



# Get the Most Out of Your Project Evaluation:

## A Checklist for Using Evaluation Findings

Lyssa Wilson Becho, Michael Harnar, & Lori Wingate | October 2020

Evaluation use occurs when an evaluation leads to a change in the program being evaluated, the host organization, or people involved in the evaluation or the program. ATE projects are encouraged to use their evaluations for reasons beyond accountability to NSF. The ATE grant solicitation's review criteria reinforce the importance of using evaluation: "Is the evaluation likely to provide useful information to the project and others? Will the project evaluation inform others through the communication of results?" (<http://bit.ly/nsf-ate>). Below are 13 ways that project staff and other stakeholders can use evaluation findings throughout a project's lifecycle.

### 13 Ways to Use Evaluation Findings

#### For Project Improvement

Create a feedback loop so you are regularly reflecting on evaluation findings and using them to fine-tune your activities and deepen your project's impact.

1. **Maximize the strengths of project activities.** Evaluation findings reveal which activities are working and which are not. Set aside time for project staff to review and discuss evaluation findings and their implications for project activities. Leverage findings to increase project impact in the areas that are working well, such as expanding the reach of high-impact activities or dedicating more resources to successful areas.
2. **Assess and address any trouble areas.** Feedback from project participants, including students, faculty, or industry partners, could identify aspects of the project that are experiencing difficulties or are not making the intended impact. These insights will help you to more fully understand barriers to success and can suggest modifications to project activities, such as changes in curriculum content, training materials, or instructional activities.
3. **Ensure reach to project's target audience.** Obtain a deeper understanding of who your project is reaching and who is benefiting from the project. Disaggregate findings by participant characteristics such as gender, race, age, discipline, enrollment status, or other factors. This can determine whether some are benefiting more from your project than others or if an intended audience is not benefiting as expected.
4. **Add or modify industry engagements.** Evaluation findings may identify a gap in industry partnerships or business expertise. Use these insights to recruit new industry partners or find additional opportunities for collaboration.



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## For Project Dissemination and Advocacy

Promote technological education teaching and learning by sharing what you're learning with colleagues and others who can help advance your project and the field.

5. **Share lessons learned from your evaluation with other projects that have similar outcomes.** Share lessons documented through your evaluation at conferences, in practitioner and academic journals, or in blogs, newsletters, and magazines. Help others learn from your project's struggles and areas of success.
6. **Highlight project achievements for institutional administrators.** Most college administrators are too busy to read full evaluation reports. Provide a one-page summary of key achievements that highlight the value and impact of your work. They'll appreciate having this succinct document to share with institution stakeholders like board members, policy makers, and community partners.
7. **Disseminate achievements to industry partners.** Sharing evaluation findings with industry partners helps them to assess the return on investment for their time and other contributed resources. It may also prompt them to continue or increase their involvement with your project.
8. **Communicate key findings to participants who provided data for the evaluation.** A great way to thank evaluation participants is to share key findings with them. If evaluation findings suggest that some aspects of the project should change, demonstrate that you value participants' input by sharing how your project intends to respond.

## For Project Accountability

Fulfill the technical requirements of informing advisors and funders of your project's progress and impact.

9. **Share project activities and achievements with advisors.** If your project has an advisory group or a National Visiting Committee, share short reports or presentations to communicate key evaluation findings and progress towards your project goals. Invite discussion of implications for project activities.
10. **Include and respond to evaluation findings in your annual report to NSF.** In addition to integrating evaluation findings into your NSF annual report, be sure to demonstrate how the project responded to or took action because of evaluation results. Don't just report findings—explain how you are using the information.
11. **Include key results in your final outcomes report to NSF.** A project outcomes report is required within 90 days of a grant's end date. This report provides a "complete picture of the results" across all years of the project ([bit.ly/POR-FAQs](http://bit.ly/POR-FAQs)). Use your evaluation findings across the life of your project to summarize the most important lessons and showcase the impact of your project.

## **For Project Planning**

Use evaluation findings about past work to plan your next endeavor.

12. **Identify areas of need for future projects.** Review evaluation findings to identify emergent needs for faculty, students, or other stakeholders. Draw on these insights in order to craft goals and objectives for a new ATE submission.
13. **Substantiate results of prior support in future proposals.** If you have previously received an ATE grant, you will need to submit a summary of results from completed work in your ATE proposal. Use your evaluation findings to explain how what you learned from prior projects is informing your new submission.