

CENTER news

EvaluATE has funds to support your evaluator to travel to and attend the ATE PI conference!

We are pleased to announce that we will reimburse up to 25 ATE internal or external evaluators for transportation, lodging, and registration expenses to enable them to attend the 2011 ATE PI conference (\$1,000 maximum).

All current ATE grantees are invited to apply by completing the application form, which is available from evalu-ate.org/events/October_2011. Additional information about expectations and requirements for funding recipients is included on this form. The submission deadline is August 15, 2011. Notification of awards will be made by September 1, 2011.

With sadness and best wishes, we said goodbye to our Senior Evaluation Associate and generally great colleague, Peggie Weeks. Peggie was instrumental in the development of our Community of Practice and provided valuable input from the perspective of someone with experience both in NSF and in community college settings. She remains a part of our community as she continues to serve as evaluator for a number of ATE projects and centers.

Conduit editor: Stephanie Evergreen

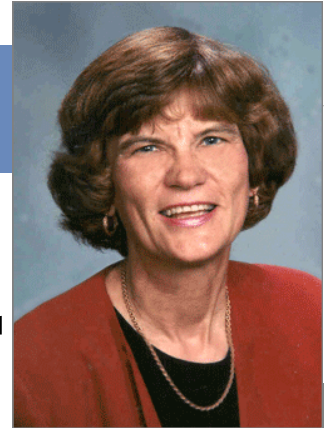
Writing Better Evaluation Plans Helpful Hints

What should be included in a proposal's evaluation plan?

What do reviewers want to see? While both of those are important questions, it is also important to make sure you have an evaluation plan in place from the beginning that will assess how your project is going and what impact you are having. Based on my experiences as a reviewer and panel participant, I recommend you consider these things when preparing the evaluation section of your ATE proposal. A good evaluation plan almost always raises the proposal ratings.

1. Identify an evaluator in advance; include his or her name and qualifications.
2. Carefully match the evaluation with project goals, objectives, and activities.
3. Design the evaluation to provide evidence about what is working and where adjustments and improvements are needed. Make sure evaluation information is useful and important and describe how it will guide the project.
4. Remember that while accountability is important, evaluation of impact and effectiveness is vital.
5. Evaluate both short- and long-term goals, develop indicators for measuring progress, and create timelines.
6. Develop the evaluation plan jointly with the evaluator(s). You know the project, but the evaluator provides evaluation expertise and an outside perspective.
7. Assign responsibilities for various components of the evaluation. Where and how will you get the data and from whom?
8. Use the evaluation literature (e.g., EvaluATE website and NSF resources) to create an evaluation plan based on best practices and include evaluation references and, if appropriate, information about your instruments.
9. Develop indicators for project goals and objectives with your evaluation stakeholders in mind (e.g., project personnel, administrators at the college, faculty, NSF, and others).
10. Use at least one (up to 2.5) of 15 proposal pages to develop and explain the evaluation. Write the evaluation plan in plain English.

See the expanded article *Writing Better Evaluation Plans: 10 Helpful Hints and 10 Fatal Flaws* at evalu-ate.org/resources—keyword search *hints*. We'll also discuss this topic in the July EvaluATE webinar. See the back page for more details.



By
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EVALUATION terminology

Pilot Test

Pilot tests are used to refine the items on an instrument or the materials in new curriculum. Intensive feedback is gathered from a small group of people on what they found confusing about each part of the questionnaire or each section of the material. This is often done through interviews or thinkalouds. Pilot tests are done on a smaller scale than field tests, which is why the solicitation says they may be done locally.

Field Test

By contrast, a field test is conducted second, using a fairly finalized instrument or set of materials with the goal of checking on every aspect of implementation—such as how the test is introduced and how the respondents are asked to complete it, or how the materials are packaged. Field testing is done under circumstances similar to the actual context in which they will be used. This is why the solicitation guides grantees to field test in diverse locations, so that the final instrument or curriculum will be widely applicable.

Whether a pilot or field test, the results are used formatively by the grantee to improve a product.

