



Evaluation Planning Checklist for ATE Proposals

Lori A. Wingate | July 2017

This checklist is intended to be of assistance to grant writers, project leaders, and evaluators as they develop evaluation plans for proposals to the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. It is organized around the components of an NSF proposal (see the [NSF Grant Proposal Guide](#)), with an emphasis on the evaluation elements that are needed in several locations throughout a grant proposal. This document is not intended to serve as a comprehensive checklist for preparing an ATE proposal. Rather, it includes guidance for aspects of a proposal that pertain to evaluation. All proposers should carefully read the [2017 ATE Program Solicitation](#).



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PROJECT SUMMARY

Your one-page project summary may be entered into text boxes in FastLane or you may upload the complete document.

What you need to do

- Prepare a one-page project summary that includes the following three sections:
 - Overview
 - Intellectual Merit
 - Broader Impacts

What you need to know

In addition to the general NSF merit review criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, there are some ATE-specific review criteria (see p. 14 of the [ATE program solicitation](#)). Some of these refer specifically to the project’s evaluation.

Resource:

[NSF’s Revised Merit Review Criteria Resources for the External Community](#)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Your Project Description is the main part of your overall proposal where you explain what you will do and achieve with the grant funding. It must not exceed 15 pages.

What you need to do

- Clearly explain the following aspects of your proposed work:
 - **Results from Prior NSF Support***
 - Rationale
 - Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, Activities
 - Timetable
 - Management Plan
 - Roles and Responsibilities of Senior Personnel
 - Plan for Sustainability
 - **Evaluation Plan***
 - Dissemination Plan

What you need to know

All elements of the Project Description, including the evaluation plan, should convey a coherent plan that supports your initial claims about the project’s intellectual merit and broader impacts (see above).

***Results from Prior NSF Support and Evaluation Plan** are the Project Description sections that must include evaluation elements. What should be included in these sections is described below. You may wish to include information related to the evaluation in other sections as well, such as the Timetable and Management Plan, as appropriate.

Results from Prior NSF Support

Results from Prior NSF Support is a subsection of the Project Description. This subsection is required only if the proposal's principal investigator (PI) or co-PI has received prior NSF funding related to this proposal within the past five years. For such proposals, the Project Description must begin with a subsection titled Results from Prior NSF Support. Centers seeking renewal have the option of submitting this information as a Supplementary Document. Whether embedded in the Project Description or uploaded separately, this information must not exceed five pages.

What you need to do	What you need to know
<input type="checkbox"/> Describe the specific achievements and outcomes of your previously funded NSF projects.	Reviewers will want to know not only what you <i>did</i> , but what <i>difference</i> you made with your prior funding. Use findings and conclusions from your prior project's evaluation to describe the project's quality and outcomes. Use the headings of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts and give priority to describing higher-level outcomes with supporting evidence. Resources: Prior NSF Support Checklist Getting Ready to Reapply: Highlighting Results of Prior Support

Evaluation Plan

The Evaluation Plan is a subsection of the Project Description. EvaluATE recommends dedicating 1-2 pages to the Evaluation Plan. See also the [ATE Proposal Evaluation Plan Template](#).

What you need to do	What you need to know
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your institution's procurement policies to determine if you are allowed to select an evaluator on a sole-source basis prior to funding. - If NO, see guidance to the right - If YES, follow steps below.	Reviewers will expect to see a specific evaluator identified. If you cannot do that, identify your institution's policies that prevent you from selecting an evaluator prior to funding and explain the process you will use to locate and select an evaluator. Resources: Evaluation Procurement: Regulations, Rules, and Red Tape...Oh My! DIY Evaluation Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Locate an evaluator who will work with you on your proposal and share this checklist with them.	Some evaluators are willing to help develop an evaluation plan at no charge with the understanding that they will get the evaluation contract if the proposal is funded. Make this agreement explicit. Establish expectations for the evaluator's contribution to proposal development, including how much space in the Project Description is being allotted for the Evaluation Plan, what information you need from them, and when you need it. Provide sufficient lead time—ideally at least one month. Resource: Locating and Selecting an Evaluator for an ATE Proposal

- Identify your evaluator by name and briefly describe their qualifications; refer to their biosketch and commitment letter and include those as Supplementary Documents.

Disciplinary knowledge is a plus, but you need to convince reviewers that the evaluator has specialized knowledge and experience in *program/project evaluation*.

