

NEWEST resources

Evaluat|e is always looking for additional ways to help ATE projects and centers improve their evaluation endeavors.

We recently added new materials to our Web site. Find these at www.evalu-ate.org:

Our latest webinar on finding and starting off with an evaluator can be accessed by searching “evaluation basics” in our resource library.

We boiled down NSF’s solicitation into a bulleted list of expectations for each program area. Check out their evaluation expectations by searching “expectations” in our resource library.

Data snapshots from the 2009 survey are available through www.evalu-ate.org/reports. Use them for benchmarking or proposal support.

We now have a Facebook page and a LinkedIn group! Join us by searching for “Evaluat|e.”

Conduit editor: Stephanie Evergreen

Exemplary Evaluators

Identifying the right evaluator for an ATE project or center can be challenging. It helps if the evaluator not only knows the essentials of project evaluation, but also understands the NSF ATE program and the two-year college environment.

The right evaluator will be a positive influence on the success of your work, communicating regularly and nudging the project team to greater success by providing helpful formative feedback as the project progresses.

In addition to characteristics such as good communication skills, accessibility, and adherence to deadlines, consider whether your evaluator candidate is:

- knowledgeable about the purpose and priorities of the ATE program
- familiar with your type of college environment and student population
- experienced in evaluating grant-funded projects
- knowledgeable of and willing to adhere to accepted evaluation standards, as applicable
- willing to work with you prior to funding to develop a strong evaluation plan for your proposal
- incorporating both quantitative and qualitative evidence of impact into the evaluation
- willing to visit your college, meet with advisory groups, and/or travel to partner sites as needed
- likely to be proactive in notifying the project team when evaluation activities should be conducted
- clear in defining evaluation-related responsibilities for both the project team and the evaluator
- asking questions to thoroughly understand project goals and planned activities
- willing to help you use evaluation data to foster dissemination and sustainability (asking the “what next” questions)

With the right evaluator, evaluation can become a stimulating part of your ATE work. When talking with a prospective evaluator, if you find yourself thinking more broadly about your work and its implications for technician education beyond your institution/partnership, then you probably should buy this person a cup of coffee and ask him or her to stay!



Elaine Craft
President/CEO SCATE Inc. and
Director, SCATE Center of
Excellence



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EVALUATION terminology

Formative evaluation

An evaluator once likened formative evaluation to when the *cook* tastes the soup. It is when an evaluation is done for the purpose of improving the project. Sometimes findings are kept internal. Project staff are heavily invested in using the findings to change practices within the project.

Summative evaluation

The same evaluator also likened summative evaluation to when the *guests* taste the soup. It is when a client takes on an evaluation with the intention to have a formalized judgment of its work. Findings typically are submitted to a funder or external audience for decision making, though they can be used internally, too.

Evaluat|e is operated by the Western Michigan University Evaluation Center, a leader in developing the evaluation discipline and a long-time contributor to the improvement of National Science Foundation evaluations.

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REAL QUESTIONS

REAL ANSWERS

Should our advisory board be evaluating our project?

Role of Advisory Boards

Most ATE projects and centers make use of advisory boards. As their name implies, the primary function of the board is to advise, which in turn helps you improve your project or center work. This advice may be based on board members' opinions or on their particular area of expertise. But the advice also should be based on data and evidence that you and your evaluator provide. Thus, an advisory board can serve in a capacity to help evaluate the project. The members are another set of eyes that will make the evaluation process even more valuable.

How can you facilitate the advisory board's willingness and ability to evaluate? One way is to pose thought-provoking evaluation questions on your advisory board meeting agenda, such as these:

- Has the project implemented the activities described in the proposal?
- Is there evidence that those involved in the project have found the activities worthwhile? Have they found them useful?
- Is there evidence that indicates the goals of the project have been achieved?

It also may be helpful to facilitate communication between your external evaluator and the advisory board. One suggestion is to have the evaluator make presentations at advisory board meetings. The evaluator also could be asked to sit in on the advisory board executive sessions. This helps the evaluator to see outside perspectives, and it helps the board see the evaluator's take on things.

It is always important to communicate with your advisory board to describe and provide

evidence of your project's progress. You'll want to make sure that board members know that you want them to serve in an evaluative capacity, which could be stated explicitly in your invitations to them or in your ongoing discussions about their role in your project or center.

If you focus attention on evaluation, advisory committee feedback will lead naturally to sound advice and to the advisory board members serving as advocates for your project.

As many of you know, Evaluat|e is housed in The Evaluation Center. Early in The Evaluation Center's ATE work, we created a small handbook to guide projects and centers in their use of National Visiting Committees (NVCs). It is available through our resource library at resources.evalu-ate.org. To locate the handbook, use the keyword "NVC" in the search field. In general, NVCs are similar to advisory committees; but, in addition to reporting to the project, they also report to the National Science Foundation. The handbook is a set of checkpoints to consider when organizing and implementing NVCs. We believe that you will find it equally useful in conducting advisory committee meetings.

In sum, your advisory board should not serve as your sole evaluator, but instead should be a source of evaluative input for you, your external evaluator, and your internal project or center staff with evaluation-related duties. However, not all of your board members may be familiar with evaluation. You are welcome to invite them to our webinars or to browse the resources in our resource library.

Featured Resource Annual Survey Findings

The annual ATE survey is just around the corner. We always say that NSF uses the survey results to report to Congress and to make decisions about the program. Here are two recent examples.