REAL QUESTIONS

REAL ANSWERS

What does NSF’s new “Data Management Plan” requirement mean for evaluation?

More upfront planning.

“Fastlane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a Data Management Plan.”

—from the NSF *Grant Proposal Guide*

Earlier this year, NSF put forth a new requirement for all grant proposals: Proposers now must include a 2-page Data Management Plan (DMP) as part of their proposal package. NSF’s long-time policy has been for grantees to share with other researchers the primary data they gather with NSF funds (see Chapter VI of the *Award and Administration Guide* at www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_index.jsp). The DMP is where proposers explain how they will conform to that policy (without taking up valuable space in the 15-page proposal). At minimum, the plan should describe the types of data that will be gathered, how the data will be shared while protecting privacy, and how the data will be maintained for future access. The basic requirements are listed in the *Grant Proposal Guide* (www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_index.jsp)—Chapter II.C.2.j.

Does “primary data” include information gathered for evaluation purposes? Yes!

NSF’s Directorate for Education and Human Resources has provided additional guidelines for proposers to EHR programs, which helps put the policy in context. It includes examples of types of data that should be addressed in the management plan. Two examples among many are project-level evaluation data and information required for programwide monitoring and evaluation (such as the annual survey of ATE grantees). Note that use and sharing of data gathered from or

about human subjects are governed by local human subject institutional review board rules—in other words, HSIRB trumps DMP.

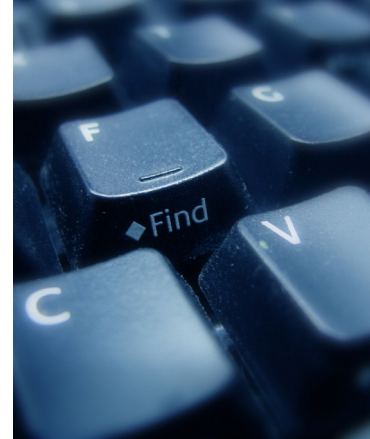
The requirement means you’ll need to specify what information will be collected as part of your project’s evaluation—e.g., participant surveys, student assessments, data on graduation and retention—any information collected systemically on behalf of the project. It also means you need to anticipate information needed for the annual ATE survey. Fortunately, you can review it online at evalu-ate.org/annual_survey (the 2012 version will be nearly identical to this year’s).

Once you’ve described what data will be collected, you’ll need to explain how the information will be made available to others, in what formats, where it will be maintained and for how long, and how privacy will be protected. Although EvaluATE was funded before the DMP requirement, we have policies in place that govern our sharing of data. For example, anyone receiving data from our annual survey of ATE grantees must sign a statement in which they agree to certain conditions about how they are going to use, manage, and report on the data. You can view our basic form by heading to evalu-ate.org/resources, keyword search *data use agreement*.

All ATE proposers and evaluators should carefully read the EHR guide for data management (www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp). It includes many more details than can be addressed here. Evaluators and proposers should start early to prepare the plan. We’ll talk about the DMP more in our July webinar. See the back page for details.

FEATURED RESOURCE

Annual Survey Fact Sheet



The Fact Sheet is a summary report of key metrics from the annual survey of ATE grantees. Aggregate data present an overview of the entire ATE program. Together, the annual survey and Fact Sheet are a unique feature of the ATE program and are used by NSF to help secure future funding.

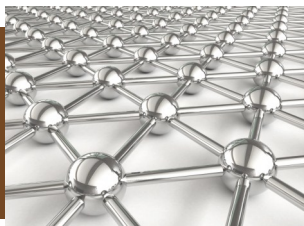
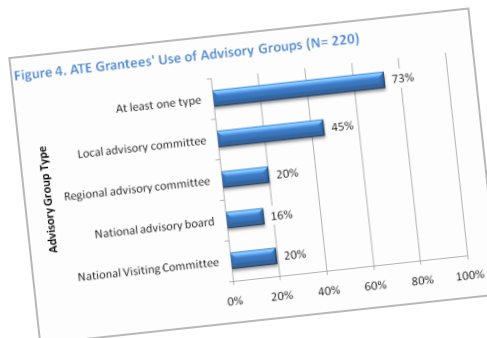
The Fact Sheet includes metrics like annual budgetary allocations, collaborative benefits, the number and types of materials developed, the number of locations and participation in professional development and educational programs. While these statistics help showcase the program as a whole, they also serve as a profile of a

‘typical’ ATE grantee. For example, the 2011 survey results show that 73 percent of respondents used at least one type of advisory group in 2010, and about 30 percent of respondents conducted a needs assessment in 2010.