Resource:

[Evaluator Biosketch Template](#)

- Work with your evaluator to develop a logic model that specifies your proposed project's activities, outputs, and intended short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes.

A logic model is *not* required for ATE proposals. However, it is a useful tool for providing an overview of your project for reviewers.

Developing a logic model helps project planners ensure that the project's activities are logically linked with its intended outcomes. A logic model is especially useful for evaluation planning, as it highlights the project's key elements. If you include a logic model in your proposal, it should take up no more than one page—make sure the text is large enough for reviewers to read easily. Do *not* include a logic model as a separate Supplementary Document—the ATE program allows only specific Supplementary Documents.

Resources:

[ATE Logic Model Template](#)

[Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models](#)

- Specify the focus of the evaluation by stating key evaluation questions (or evaluation objectives).

Review the ATE program solicitation for specific expectations for evaluation of various kinds of projects—use this information to help focus your evaluation. For example, evaluation plans for national centers are expected to describe how impacts on institutions, faculty, students, and industry will be assessed. When formulating evaluation questions or objectives, keep the following points in mind:

- The evaluation should be clearly aligned with the project's goals, objectives, and activities (and logic model, if it is included in the proposal).
- Evaluation results should (a) provide or directly inform determinations of project quality and outcomes; and (b) inform decision making about how to improve the project.

Resource:

[Evaluation Questions Checklist for Program Evaluation](#)

- Describe the data collection plan, including what indicators will be used, how the data for each indicator will be collected, from what sources, and when.

The description of the data collection plan should demonstrate a clear vision for what will be measured to answer each evaluation question and how data related to each of the indicators will be collected, from what sources, and when. If specific existing instruments are to be used for data collection, cite them. It is advisable to draw on multiple data sources using multiple methods to answer each overarching evaluation question.

Resources:

[Data Collection Planning Matrix](#)

[Criteria for Selection of High-Performing Indicators](#)

- Describe the analytical and interpretive procedures that will be used to transform raw data into usable information.

You may not have enough space to provide a lot of detail here, but you should show that there is a plan for how the data will be analyzed and interpreted to answer the evaluation questions. Reviewers will want to know how a project’s success will be determined. Therefore, it is useful to identify what types of comparisons will be made (e.g., over time, between groups, against targets) to reach conclusions about the project’s progress, quality, and outcomes.

- Identify the main evaluation deliverables and their intended uses.

Typical evaluation deliverables include periodic reports (at least annually for formal written reports, more frequently for informal reports), detailed evaluation plans, and data collection instruments and protocols. Some evaluations may also produce conference presentations, journal articles, or other materials. The evaluation section of a proposal does not provide sufficient detail to serve as a guide for the execution of the evaluation. Therefore, an actionable evaluation plan and timeline should be one of the first deliverables provided by the evaluator once the project is funded. In explaining what reports will be developed and how they will be used, remember that an ATE-specific intellectual merit criterion is, “Is the evaluation likely to provide useful information to the project and others?” Describe how the project will use the evaluation results.

- Identify when key evaluation activities will take place and deliverables produced.

The evaluation timeline should show that data will be collected in a timely way so the information can be used for project improvement and accountability.

REFERENCES CITED

FastLane has a special section for uploading a References Cited document. Do not include references as part of your 15-page Project Description.

What you need to do	What you need to know
<input type="checkbox"/> Include references to evaluation literature as needed.	References to the evaluation literature help show how the evaluation is grounded in and building on current knowledge and practice. If you are going to apply a specific evaluation approach or instrument, provide citations to support its use in your context.

BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

The project Budget is entered into a form in FastLane. A Budget Justification—up to three pages—is uploaded as a separate document.

What you need to do	What you need to know
<input type="checkbox"/> Include evaluation costs as part of the consultant budget line or as a separate subaward budget.	Typically, a subaward is between institutions, and a consulting agreement is between an institution and an individual. Check with your institution’s grants office to ensure you are proceeding in accordance with its policies.

A general rule of thumb is to dedicate 10 percent of a project’s costs to evaluation. Among ATE grant recipients specifically, the average is 7 percent. The evaluation budget request should be consistent with the scope of the evaluation effort.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> In the Budget Justification, explain the evaluation costs, including the evaluator’s daily rate, time committed to the project (broken down by major tasks), travel, materials, and indirect costs, if applicable. | Salary rates for the evaluator must be consistent with what they normally earn for comparable work, according to the NSF Grant Proposal Guide . If there are multiple members of the evaluation team, list rates for all persons. |
| | If the evaluation component is a subaward, the evaluator must prepare a detailed budget and budget justification in NSF format. |

CURRENT AND PENDING SUPPORT

If the evaluation is a subaward, you will need a Current and Pending Support form for your evaluator, indicating their commitments to other projects, regardless of funder.

