



# Getting to Know an Evaluator: What Should I Ask?

Megan Zelinsky & Lyssa Wilson Becho | July 2022

It can be difficult to determine whether an evaluator will be a good fit. Project staff need to ensure that an evaluator has the right qualifications and skills, and that their personality and vision for evaluation mesh well with the project. Ask these questions to get to know an evaluator and figure out whether they're right for your project.

## Questions to Ask When Selecting an Evaluator

### Background and Experience

- What are your qualifications and skills?
- What approach do you take to evaluation?
- Have you evaluated projects in a community college setting? What about STEM education?
- Have you been involved in an NSF-funded project?
- How many other evaluation projects do you currently have? What are your other clients like?
- In your view, what makes a successful evaluation?

### Collaborating with Project Staff

- How do you typically get started with a new project?
- How do you determine key deliverables or outcomes of an evaluation?
- How often do you meet with project staff?
- Do you do site visits with projects?
- What is your role in interpreting data and encouraging the use of findings for project improvement?

### Budgeting and Contracting

- *[If in proposal development stage]* Do you assist with evaluation plan development for grant proposals? If so, what arrangement do you prefer for this service?
- What might an evaluation budget look like for my project? *[Probe for activities, deliverables, and cost.]*
  - **Tip for Project Staff:** If comparing proposed evaluation budgets between prospective evaluators, be sure to look not only at the cost but also at the level of service and planned deliverables. A lower-cost evaluation might come at the expense of the overall evaluation quality, thoroughness, or usefulness.

## Questions an Evaluator Might Ask You

- What are the goals of your project?
- What questions are you looking to answer with the evaluation?
- What would success look like for your project?
- What is your budget for evaluation?
- What are your institution's requirements around procurement? Will a request for proposals be required?
  - **Tip for Project Staff:** Meet with your institution's procurement officer or grants management office staff as early as possible to learn about the guidelines and policies your project must follow when contract with an evaluator. They are there to help! Building these relationships will help you find and contract with the right evaluator for your project.



This material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1841783. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.