February 6, 2010

Mr. François Dumaine
President
Canadian Evaluation Society
1485 Lapierre Ave.
Ottawa, ON K1Z 7S8

Dear Mr. Dumaine:

We are pleased to submit a proposal to undertake a formative and summative evaluation of the Canadian Evaluation Society Professional Designation Program (PDP).

Our proposal includes an analysis of stakeholder information needs. This, along with the logic model, forms the basis for determining the evaluation questions and our proposed methodology. We have also identified measures to ensure data quality (reliability, validity and timeliness) to provide you with credible, informative results.

In preparing our proposal, we have consulted assessments of professional designation programs in other fields. One area that emerged is to investigate the response to designation programs across different sectors (i.e. governmental, non-profit and private). We have incorporated this into our proposed design.

Evaluation DESK is known for being responsive to our clients' needs. We offer strong analytical skills and high technical quality. We also have a reputation for working with stakeholders representing diverse backgrounds and interests. Our team offers extensive practical experience, backed by strong academic backgrounds and expertise in evaluating various types of programs.

We thank you for the opportunity to present our proposal. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Evaluation DESK

EVALUATION DESK

Canadian Evaluation Society
Professional Designation Program (PDP)

February 6, 2010

Submitted to:

Canadian Evaluation Society

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1. Program Profile

Description

The Canadian Evaluation Society Professional Designation Program (PDP) was developed in 2010. The Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) was the first national organization in the world to introduce a professional designation program for evaluators.

The PDP initiative started in May 2006 when the Member Services Committee issued a request for proposals to obtain assistance in researching options for credentialing or certifying evaluation. It was determined that there was an intrinsic benefit to the field of evaluation in determining a minimum level of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that define competent evaluation practice (Stavhan et al., 2005, p.47).

Credentialing assures a certain level of exposure to key concepts of evaluation. It further protects the field by emphasizing the need for specialized training in evaluation (Altschuld, 1999). Activating a process of credentialing helps protect the evaluation profession by exposing evaluators to expected levels of knowledge. The introduction of a taxonomy of essential competencies for program evaluators as part of the credentialing process assists evaluators to determine areas for improvement. Over time, it is believed, the quality of evaluations will improve, thus protecting the reputation of evaluators to progress as a profession.

PDP Objectives

- To create and respond to the demand for professional designations
- To ensure the CE designation, CES Ethics, Standards and Competencies reflect current and best practice
- To ensure a sustainable infrastructure for the Professional Designation Program

2. Evaluation Considerations

Reasons for Undertaking This Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the program has been implemented as planned, its strengths and weaknesses, whether any improvements should be made, as well as gather evidence on outcomes and the program's impact. As such, the evaluation will be both formative and summative in nature.

Stakeholders and Their Information Needs

Understanding the information needs of the primary stakeholders is essential to ensure that the evaluation questions are focused on the purpose of the evaluation and that the report clearly addresses each need. The information needs of the primary stakeholders in turn have implications for specific post-evaluation decisions (Patton, 1997). The chart below identifies what primary and secondary stakeholders can expect to learn from the evaluation.

Table 1. Primary and Secondary Stakeholders

Primary Users of the Evaluation		
	Information Needs	**Decision-Making Implications**
VP of PDP CES President CES National Council	• Basis for continuing the program, i.e. evidence of continuing demand, relevance • Evidence that program activities result in desired outcomes • Any unintended outcomes, especially negative ones • Whether there are other alternatives	• Program focus: core objectives • Targeting: criteria • Partnerships with evaluation sectors
Application Administrator Credentialing Board	• Extent to which the program is achieving its intended goals • Whether there are program design and/or delivery issues and what might be done to address them	• Program focus, targeting • Program design and delivery
CES local chapters	• Evidence that program activities result in desired outcomes • Whether there are other alternatives	• Program focus, targeting
Secondary Stakeholders / Program Beneficiaries		
Evaluation Community and CES members (e.g., evaluators)	• Post-evaluation decisions regarding any program changes that would affect them directly	• Decision to apply for the credentials
Heads of Evaluation Functions (government/public service; private and non-for-profit sectors)	• Feedback on the evaluation: highlights	• Using credentials in hiring processes

3. Logic Model

We consider the logic model provided in the Request for Proposals to be quite comprehensive with the exception of linking constructs. That is, the logic model does not identify underlying assumptions of the program. We have noted these assumptions below.