What you need to do	What you need to know
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide your evaluator with a Current and Pending Support form to complete and return to you.	Current and pending support information may be added to your proposal using FastLane’s interactive system, but if you need one from your evaluator, it may be more efficient to have them complete the form and send it to you for uploading.
	Resource: Current and Pending Support form

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

ATE program proposals require certain Supplementary Documents. These files are uploaded separately and are not part of the 15-page Project Description. Supplementary Documents must not be used to extend the Project Description beyond 15 pages. The ATE program solicitation explicitly states that “Submission of the evaluation plan in supplementary documents is not allowable.” Furthermore, inclusion of documents other than those listed below and in FastLane “will result in the proposal being returned without review.”

What you need to do	What you need to know
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare a Data Management Plan (2 pages maximum) organized around the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Types of data - Standards for data and metadata format and content - Policies for access and sharing, including provisions for privacy, confidentiality, security, and intellectual property - Policies and provisions for re-use, redistribution, and production of derivatives - Plans for archiving data and preserving access to them 	Data Management Plans (DMPs) are required for all NSF proposals. The plan should address the topics listed to the left, but it is most important to explain how data or products will be shared with others and how the privacy of the individuals about or from whom you gather data will be protected. The DMP should address all data and products generated by the project, including those from the evaluation. ATE projects must archive their products with ATE Central to ensure availability after funding ends. Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide – section on Data Management Plans - ATE Central Handbook includes a sample DMP - DMP Online—an interactive system for generating a DMP tailored to NSF requirements - Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research has a DMP framework with guiding questions and sample language - ATE Central’s archiving webpage explains how to plan for archiving and use their services.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and upload a list of individuals who will receive compensation from the project. | <p>All members of the evaluation team should be on this list.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain and upload your evaluator's biosketch . | <p>The evaluator's biosketch should reflect their past experience in conducting project evaluations and with the discipline related to the ATE project. There is a section in FastLane for uploading biosketches, but it is for senior project personnel only, so the evaluator's biosketch should be included as a Supplementary Document. Follow the two-page, NSF biosketch format.</p> <p>Resources:
 Evaluator Biosketch Template
 NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide – section on biographical sketches</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Include a commitment letter from your evaluator, along with your other Letters of Collaboration. | <p>The evaluator's commitment letter should convey their personal and organizational commitment to provide evaluation services for the grant if it is funded.</p> |

Checklist Acknowledgments

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Checklist Quick-Access URLs (listed alphabetically by title)

- ATE Central Archiving: <https://atecentral.net/archiving>
- ATE Central Handbook: <https://atecentral.net/handbook?P=AC--Handbook>
- ATE Logic Model Template: <http://bit.ly/ate-logic>
- ATE Proposal Evaluation Plan Template: <http://bit.ly/ev-pl-tmp>
- Evaluator Biosketch Template: <http://bit.ly/eval-bio>
- Criteria for Selection of High-Performing Indicators: <http://bit.ly/indicator-eval>
- Current and Pending Support Form: <https://doresearch.stanford.edu/node/2221181/attachment>
- Collection Planning Matrix: <http://bit.ly/data-matrix>
- DIY Evaluation Planning: <http://www.eval-ate.org/newsletter/2015-summer-rqra/>
- DMP Online: <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/dmponline>
- Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models: <http://lmcourse.ces.uwex.edu/>
- Evaluation Procurement: Regulations, Rules, and Red Tape...Oh My!: <http://bit.ly/rearick>
- Evaluation Questions Checklist for Program Evaluation: <http://bit.ly/eval-questions>
- Guidelines for Data Management Plans: <https://nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>
- Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research: <http://bit.ly/2tuT3hw>
- Locating and Selecting an Evaluator for an ATE Proposal: <http://bit.ly/eval-prop>
- NSF Prior Support Checklist: <http://bit.ly/nsf-prior>
- NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide: <http://bit.ly/pappg17>
- NSF's Revised Merit Review Criteria Resources: https://nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/resources.jsp