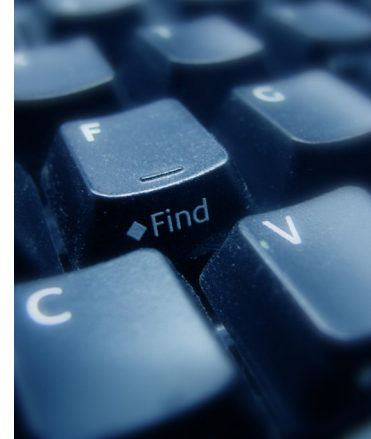
NSF was asked by a Congressional staffer about how much money goes to community colleges and how much goes toward implementation vs. evaluation. Lead ATE Program Director Eileen Lewis asked us to provide data that would help answer these questions. We were happy to let her know that

- 69 percent of awards were made to 2-year colleges

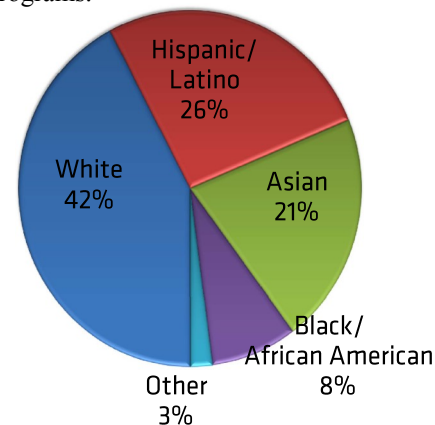
- grantees used 68 percent of their ATE funds to serve 2-year college audiences
- 7 percent of grant funds were spent on evaluation

As part of NSF's input on the "value of education and immigration on medical innovation," Dr. Lewis was asked to pull together data on ATE bio-related projects and centers and the diversity of students in those programs. Within the hour, we were able to extract data on the gender and ethnicity of students in ATE-supported programs in biotech and biomanufacturing.

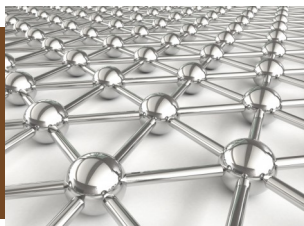
The following chart, which was included in our brief report to NSF,



shows the ethnic makeup of students enrolled in bio-related ATE programs.



For more survey results, go to www.evalu-ate.org/reports



Web Conferencing Tools

Conduit editor, Stephanie Evergreen, reviews online meeting and collaboration tools that can support client/evaluator communication.

Back in the olden days of e-mail, it was time-consuming to communicate with an evaluator. Multiple copies of e-mails and documents bounced around every time someone hit "Reply." Getting quick feedback on an idea could take days. Flying the evaluator in for a presentation of the findings was expensive! Web conferencing has arrived to eliminate (most of) those hassles.

Nowadays, presentations can be given remotely using Web-based interfaces. Some tools, like Elluminate or Adobe Pro Connect, must be purchased and can handle large audiences. Others are free with an account signup. Search out Vyew and DimDim as examples, but limit the number of participants. Either way, these applications allow for video

chatting, document sharing, and even recording.

Many ATE grantees use Web conferencing tools, so ask around for input or possible production partners. Also, many colleges and universities have purchased an institutional license with a particular company—check out what might be available already on campus.

For more informal communication between an evaluator and a client, many free Web applications are now on the market.

Many of you are already familiar with Skype. It allows one-on-one video or phone conversations over the Internet. It is free of charge when all parties have a Skype account and costs a nominal fee to call

to a landline or cell phone. Skype even works internationally.

Oovoo has a free service that does everything Skype can do, but its premium service handles up to six people video chatting at one time and includes document sharing.

Another upcoming powerful tool is Google Wave. It allows document sharing, blog updating, instant editing, and video calling in one e-mail space. The free service is currently available by invite only (again, ask around!), but feasibly could replace paid videoconferencing services.

This brief overview has only scratched the surface of what's out there. To find out more, start by asking colleagues about their tools and by searching the Web.



«First Name» «Last Name»
«Project/Center Name»
«Organization Name»
«Street Address»
«City», «State» «Zip Code»

Upcoming Webinar & Workshop

Webinar: Evaluation Tools

Wednesday, January 20, 1-2:30 PM ET

Presented by the Evaluation Center team

Hosted by our friends at MATEC

How, exactly, is evaluation done? This webinar introduces grantees to logic models and standards of performance—the blueprints for an evaluation.

Logic models detail the project's impacts into something that can be measured. Standards of performance establish how the project's work will be judged for success. You'll leave the webinar with a better understanding of how to create and use:

- Logic models
- Success indicators
- Performance standards

Join us for this free event to learn how to improve your evaluation plan.

Register for
either event at
www.evaluation-center.org/events

Workshop: Assessing Impact

Thursday & Friday, February 4-5, 2010

Rio Salado Community College
Tempe, Arizona

Joellen Killion, Instructor

This two-day workshop provides guidance and practical resources for measuring professional development impact through an eight-step evaluation framework.

Joellen Killion is the deputy executive director of the National Staff Development Council. Her recent publications include the widely-used *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*.

The regular cost of the workshop is \$695, but NSF funding provides a discount for ATE-affiliated participants, reducing the cost to only **\$295** (Maricopa Community Colleges members pay \$250).

Visit our Web site, where you also can find location and accommodation information. We hope to see you in sunny Tempe!