**Call to Discuss ArchEE Initiative**

**Thursday, December 18th, 2014; 9:30 AM U.S. Eastern Time, 3:30 PM Copenhagen Time**

Participants:

Matt Keene, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)/Environmental Evaluators Network (EEN)

Carl Koch, EPA

Shari Grossarth, EPA

Terell Lasane, EPA

Rasmus Dilling, European Environment Agency (EEA)

Johannes Schilling, EEA

Nick Pittman, Industrial Economics (IEc)

**a. Short presentation about the ArchEE initiative**

Matt spoke about the origin of the ArchEE idea approximately seven years ago:

*Motivation for idea*

Frequently at EEN meetings, participants discuss that no one has a list of all of the relevant environmental evaluation work available; evaluators want to know who is doing what, and how and where, and what they are finding. EEN members discovered related initiatives, online clearinghouses of information, but with different purposes or narrower boundaries.

*Vision*

The vision for this project is an open access repository of evaluation-related work that would be useful for analysis and synthesis to improve decision-making. The idea also embraces the EEN policy that not just one member of the network has all of the answers, but that together they may. Additionally, ArchEE fits with the Cradle to Cradle Evaluation concept that the American Evaluation Association (AEA) has been discussing. Many EEN members are interested in the idea, but progress was slow, largely because no one wanted to commit to managing the resulting database.

*Moving forward with the idea*

EPA is interested in large part as a way to work more efficiently with a constrained budget by using existing knowledge and data; however, they do not want to be the sole sponsor of the effort. Eventually Beverly Parsons of the AEA directed Matt to Nancy McPherson of the Rockefeller Foundation, who told him about the Foundation Center. The Foundation Center had acquired IssueLab several years previously, and Matt spoke with Nancy and Gaby Fitz about their work. IssueLab had been engaged in innovative knowledge management activities with keywording and querying tools. IEc interviewed IssueLab about the possibility of helping to build and maintain the ArchEE database. IEc has also been investigating other knowledge management options.

**b. Common understanding of aim/objectives, process, and outcome of ArchEE**

See sections a. and d.ii.

**c. How to fit ArchEE to other EEN activities**

We omitted this section due to time constraints.

**d. The ArchEE workshop in April/May**

Matt has sent invitation letters to key EEN participants; some have been part of the ArchEE conversation previously, while for others this is the first time they have discussed it.

**i. Aim, purpose**

See sections d.ii. and d.iii.

**ii. Stakeholders/participants**

Unlike past EEN events, which have been quite large, we plan to have a group of 15 to 20 (though potentially as many as 30) organizations and participants who are invested in the ArchEE idea. Following EEN models of the past, we plan to look for one to six partner organizations to help design the workshop to serve a wider organization. Matt stressed that we want the workshop to be participatory, not prescriptive.

*“Inreach” and outreach in the U.S.*

Matt has been responsible for ArchEE outreach to various networks and associations; he has been presenting the concept in a number of ways to see how different audiences react to it. For instance, the evaluation and environmental community have discussed the initiative differently. Another important group to bring to the table are individual researchers.

Carl has taken on EPA inreach; with the Agency’s tight budget, ArchEE embraces the idea of “working smarter” by using existing information.

*The EEA*

Johannes and Rasmus have discussed the matter internally, and feel that EEA could participate; the EEA focuses strongly on networking, and appreciates the opportunity to use existing information. The organization has fewer social scientists than hard scientists, but they feel it would interest people to see that EEA can also do the “softer” side of science. Rasmus mentioned that the biggest worry is who would actually operate the database once it has been set up.

**iii. Duration and venue**

We currently envision a date of April or May for the workshop. Matt has set aside the resources for a two-day workshop and to manage the logistics, communication, planning, and documentation of the event.

EPA had thought that DC could be an ideal location, and EPA can provide a free space. Johannes and Rasmus suggested a similar forum in Europe at some time and are open to hosting a 2015 event in Copenhagen. Rasmus, however, worried about Europeans not attending the DC event if they knew a closer event would follow.

Matt then suggested having two parts of the workshop, which could engender in participants a different mindset from the beginning: first there would be an explanatory discussion, then a concrete follow-up.

Matt has a potential external facilitator in mind: someone who has worked on these kinds of initiatives, has extensive experience in evaluation, and applies systems thinking to these types of efforts.

**e. Next steps**

We agreed that we will hold our next call to discuss ArchEE on Friday, January 9th at 9:30 AM U.S. Eastern/3:30 PM Copenhagen time. At this meeting we plan to discuss more specific details of the ArchEE workshop, including dates, roles, and how to get participants there (especially those who cannot pay their own way).