Underlying Assumptions

The PDP is built in response to demand by members of the CES. After much research, a vote was put to the CES members at the 2009 annual CES Conference in Ottawa. The response was

positive. The underlying assumptions are that there is interest and demand for this program by members and that members can meet the educational and experience requirements and competencies required for credentialing. Furthermore, it is assumed that employers, clients and future evaluators will value having a credentialed designation for professional evaluators. Finally, the value and impact of the professional designation program is career advancement, demonstrated competence, greater recognition, enhanced confidence and a more professional identity.

4. Evaluation Questions and Matrix

The PDP is still in its implementation stage. However, given that over the course of the three years of program operation, a considerable amount of performance measurement data has been collected and also that the program cycle appears to be relatively mature (i.e., the identified program activities, outputs and outcomes have already materialized to some extent), Evaluation DESK is proposing to conduct an evaluation that is both formative and summative in nature.

Conducting such an evaluation will provide the CES and the evaluation community with relevant information with regards to

- whether the PDP has been implemented as planned, its strengths and weaknesses, and whether any improvements should be made, as well as
- gather evidence on outcomes and the program's impacts.

The evaluation results will, therefore, act as a pilot study on the success of evaluation professional designation programs and will allow the CES National Council to improve the program and inform their strategic planning.

Evaluation Advisory Committee

To facilitate the process of determining the scope of evaluation, we propose to form an evaluation advisory committee. The committee will provide leadership, advice and direction to evaluation activities. The committee will include representatives from the primary users of evaluation. Due to budget limitations, all consultation will be conducted by telephone and teleconferences, as well as other electronic means.

Evaluation Matrix

To follow is an evaluation matrix that will serve to guide the proposed evaluation of the PDP. Evaluation involves judgment of program merit, worth and significance, and support for ongoing improvement to program design and delivery. Therefore, this matrix includes suggested indicators, data sources and data collection methods in support of evaluation judgments. All are presented according to the evaluation questions, identified in consultation with program management and the evaluation advisory committee.

Table 2. Evaluation Matrix

Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection
Program Rationale – Is there a need for PDP?			
1. Is there a need for a formal credentialing process for evaluators?	• Perceived demand for formal evaluator credentials (by sectors) • Examples from other similar professions (e.g., auditors)	Heads of Evaluation Functions CES Members Environmental Scans and Reports CES Credentialed Evaluator project reports (e.g., Integration of Consultative Input)	Focus groups On-line survey Literature scan File review Benchmarking
2. What role does CES and PDP play in evaluator credentialing?	• Perceived role of CES and PDP in credentialing?	CES Members Heads of Evaluation Functions	On-line survey Focus groups
Design and Delivery Issues – Is the PDP designed and implemented such that expected outcomes are achievable?			
3. Are the implemented program's activities linked and sufficient to achieving expected program outputs? a. Are sufficient governance structures in place to support PDP? b. Is program staffing resources sufficient to perform program functions adequately? c. Is the application process implemented as planned? d. Is the technology use appropriate?	• Logical links between the program's activities and outcomes • Perceived opinion on the program design and delivery model • Roll-up of identified performance measures (as per the PDP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan)	Program documents PDP systems Key Informants (e.g., VP, etc.) / Evaluation Advisory Committee	File review Quantitative Analysis of performance data Interview (telephone)

Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection
e. Do communication and marketing activities reach their intended audiences?			
4. Are performance measures incorporated?	• PDP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan • Roll-up of performance measurement data	PDP systems Program documents Key Informants	Quantitative analysis of performance data Interview (telephone)
5. Are there any alternatives to PDP?	• Availability of other similar programs • Stakeholder opinions	Program Documents and Reports Heads of Evaluation Functions / CES Members	Literature scan Benchmarking Focus groups On-line survey
Success Issues – Is the program achieving its intended outcomes in an efficient and effective manner?			
6. To what extend is the PDP designation accepted and viewed as a desirable designation in the evaluation community? a. What are the perceived benefits of the program?	• Stakeholder opinions • # of satisfied CES members • Application pressure measures over time (e.g., # of applications) • Increase in the # of evaluation positions	CES Members Heads of Evaluation Functions PDP Systems	On-line survey Focus groups Quantitative data analysis
7. Does interest in the program vary across sectors (public, non-for-profit and private evaluation communities)?	• Stakeholder opinions • # of applicants from different sectors (over time)	Heads of Evaluation Functions CES Members PDP Systems	Focus groups On-line survey Quantitative data analysis
8. What role does the PDP designation program play in enhancing an organization's evaluation function/visibility/credibility (by sector)?	• Stakeholder opinions • # of new evaluator positions • # of new CES members	Heads of Evaluation Functions CES Members PDP Systems	Focus groups On-line survey

Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection
8. To what extent does the PDP contribute to professionalization of evaluation?	[Note: not within the scope of the current evaluation due to the limited time elapsed since program implementation to achieve the ultimate program impact. However, in our qualitative data collection (namely, focus groups), we will include a question(s) to further explore this issue.]		
Unintended Program Effects – Does the program create any positive or negative unintended effects?			
9. Have there been any positive or negative unintended program effects (e.g., impact of members who don't fully meet the PDP criteria)?	• Stakeholder opinions	CES Members Heads of Evaluation Function	On-line survey Focus groups

5. Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

Mixed-Methods Research Design

A key intent of the evaluation is to assess program implementation and impact. The design for this evaluation will be quantitative and qualitative. Multiple lines of evidence will be employed of a mixed-method nature to ensure all evaluation information needs regarding implementation and impact are addressed.

Methodology

The evaluation will involve the following lines of evidence: literature scan; program document review and administrative data analysis; key informant telephone interviews; web-based focus group; and on-line survey.

The literature scan and analysis of program data will be undertaken first to identify gaps in data and inform the design of data collection tools.
We recommend using electronic technology for data collection, such as telephone and web-based methods, to minimize data collection costs. As part of our data quality assurance, two members of our team will separately identify themes emerging from open-ended input from interviews, surveys and focus groups. They will then compare their findings.

Literature Scan

Literature scans contribute to addressing rationale and identifying key issues. They may also reveal best practices and alternative options. To make the best use of time and resources, we

propose undertaking a very focused literature scan. For example, the audit profession is closely related to evaluation. We will examine evaluations of the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) designation program initiated in 1975 by the Institute of Internal Auditors. The CIA evaluations may provide insight into the implementation and impact of professional designation programs.

Program Document Review and Administrative Data Analysis

Program documents, will be cross-checked with the PDP Implementation Plan and the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, as well as informant and other input to confirm whether the program is being implemented as planned. Administrative data will be used to provide descriptive statistics on the program, including information about applicants and credentialed members, the extent of services provided and costs. The limitation of this data is that it can be subject to errors in recording, data entry and other inconsistencies.

Key Informant Interviews

Phone interviews will be conducted with approximately 10 key informants involved in delivering the program. This could include the VP of PDP, Credentialing Board members, the application administrator and CES National Council. We will rely on you to identify the informants and provide us with their contact information. If we need to interview considerably more than the number indicated, it would probably be appropriate to develop a short survey questionnaire for some or all of the informants. This will serve to keep the time required for data analysis manageable as well as address possible budgetary constraints.

We propose a standardized open-ended interview guide, focusing on about six key questions. This will ensure consistency in the issues discussed and facilitate analysis of the data gathered. Interviews will be kept to about 30 minutes each. Members of the evaluation advisory committee will be helpful in ensuring the questions are on target and worded appropriately.

We will let informants know how the interview is being documented (i.e. taped, note-taking or both). We will also let them know that their identity will be kept confidential. No names or titles will be used in the report, and interview notes, and tapes if applicable, will remain with Evaluation DESK. This will allow us to assure confidentiality. As a means of checking data quality, we may ask one or more of the informants to review a draft summary of their input.

While informants may present biased or even conflicting perspectives, these interviews often reveal insights into a program not accessible through other means, as well as providing information that helps substantiate data from other sources.

Focus Group

A web-based focus group will provide us with a deeper understanding of perceived benefits, impacts, alternative means of enhancing the role of professional evaluators and unintended consequences of the program. It must be noted that the views expressed in a focus group cannot be generalize to the evaluation population.

