



Becky Stewart, M.P.P.

Chief Practice Officer, The Improve Group

Becky feels passionately about her role in making the world a better place. This shows up in her work at The Improve Group, where she listens empathetically, encourages authentic community engagement, and comes to creative solutions as she advises consultants on meeting clients' needs.

Expertise

Evaluation

As Chief Practice Officer, Becky enhances The Improve Group's position as a leader in evaluation by refining and strengthening its practice through new trends, techniques, and competencies. Becky co-created The Improve Group's Community-Responsive ApproachSM and helps consultants apply it with different stakeholder groups, leveraging her 15 years' experience in evaluation. Becky's 8 years at a nonprofit community development organization before joining The Improve Group help her empathize with the opportunities and challenges nonprofit clients face with evaluation.

Consulting

Becky oversees The Improve Group's work with clients, ensuring responsiveness and quality. As an experienced consultant, she can help colleagues hold onto the core purpose and goals in projects as teams adapt to project circumstances and stakeholder needs along the way. When project challenges emerge, consultants value Becky's calm demeanor and collaborative approach to problem-solving.

Evaluation in community settings

Becky is an expert in designing community-based evaluations that incorporate cultural nuance and value community wisdom. She practices cultural humility and authentic partnership in her work with communities. In addition to co-creating The Improve Group's community-responsive approach, Becky initiated the development of Image Grouping, a data collection tool that uses images to better engage participants who have low literacy or who speak different languages than the evaluator. Becky has also presented to various audiences about community-responsive evaluation.

Professional Experience

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Chief Practice Officer | 2013-present | Plans and coordinates the daily practice of the organization's work with clients to make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure clients' investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact. Project experience includes:

Partnering with Mercy Corps' Global Citizen Corps to assess the impact the program had on attitudes about community leadership among youth participants in Palestine, Iraq, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the U.S.

Evaluating the Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative's \$8 million Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative to highlight how schools' unique approaches to prevent youth violence and substance abuse are effectively addressing school safety and student mental health.

Engaging an advisory group of diverse stakeholders and analyzing existing and new data to inform Minnesota Department of Human Services policy decisions for Housing Support (known at the time as Group Residential Housing).

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Research and Evaluation Director | 2004-2013 | Designed and managed research and evaluation projects and coordinated work of teams.

Handloom Weavers Development Society | Balaramapuram, Kerala, India | Consultant | 2006 | Updated pilot pictorial diary tool to support participatory evaluation of the Society's efforts to understand its impact on participating households, particularly women, and identify areas for additional attention.

University of Minnesota Extension Community Vitality Office | St. Paul, MN | Research Assistant | 2006 | Conducted case studies of communities that had catalyzed community leadership, in order to educate and inspire broader audiences.

Project for Pride in Living | Minneapolis, MN | Executive Project Manager, Grant Writer, and Development Project Coordinator | 1996-2004 | Managed capital campaign, public policy initiative, and strategic planning process to strengthen organization as it provided transformative affordable housing and career readiness services.

Education

Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota | Master of Public Policy in Community and Economic Development

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

Macalester College | Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (major) and History (minor)

Select Presentations & Trainings

"Involving Youth in Evaluation" | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2018

"Equitable Organizations" | American Evaluation Association annual conference | 2018

"Evaluation Planning for Funders" | Minnesota International NGO Network IDEA Summit | 2017

"Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation" | New Sector Alliance Fellows | 2015

"Data Management with Remote Fieldwork" | American Evaluation Association annual conference, coffee break | 2014-15

"Community Responsive Evaluation" | Minnesota International NGO Network IDEA Summit | 2015

"Image Grouping" | American Evaluation Association annual conference | Multiple years since 2012

Instructional Experience

Co-lecturer of Program Evaluation | Humphrey School of Public Affairs | 2015

Community Involvement

Hale Elementary School | Site Council

Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota | Board Member | 2010-14

Certification

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

Professional Affiliations

American Evaluation Association

Minnesota Evaluation Association

