



Sara S. McGarraugh, M.P.P.

Managing Consultant, The Improve Group

Sara is a solutions-focused and action-oriented evaluator who brings to The Improve Group extensive experience in creating tools, collecting data, analyzing results, and reporting findings. Outside of work, Sara loves connecting with people over food (she is always looking for new recipes) and negotiating with her spouse about where to travel next.

Expertise

Evaluation

Sara is skilled at efficient data analysis and reporting findings to support client needs and use. Her strengths include bringing together disparate ideas and identifying larger themes in data. She applies creative approaches to methods and design to meet client needs and answer evaluation questions. Sara is rooted in use-focused evaluation design while also incorporating the learning needs of clients and participants.

Consulting

Sara's project management expertise ensures she delivers projects on budget and on time. She is comfortable navigating complex and unknown systems with clients. Sara is particularly skilled at acting as a negotiator between stakeholders, bringing and valuing different stakeholder voices in the evaluation process.

Facilitation

Sara is a skilled facilitator who designs processes to enable groups to achieve their objectives. She is attentive to group dynamics and draws from a variety of techniques such as ToP and Art of Hosting to ensure inclusion of different learning and engagement styles. Sara is a confident public speaker and facilitator with groups of all sizes.

Practice areas

International Community Development

Professional Experience

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Managing Consultant | 2016-present | Lead evaluation projects and phases to make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure clients' investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact. Project experience includes:

Providing backbone facilitation support to assess the impact of the Rural Community Inclusion Partnership (RCIP), an initiative championed by six nonprofits and spanning 11 Nebraska communities that seeks to promote tolerance and ensure that all diverse community members have a voice in civic life. Used highly participatory processes to create a shared Theory of Change that drove a wide-scale evaluation of the work.

Collaborating with a university team on a post-project sustainability assessment for the USDA's Food for Progress program. Designed an iterative Community-Responsive Approach to the evaluation, starting with existing data and key informant interviews to shape culturally appropriate methods and tools, and then guiding data collection in three key sites in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and Benin.

Performing a final evaluation of Mercy Corps' Irtoun Program, which aimed to increase resiliency among Malian communities that suffered food insecurity due to drought or flooding. The highly collaborative client relationship resulted in meaningful lessons for future project improvements and validation of successful interventions that led to positive participant outcomes.

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Associate Consultant | 2012-2016 | Worked collaboratively with project team to execute activities.

University of Minnesota – Twin Cities | Minneapolis, MN | Teaching Assistant | 2012-2013 | Designed and implemented weekly lab curriculum, worked through complex economic examples using classical theory, and assisted Visiting Professor with course planning for a graduate student class.

Bridges to Learning | Minneapolis, MN | Programs and Administrative Manager | 2010-2012 | Oversaw fundraising, marketing, strategic communications planning, and content development for an organization that provides resources for the educational, health, and social development of impoverished children in Vietnam.

École Primaire et Maternelle Bilingue Noula | Yaoundé, Cameroon | Head Administrator and Fundraiser | 2009-2010 | Gathered parent and staff input to guide primary school's strategic planning and budgeting, increased school revenue by leveraging grant writing skills and French fluency to submit in-country grant proposals, and designed and executed an international fundraising effort to remodel building space and stock a new library and computer center for the school.

Education

Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota | Master of Public Policy with a minor in Evaluation Studies

University of Wisconsin – Madison | Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with minors in Global Cultures and African Studies

Training

Technology of Participation® Facilitation Methods | Institute of Cultural Affairs in the U.S.A.

Community Involvement

American Evaluation Association | Social Impact Measurement TIG Webmaster | 2017-present

Vision Loss Resources | Reader | 2017-2018

Minnesota International NGO Network | Board of Directors Member and President | 2010-2016

Humphrey School Public Affairs Student Association | Curriculum Chair | 2012-2013

Minnesota International Institute | Refugee WELCOME Volunteer | 2010

Professional Affiliations

American Evaluation Association

Minnesota Evaluation Association