A key aspect of focus groups is that participants formulate their responses based on the discussion at hand. The advantages of a web-based focus group is that we can hold three sessions with a small number of participants from across Canada, which otherwise would be prohibitively expensive. Focus groups will be conducted with heads and clients of evaluation function from the following three sectors: government, non-profit and private sectors. A disadvantage is that participants, and the focus group leader, do not benefit from direct interaction. It is more difficult, then, to achieve a group dynamic, a key element of focus groups, and it can be more challenging for the session leader to ensure all participants are drawn into the conversation.

Survey

A stratified sampling approach will be used to ensure representation from key sub-groups, and we will randomly select from each group from CES membership lists containing their contact information using a software program, such as MS Excel. Credentialed evaluators, applicants who applied but were declined and non-applicants will be surveyed to collect information regarding the program's impact.

The survey will be administered online, in French and English, and take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Also for data quality purposes, we will limit the number of skip questions, and after collecting the data, we will check frequencies to ensure respondents are not missing following skip questions.

Survey Development, Administration and Analysis

Evidence as to the perceived benefits and relevance of the PDP will be collected by means of an on-line survey to CES registered members. Available in both official languages, the survey will include three major sections: benefits of having a credentialized designation, need for such designation and the necessary background information on survey respondents (including whether they have applied to the PDP). Evaluation DESK will personalize the correspondence with potential respondents by sending an electronic invitation outlining the purpose of the survey.

Given that the survey is administered on-line, all respondents will be guaranteed anonymity. On-line survey service, VOVICI, will be utilized for this purpose. The survey will be open for a period of no longer than three weeks, with a reminder sent out to participants 10 days after its launch.

As mentioned earlier, Evaluation DESK will first analyze PDP performance data along with information obtained from the literature scan to inform the survey statements and qualitative questions. The survey will contain statements addressing perceived benefits of and the need for the PDP in a number of areas, including *hiring decision, career advancement* and the *acceptance of the proposed evaluator competencies*. Respondents will be asked to indicate their level of agreement with the survey statements on a 5-point Likert response scale, which will also be personalized.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Being formally accredited is important for me	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Being formally accredited indicates a higher level of competence in evaluation	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Being formally accredited helps in advancing my career	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

The survey will also contain several qualitative questions that will provide the respondents with an opportunity to contribute written comments.

The survey questionnaire will be approved by the evaluation advisory committee. It will be piloted with select CES members who will volunteer for pilot-testing. Once all the areas requiring attention are addressed, a final version will be posted on-line.

In terms of data analysis, for all quantitative statements, all data will be screened for completeness/missing values and rating distribution. Mean responses, standard deviations and the response range will be obtained using SPSS. Qualitative data will be coded by two team members. Content analysis and emerging theme analysis techniques will be utilized and final codes will be compared and contrasted between the coders.

Furthermore, to determine if there is any difference in terms of responses on perceived benefits of and need for the PDP between those CES members who applied for the PDP credentials and those who did not apply, the independent-sample t-test will be used (if the responses are normally distributed). Alternatively, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test will be employed. All differences will be determined at the 0.05 significance level.

Ethical Treatment

In keeping with CES propriety standards, specifically P3 Rights of Human Subjects ("Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects.") and P4 Human Interactions ("Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation, so that participants are not threatened or harmed."), Evaluation DESK commits to the following: obtain informed consent to use any information supplied by evaluation participants; assess risks and benefits of the evaluation; inform all participants of their freedom to discontinue participation in this evaluation; and assure privacy and confidentiality.

Evaluation Challenges

We have already mentioned some of the disadvantages in the collection methods. We feel it is imperative to further identify evaluation challenges and provide mitigating actions necessary to resolve them. Further challenges are a limited budget for this evaluation, data quality for the PDP

monitoring and evaluation plan, the relative newness of the program, sample selection, as well as the timing for the evaluation.

Limited Budget

The proposed evaluation budget, as outlined on page 3 of the Implementation Plan, allots $25,000 for an evaluation in year three. To stay within budget it is necessary to use relatively inexpensive methods for data collection. As previously mentioned, we intend to use technology as much as possible for data collection, including telephone interviews with key informants and web-based surveys and focus groups. We recommend a standardized open-ended interview guide and limiting the use of open-ended survey questions to facilitate data analysis.

Data Quality

For the administrative data we need to determine whether any procedural changes have occurred that could have an impact on observed results. An interview with the Application Administrator, CES web administrator, CES treasurer and accountant and the VP of PDP will mitigate this challenge.

