



# Stacy Rassel, Ph.D.

Director of Consulting, The Improve Group

Stacy is passionate about program evaluation and the role it plays in helping organizations improve programming, demonstrate outcomes, and communicate the value of their programs. Outside of work, Stacy is usually doing something active like hiking in a state park, kickboxing at the gym, growing vegetables in her garden, or playing softball.

## Expertise

### Evaluation

Stacy has her Doctor of Philosophy in evaluation and has worked in the field since 2007. She is adept at seeing the big picture of an evaluation while also paying great attention to detail in plotting out the path required to answer evaluation questions. In designing evaluations, Stacy enjoys the challenge of figuring out how to gather the right data. She sees the importance of this step and believes that, as Light, Singer, and Willett said, “You can’t fix by analysis what you bungled by design.”

### Consulting

Stacy applies her strength in critical thinking when planning project management for complex projects. She is able to foresee potential challenges and strategies to address them before they can impact a project. Stacy focuses on building relationships with clients and collaborating to help ensure they have confidence that our work will answer their questions.

### Working with foundations

Stacy has vast experience supporting foundations to conduct evaluation. Stacy has contributed to evaluations of programs funded by the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, the Kansas Health Foundation, the Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Fetzer Institute, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Bush Foundation, and others. She is also a member of an internal workgroup studying trends in evaluation and philanthropy. From contributing to and leading evaluations across philanthropic areas of focus, Stacy understands how to conduct useful evaluation of grantmaking that is focused on improvement. She is thoughtful around the different experiences of grantees and funders and has supported several foundations to make evaluation relevant to both grantees and the funder.

### Evaluation capacity building

As the leader of The Improve Group’s Training Team, Stacy applies her expertise in designing and delivering trainings that build the evaluation capacity of clients and stakeholders. She also oversees projects that include built-in client evaluation capacity building.

### Practice areas

*Evaluation Capacity Building: Providing people and organizations the tools they need to make informed strategic decisions and deepen organizational impact.*

## Professional Experience

**The Improve Group** | St. Paul, MN | Director of Consulting | 2013-present | Plan, direct, and provide coaching support on projects to make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure clients’ investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact. Project experience includes:

Collaborating with the Performing Arts Workshop of San Francisco to evaluate a program aimed at providing innovative arts programming to over 1,500 economically and educationally disadvantaged students in the San Francisco Unified School District.

Providing coaching support on a development and summative evaluation for the Center for IDEA Fiscal Reporting (CIFR) to inform CIFR's assistance to state education agencies reporting special education fiscal data.

Partnering with teams on many projects to support Minnesota's Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) programs in their work of keeping Minnesotans who are elderly, disabled, or live with mental illness in home and community-based living settings and out of institutions like nursing homes.

**The Improve Group** | St. Paul, MN | Research Analyst, Senior Research Analyst | 2010-13 | Plan, lead, and execute project activities to make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure clients' investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact.

**University of Minnesota Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development** | Minneapolis, MN | Graduate Research Assistant | 2009-11 | Conducted evaluations and research for department projects.

**University of Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development** | Minneapolis, MN | Research Assistant, Minnesota Early Learning Foundation Evaluation | 2007-09 | Evaluated early childhood programs and projects to improve services with low-income and diverse populations.

**Minnesota Literacy Council** | St. Paul, MN | Program Coordinator | 2002-07 | Coordinated AmeriCorps programs serving low-income children throughout Minnesota in schools, libraries, and community organizations.

**Bruce F. Vento Elementary School** | St. Paul, MN | Teaching Assistant, After School Program | 2003-07 | Taught after-school enrichment courses to support students with their learning and development.

## Education

University of Minnesota | Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development; emphasis on Evaluation Studies

University of Minnesota | Master of Arts in Educational Policy and Administration; emphasis on Evaluation Studies

University of St. Thomas | Mini-MBA in Volunteer Management

Luther College | Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and Management

## Publication

Rassel, G.R., DeVance Taliaferro, J., Rassel, S.M., & O'Sullivan, E. (2022). *Practical Research Methods for Nonprofit and Public Administrators* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

## Select Presentations

"So Now What? Influencing Stakeholders to Turn Findings into Action" | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2018

"Collecting and Using Information from Drop-in Patrons: Successful Practices and Lessons Learned from a Variety of Evaluations with Cultural Institutions" | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2014

"Remote work: What Are Best Practices and Great Ideas to Manage Quality Data Collection from Afar?" | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2014

“Evaluating Advocacy: How Evaluation Stretches to Balance Accountability with Realistic, Relevant Measures” | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2014

“Data Seeking Data: Using What You Have to Get What You Want” | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2013

“Longitudinal Studies: Getting the Data You Need and Working with the Data You’ve Got” | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2012

“Managing Evaluation Projects from a Distance: Strategies, Tips, and Tools” | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2012

“Map it Out: A Visual and Physical Participatory Method for Data Collection” | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2011

“An Ounce of Prevention ... Practical Approaches to Evaluating Health Initiatives in our Communities” | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2011

## **Community Involvement**

Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute | Advisory Group member | 2010-present

Big Brothers Big Sisters | Mentor | 2005-14

Hiawatha Lake Learning Center Intermediate English and Computer and Employment classes | Volunteer | 2006-08

Minnesota Literacy Council | AmeriCorps VISTA | 2002-03

## **Affiliations**

American Evaluation Association

Minnesota Evaluation Association

International Society for Evaluation Education