recommendations to achieving a stronger and more equitable field of practice. FEAN is an informal membership group of more than 300 philanthropy and philanthropic evaluation professionals.

In the fall of 2019, five Action Teams of volunteers from FEAN membership assembled around practice areas chosen collaboratively by the FEAN members as areas most urgently in need of change—**Strategy & Practice, Evaluators of Color, Knowledge Sharing, Global Challenges, and Collaboration & Partnership**. Over the course of 2019 and 2020, the five teams developed products which propose tangible steps to make change in the field.

Co-founded in 2017 by **Meg Long**, President, [Equal Measure](#) and **Clare Nolan**, Co-founder, [Engage R+D](#), FEAN is a collective effort to transform how funders and evaluators collaborate, deepening the impact of evaluation and learning on philanthropic practice to advance a more equitable and sustainable field.

"FEAN arose because both funders and evaluators saw some core ideas about our field shifting—high demand for evaluation coupled with changes in how evaluation is defined; new talent needs, especially for more and better supported evaluators of color; and new opportunities to position evaluation for effective learning and decision-making in philanthropy," said Long. "We believed that a collaborative approach grounded in shared values would make the strongest impact, and four years on, we are seeing this belief culminate in the Call to Action series."

"As an informal network, FEAN's greatest asset has been the act of bringing people together to encourage them to act upon their respective spheres of influence, and this has only deepened as we have navigated the pandemic and our national and international racial justice reckoning," said Nolan. "With the Call to Action series, we are moving to the next stage—sharing as broadly as possible the resources produced by FEAN's membership, generating and encouraging discussion and action around these urgent issues, and creating space for new and diverse leaders to continue to advance the field of philanthropic evaluation."

The five Call to Action products are:

### [Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Making Evaluations More Useful for Foundation Strategy and Practice](#)

*Evaluators are often invited late to the social change party. To be most effective, evaluation should be addressed early, but too often promises of outcomes and impact have already been stated and approved. With pre-defined and often inappropriate expectations for evaluation of the work, there is often disappointment in the results. This brief outlines six areas of focus and change that will help improve the application of evaluation in philanthropic strategy.*

### [Evaluation is So White: Systemic Wrongs Reinforced by Common Practices and How to Start Righting Them](#)

*Building a field of diverse evaluators who bring a variety of lived and cultural perspectives strengthens the salience, resonance, and responsiveness of evaluation—methodologically, analytically, and in the application of evaluation lessons to drive more equitable and impactful social outcomes. Along with this, foundations must be ready to accept and value different ways of thinking and new perspectives, or efforts to diversify the field will fail. This brief highlights common practices and suggests ways to change them.*

### **Knowledge Sharing is a Mission Imperative: Why We Cannot Afford to Keep Evaluation Findings to Ourselves and How We Can Do Better**

*The open letter, discussion guide, and dissemination planning tool in this brief can help funders and evaluators anticipate and overcome some of the most common barriers to evaluation knowledge sharing. Using these resources, funders, evaluators, and grantees can work together to develop a dissemination plan at the beginning of every evaluation engagement—helping to establish knowledge sharing as the norm, rather than the exception.*

### **Advancing Evaluation Practice to Meet Global Challenges: A Call to Action and Reflection**

*As philanthropy takes on a larger role in global development, foundations and evaluators can nurture and grow a robust, inclusive ecosystem that allows the co-creation of paths by which funders and evaluators can catalyze innovative thinking and undertake coordinated action with others in support of global transformation. This brief identifies ways foundations and evaluators can join forces to deepen field capacity, undertake complementary actions, harness philanthropy's unique position, and bring more and different people together to advance this work.*

### **Better Together: How Evaluator Collaborations Can Strengthen Philanthropy and Increase Collective Knowledge**

*Competition among evaluators impedes collaboration and knowledge-sharing that could advance the collective capacity of the field. Part of the problem is that there is a lack of structures or mechanisms that facilitate learning and collaboration among evaluators and funders. This guide provides step-by-step instructions for evaluation firms and professionals interested in engaging in more formal partnerships, including: establishing the purpose and formality of the partnerships, and evaluator and funder considerations in supporting these partnerships.*

The **Call to Action** series is intended to drive sharing, discussion, action, and change. FEAN invites funders, evaluators, nonprofits, and others from the philanthropic sector to engage in discussion of the issues and recommendations through fall 2020 and into 2021, when the five action teams will host webinars in collaboration with Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

For more information, please visit [fdnweb.org/fean](https://fdnweb.org/fean).

### **About FEAN**

Founded in 2017, FEAN brings together funders and evaluators to review the current state of evaluation in philanthropy, identify key opportunities and challenges in this field of practice, and work individually and collectively toward solutions that advance shared capacity on the part of evaluators working with, and within, philanthropy. It is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, The California Endowment, the California Health Care Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Minnesota Community Foundation Donor Advised Fund, the James Irvine Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation. For more information, please visit [fdnweb.org/fean](https://fdnweb.org/fean) or email [fean@equalmeasure.org](mailto:fean@equalmeasure.org).