Program Life Cycle

The PDP has been in place for three years. As a new program there may still be aspects of implementation that continue to evolve. As well, we are unable to assess the program's ability to retain credentialed evaluators over the long term. That is, we cannot determine the extent to which those who have been credentialed will seek to renew their status at the end of their three-year period. Evaluations of other professional designation programs, such as the CIA designation, may shed some light on challenges around retention.

Sampling Selection

With respect to surveys, low response rates may be an issue. We recommend that CES offer a small discount on the membership cost for the upcoming year for members who respond to the survey. In order to ensure confidentiality we will compile a list of respondents separate from their survey responses.

Timing of the Evaluation

We note that a decision on the RFP submissions will be made in early March. Therefore, a contract for the evaluation could be in place by early April. Such timing coincides with final preparations for the CES annual conference in May. While we could proceed with the literature scan, we anticipate that the evaluation would not be fully under way until early June. Timelines will need to be discussed with you, as we are then headed into summer, which is often a challenging time to conduct interviews and surveys. We suggest some of the data collection should be deferred until fall.

Appendix A: About Our Company

Evaluation DESK Team Liaison

All team members are equally qualified to undertake any aspect of the evaluation work. As such, we provide back-up for one another on any given task. For the purposes of this evaluation, we will identify one of our team members as a main contact. Should that person become unavailable, we will inform you of a replacement at that time. One or more other team members may participate in meetings or briefings with you, as appropriate.

Your Feedback

As a small company, we pride ourselves on tailoring our services to your needs. We welcome and value your feedback. In addition to any comments you may have during the course of the evaluation, we would appreciate obtaining your comments on our services at the end of this assignment. We would be pleased to send you a brief client satisfaction survey, or you may wish to provide us with your comments directly during our final meeting. Your thoughts and observations will help us assess your level of satisfaction with our services and determine how we can continue to be of benefit and support to our clients.

Team Members[1]

Evaluation DESK summarizes who we are. That is, DESK is an acronym of our names. Collectively, we offer a wide breadth of experience covering the private and non-profit sectors and all three levels of government.

Team Member 1

With an extensive background in the fields of health and education, TM1 meets the evaluation needs of clients with proven excellence and balance in stakeholder responsiveness and technical quality. TM1, who is bilingual, has a Master of Education degree and has taken graduate courses in program evaluation. Her security clearance is at the Reliability level. Raised just outside of Open Minds, TM1 now lives with her husband, four children and pet llamas on a ranch 40 minutes from the city.

Team Member 2

TM 2 is experienced in undertaking large-scale evaluations and other related projects, such as development of performance measurements and strategic reviews. Previously in her role as program manager, she had the opportunity to develop training plans and performance measurements. Her other areas of specialization include adult education, program and business planning, program implementation. Following completion of her Master of Education degree in 2008, she enrolled in graduate studies in program evaluation. TM2

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[1] In the interest of protecting our identities, some of our relevant experience has been omitted or slightly altered.

speaks English fluently and has a working knowledge of French. She has security clearance at the Secret level.

Team Member 3

TM3 has extensive experience in a diverse range of subject areas, project management and serving the non-profit, private and government sectors. As a former program manager, TM3 was directly involved in determining and reporting on performance measurements. She holds a Master of Arts degree, has taken graduate courses in program evaluation and has participated in quantitative and qualitative evaluations. Her security clearance is Secret.

Team Member 4

TM4 has been an active member of Canada's evaluation community for the past three years. She has worked in both the academic and government sectors, which enabled her to acquire valuable experience in evaluating a variety of programs and initiatives. TM4 holds a Master of Education degree in Leadership Studies and has taken graduate courses in program evaluation. As a new resident of Open Minds, TM4 looks forward to representing the city at the CES Student Case Competition in 2010.

Appendix B: References

Altschuld, J.W. (1999a). The certification of evaluators: Highlights from a report submitted to the board of directors of the American evaluation society. *The American Journal of Evaluation. 20*(3), 481-493.

Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization-Focussed Evaluation, (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Stevahan, L., King, J.A., Ghere, G., & Minnema, J. (2005). Establishing essential competencies for program evaluators. *American Journal of Evaluation. 26*(1), 43-59.