



Webinar Handout

## Right-Sizing Evaluation for ATE Small Grants

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Webinar slides and recording are available at [evalu-ate.org/events/mar\\_2014/](http://evalu-ate.org/events/mar_2014/).



**Mentor-Connect**

[www.teachingtechnicians.org/MentorConnectLanding.aspx](http://www.teachingtechnicians.org/MentorConnectLanding.aspx)

Mentor-Connect is an ATE project that works with cohorts of 20 two-year technical or community colleges each year to familiarize participants with the ATE program, help them develop grant writing and leadership skills, and pair them with ATE mentors throughout the grant development, submission, and funding process. Applications for new participants will be accepted in September 2014. For more information email [Mentor-Connect@fdtc.edu](mailto:Mentor-Connect@fdtc.edu).

Check out their how-to videos at [www.youtube.com/user/TeachingTechnicians](http://www.youtube.com/user/TeachingTechnicians). Evaluation-related titles include *How an Evaluator Contributes to a Project*, *When to Begin Working with an Evaluator*, *Essential: Include Evaluation in Your Proposal*, and *Do I Need an Evaluator During Proposal Development?*

### Right-sizing Evaluation for Small Projects

See the webinar recording or slides for a demonstration of how to align evaluation questions and data sources with a small project's purpose and scope. To learn more about adjusting evaluating methodologies to deal with time, budget, and data constraints, check out the book and website on RealWorld Evaluation by Michael Bamberger, Jim Rugh, and Linda Mabry: [realworldevaluation.org](http://realworldevaluation.org).

### Evaluation in the ATE Program

The two most important things you can do to better understand and respond to NSF's expectations for ATE project evaluations are to **(1) carefully read the entire program solicitation**, and **(2) ask your program officer**.

According to the ATE program solicitation, it is expected that all projects budget for the involvement of an independent evaluator. This person may be external to your project, but internal to your institution OR completely external. More than three-fourths of ATE projects and centers (77%) engage completely external evaluators.

### Cost-saving Strategies for Economical Evaluation

**Develop and use a tracking system to monitor project reach and participation.** Use spreadsheet or database software to keep a log of who participated and their key demographics, contact information, and nature of involvement in the project. This information is useful for evaluating your project's reach and engagement of its target audience, as well as for NSF annual reporting (via [research.gov](http://research.gov)) and the annual survey of ATE grantees (preview survey items at [evalu-ate.org/annual\\_survey](http://evalu-ate.org/annual_survey)).

**Maintain a record of key project activities and accomplishments.** A project fact sheet or vita provides succinct documentation of your past performance. This is useful for accountability—demonstrating that you followed through on what you proposed in terms of implementation. It is also a convenient resource for developing NSF annual reports. At EvaluATE, we maintain a center vita that is continually updated and publicly available—see [evalu-ate.org/about\\_us/center\\_vita](http://evalu-ate.org/about_us/center_vita).

**Utilize institutional research data to the fullest extent possible.** Data elements commonly available from an institutional research office include individual student data such as ID numbers, demographics, program of study, semester-to-semester retention, and graduation. Institutional data can be tracked over time and may be used to create comparison groups.

**Leverage internal and external evaluation to answer the most important questions.** Here are four possible scenarios for combining external and internal evaluation functions:

- **External Evaluator as Coach:** External evaluator provides regular guidance and feedback to the internal evaluator.
- **External Evaluator as Heavy-lifter:** External evaluator plays a lead role in planning the evaluation, designing instruments, analyzing results, and writing the report; the internal evaluator mainly gathers data.
- **External Evaluator as Architect:** External evaluator designs the overall evaluation and data collection instruments; the internal evaluator executes the plan with periodic guidance from external evaluator.
- **Divide and Conquer:** Internal evaluator is responsible for evaluation of reach, participation, and immediate outcomes; the external evaluator is responsible for the evaluation of longer-term outcomes.