The National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) program focuses on the education of technicians for the high-tech fields that drive the nation's economy. The faculty members of community colleges, which are the main source of technician education in the United States, have leadership roles in the initiatives that involve partnerships with industry and other educators. Since 1994, NSF ATE initiatives have developed a wide-range of innovations to better serve students and inform educators.

Five NSF ATE centers formed the Centers Collaborative for Technical Assistance (CCTA) in response to a Department of Labor request to NSF for technical assistance services to recipients of Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants. The five centers are National Center for Convergence Technology (CTC), South Carolina ATE National Resource Center (SCATE), Florida Advanced Technological Education Center (FLATE), Bio-Link National Center (Bio-Link) and Maricopa Advanced Technological Education Center (MATEC). The identification and sharing of NSF ATE best practices are among the services CCTA offers.

SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES THAT WORK

This hand-out addresses the imperative of National Science Foundation (NSF) and Department of Labor (DOL) grant recipients to sustain at least a portion of the work started with federal support.

For the NSF Advanced Technological Education program, being sustainable means that a project or center has developed a product or service that the host institution, its partners, and its target audiences want to maintain.

The DOL's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) initiative seeks evidence of grantees' planning to integrate funded strategies and activities into their non-grant funded program(s) for continued success.

SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

Research findings indicate that leaders of sustained initiatives focus early and often on
- defining the audience for their products or services;
- identifying internal and external stakeholders who can assist with sustainability goals; and
- exploring creative possibilities for institutionalizing and embedding the initiative's work.

PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- Gather data from the outset to identify the initiative's impact and the components to sustain.
- Utilize the data analysis and recommendations of an external evaluator.
- Determine whether sustainability will be through institutionalization, funding through the college budget, in-kind support from partners, donations from other sources, or a combination of resources.
- Talk with other staff members, business partners, college administrators, other ATE principal investigators and DOL project directors.
- Refine sustainability plans continuously based on data.
- Present data to financial decision makers well in advance of budget deadlines.
- Learn from what did not work.

CCTA webinar covering sustained project details:
youtube.com/watch?v=f6w_b4EJ3Fs

The Next Generation National ATE Center for Biotechnology and Life Science (Bio-Link) uses participant fees to continue its Summer Fellows Forum for community college and high school biotech instructors.

Collin College added three career coaches and three tutors to its personnel budget based on the effectiveness of the National Information, Security & Geospatial Technologies Consortium's intervention.

HOW SUSTAINABILITY HAPPENS

As a result of solid evidence, innovations started with ATE or TAACCCT grants have been sustained in the following ways:

- Courses as well as entire certificate and degree programs piloted with grant funds become part of regular offerings within a college's portfolio with related faculty positions absorbed within the personnel budget.
- Faculty professional development programs initially funded with grant support continue with participation fees.
- The cost of intervention staff positions for recruitment, coaching, and community outreach shift from grant support to colleges' general operating budgets.
- Tasks initiated by grant-funded faculty and staff become the responsibility of embedded college personnel.
- Partner industry organizations take over activities, such as faculty and partner awards programs and student internships, that began with grant support.
- Non-profit organizations are formed to continue grant-initiated programs or college foundations bring grant-initiated activities under their umbrellas.

The South Carolina Advanced Technological Education Center's Internship Program was institutionalized at Florence-Darlington Technical College when the internship coordinator's responsibilities were transferred to the scholarship coordinator.

Sustainability reports and other resources at

atecentral.net/sustainability

including:

Indicators of the Sustainability of NSF's Advanced Technological Education Program
Keep the Ball Rolling: Sustaining Projects Through Dissemination
Searching for Sustainability: Strategies from Eight Digitized Special Collections
End Games: The Challenge of Sustainability

CCTA | CENTERS COLLABORATIVE FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For more information, contact:

Christina Titus, Program Director at ctitus@collin.edu or 972.377.1786
Ann Beheler, PI at abeheler@collin.edu or 972.377.1649