Thank you to everyone who completed the annual survey. We achieved a 94 percent response rate, which helps us to more accurately report on the broad contributions of the ATE program. As you read

through the Fact Sheet, think of what other metrics might be useful to you. We invite requests for specific reports that may help you in your own pursuits (e.g., benchmarking, proposal writing, and

research). Stay on the lookout for additional reports pertaining to this and past annual surveys. The Fact Sheet is now available at http://evalu-ate.org/annual_survey/.



Mainstreaming Evaluation

In this and other issues, Amy Gullickson shares some lessons learned from her dissertation on evaluation use at four ATE centers.

In my dissertation research on ATE centers that effectively used evaluation, I found three main streams through which the centers I studied were getting and using evaluative information: (1) strategy and design, (2) continuous improvement, and (3) impact. Here I describe each stream and give examples of key questions and actions to help you think about how to use these streams in your ATE work. Next *Conduit*, I'll discuss information sources and systems you can create to collect that information.

Strategy and design is evaluating your overall strategy, context, and activities. Key questions: Whose needs is our project or center designed to serve? What have we done/can we do to learn about those

needs? How have we used that information to shape our program and staff configuration? Are we trying to create outcomes that meet those needs? How will we know we've been successful? Key actions: needs assessment, articulating mission related to consumer needs, defining outcomes, describing success, setting performance standards.

Continuous improvement is evaluating the materials, staffing, and processes of your activities for adaptation and improvement. Key questions: How can we adapt our materials to better suit participants' needs? How can we improve our presentations or exercises to make them more easily understood? How can we create better functioning teams on our staff and among workshop

participants? Do we have personnel with the right skill sets involved in this activity? Key actions: getting specific feedback from participants using various methods, gap analysis, adaptation.

Impact is evaluating the influence of your programs, activities, and/or materials (usually for ATE or other external stakeholders). Key questions: How have our participants changed, developed, or increased their knowledge as a result of our efforts? What are the long-term effects of our efforts on the workforce? On our participants? Key actions: End of program/workshop/activity evaluations, follow-up and long-term tracking of participants, workforce analysis.

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Upcoming Webinars

Strong Evaluation Plans = Stronger Proposals

July 20 | 1-2:30 PM ET

We are just a couple of short months away from the due date for the next round of ATE proposals.

Join us as we review the elements of an ATE proposal's evaluation component and how to use it to strengthen your submission. We'll discuss how to tie evaluation tasks to the grant's goals and objectives and how to be sure the evaluation is responsive to NSF's expectations for ATE projects and centers.

We will feature Mike Lesiecki (PI, MATEC) and his evaluator, Norena Badway (San Francisco State University). Liz Teles (Teles Consulting LLC and former co-Lead Program Director, ATE Program) will also be on board to discuss her full list of helpful hints and fatal flaws of proposal evaluation plans. Tell your colleagues!

Ready, Set, Evaluate: How to Hit the Ground Running with your ATE Evaluation

September 21 | 1-2:30 PM ET

Designed for new ATE PIs and evaluators, this webinar will present information and strategies to help evaluation stakeholders achieve common understandings about the purposes, expectations, and deliverables for an ATE evaluation.

The EvaluATE team and ATE veterans will cover topics like how to turn the evaluation plan from your ATE proposal into actionable steps, how to work with subcontractors and partners to ensure their cooperation in obtaining evaluation data, what should be included in evaluation reports and who should receive them.

Register at www.evalu-ate.org/events

Hosted by our friends at MATEC