



February 9, 2022

THE HONORABLE ERIC LANDER
The White House
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20504

THE HONORABLE BRENDA MALLORY
The White House
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place
Washington, DC 20504

Transmitted via Electronic Mail

Re: White House Commitment to Include Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Federal Policymaking

Dear Director Lander and Chair Mallory:

On behalf of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), we welcome the November 15, 2021, joint memorandum from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Council on Environmental Quality to federal agencies, recognizing the role of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) in federal policymaking and decision-making. In particular, AEA has a commitment to diversity and inclusion in evaluation practice and AEA recognizes that Tribal/First Nations are sovereign governments. AEA is excited about the potential activities highlighted in the joint memorandum to contribute to such values in evaluation and, more broadly, to increase OMB's capacity for nation building and nation-to-nation relations with Tribal/First National and Indigenous peoples.

AEA is a professional association of evaluators. AEA's mission is to improve evaluation practices and methods, increase evaluation use, promote evaluation as a profession and support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human action. Evaluation involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, personnel, addressing data governance, and ethics in evaluation, and products and organizations to improve their effectiveness. As we suggest in AEA's Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government, evaluation can address contextual appropriateness, a critical consideration for Tribal Nations. AEA's Evaluation Roadmap and Cultural Competency documents outline the critical need for inclusion and strengthening of cultural competence, capacities, and practices of evaluation to inform theory, policy, professional development, and decision making. In an intentional effort towards meeting these calls for action, AEA is committed to the visibility,

RE: White House ITEK Statement (2/9/2022)

representation, and inclusion of sovereign Tribal/First Nations and Indigenous peoples throughout organizational policies and practices.

AEA offers three suggestions as the activities stimulated by the November 15, 2021, memorandum move forward. First, we strongly encourage that the Interagency Working Group on Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge include evaluation, Indigenous evaluation, data sovereignty, and nation-to-nation evaluation policy and systems work in the scope of its deliberations. Second, the Working Group should include individuals with experience and expertise in evaluation and with Tribal/First Nations Governments and peoples. Third, AEA encourages the White House to extend the framework of the November 15, 2021, memorandum to explicitly recognize the value and appropriateness of nation-to-nation collaboration and provide opportunities and resources towards nation building efforts so non-Tribal government agencies can strengthen their capacities to effectively and responsibly contribute to operationalizing TEK throughout Federal government policies and activities in an effective, responsive, and sustainable way.

We welcome the opportunity to be a resource as steps continue regarding Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decision Making. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me (president@eval.org) or AEA's Executive Director Anisha Lewis (alewis@eval.org).

Sincerely,

Veronica Olazabal
President
American Evaluation Association