

ATE Evaluation 101

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The recording, slides, and handout for this webinar are available from ate.org/events/sept_2013/.

ATE Central Resources

ATE Central (atecentral.net) is an information hub for the ATE community that supports and promotes the work of the ATE program. Valuable resources for new and veteran ATE grantees include the ATE Central Handbook, Outreach Kit, Interactive Map, Social Media Directory, and ATE Events Calendar. ATE Central also serves as a library for the ATE community, maintaining digital records about each grant and its resources.

Evaluation Purposes

In the ATE context, grant-level evaluation serves three main purposes:

1. Learn how the project could be improved as it is implemented (formative evaluation).
2. Provide conclusions, supported by evidence, of the quality and impact of your achievements (summative evaluation)
3. Document what you did with the grant money (accountability). Tip: maintain a project vita as a record of your activities and accomplishments, e.g., see EvaluATE's at evalu-ate.org/downloads/EvaluATE_vita.pdf

Use/Dissemination of Evaluation Results

Formative evaluation reports/feedback are mostly for PIs and other grant staff to use internally and share with the stakeholders who need to know how the project is unfolding so they can help make adjustments where necessary.

Annual **summative evaluation reports** should be submitted to your program officer via Research.gov as part of annual report. (To find out what else goes in your annual report, see EvaluATE's summary of annual report contents at bit.ly/151llls.) Other places where information from your evaluation will come in handy include the following:

- Annual Survey of ATE Grantees (conducted annually February-March): www.evalu-ate.org/annual-survey
- New proposals: If the PI or a co-PI on the proposal has received prior funding from NSF related to this proposal, you must start the project description with a section titled "Results from NSF Prior Support" in which you provide "evidence of the quality and effectiveness" of your prior work. See the ATE program solicitation at www.nsf.gov/ate.
- ATE Centers Impact Books (published biannually): www.atecenters.org.

What to Expect from your External Evaluator

Typically, an evaluator for an ATE grant should provide a detailed evaluation plan, at least one interim report per year, annual reports, and opportunities to review and provide feedback on draft plans and materials. Most importantly, the evaluation should generate knowledge and insights you could not have obtained on your own.

Although you included an evaluation plan in your proposal, due to space limitations, it likely did not include the level of detail necessary to make it actionable. An actionable evaluation plan should provide additional details about the purpose of the evaluation, questions it will address, methods for data collection and sources of information, analytic procedures, deliverables and associated timelines, and a delineation of responsibilities.

Establishing Evaluation Needs and Expectations

For guidance on the first steps to take after you get your NSF award letter (with regard to getting your project and its evaluation off the ground), see Elaine Craft's *Principal Investigator "To-Do" Checklist: Before Launching Your Project Evaluation* at bit.ly/1aGkgLG. Be sure to review your funded proposal to refamiliarize yourself with your project plans. Review/determine data sources and partners, IRB requirements, data management plan, evaluation activity timeline, needed site visits/event evaluation, and plan for evaluator-project team communications and reporting deadlines.

PI's Golden Rule: Do not disperse money to partners/consultants before contractual obligations have been met, such as required reporting and providing data for evaluation.

Be aware that institutional research staff may assume that IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) data will serve your needs. However, IPEDS data are limited to first-time, full-time freshman cohorts. When you meet with your data person, be prepared to convey your specific data needs, including baseline data parameters, cohort definitions, data capture dates, and comparison data.