The Nuts and Bolts of ATE Evaluation Reporting

by Jason Burkhardt, Michael Lesiecki, Krystin Martens, and Lori Wingate

The recording, slides, and handout for this webinar are available from evalu-ate.org/events/may_2013/

Outline for an Effective Evaluation Report

Front matter: Acknowledgements, table of contents, and lists of tables and figures (if necessary)

Executive summary: 1-2 page snapshot of key findings

Introduction: Background and context of evaluation and project evaluated

Key Evaluation Questions/Objectives: The focus of the evaluation stated as questions or objectives

Methodology: Description of the indicators, data sources and collection methods, and analytic and interpretive procedures

Findings: Key results organized by evaluation question/objective

Limitations: Discussion of factors that may have influenced the results in important ways

Recommendations: Suggestions for improvement grounded in evidence

References: List of works cited

Appendices Instruments, detailed results, additional information about methods, if necessary

To learn more about this layered approach to reporting, see *Evaluation Methodology Basics: The Nuts and Bolts of Sound Evaluation* by Jane Davidson (Sage, 2005).

NSF Annual and Project Outcomes Reports

Research.gov offers several useful documents to help users with project reporting and other tasks—see http://1.usa.gov/16NJqXr. EvaluATE has also created a document that lists all the annual reporting categories and includes Research.gov's directions about what should go into each section—it's available at evalu-ate.org/downloads/resources/Research_gov.docx.

Integrate salient evaluation results into the Accomplishments section of your annual report, where you are asked to describe "Key outcomes."

For information on meeting reporting requirement, check out *Hot Compliance Topics for a Cold February Day*: www.ncuraregion1.org/images/RADG_021408.pdf

Beyond Reporting

Evaluations should add value to projects. Beyond traditional reporting, evaluation results should be used to improve projects, support decisions to redirect resources (if needed), for dissemination, and provide evidence about whether and how projects should continue or expand.

Improve: Carefully consider evaluator's recommendations, review all qualitative feedback for opportunities for improvement, break down results by participant type to find out who is most and least well-served, and make time to review and reflect on evaluation results. See the Evaluation Feedback Workshop Checklist for guidance on organizing a meeting to review evaluation results: www.wmich.edu/evalctr/archive_checklists/feedbackworkshop.pdf.

Redirect: If major changes are needed to increase project effectiveness, use evaluation results to support decisions. Be sure to check with program officers about significant changes.

Disseminate: Create "highlights reports" for public consumption, write up evaluation findings in scholarly publications, and work with your organization's media person to develop press releases. For an example of a "highlights report," see one by the Marine Advanced Technology Education Center at evalu-ate.org/downloads/resources/MATE_Highlights.pdf.

For publication outlets, check out the list of career and technical education-related journals created by the University of Wisconsin's Center for Education and Work: www.cew.wisc.edu/resourcecollections/ctejournals.aspx.

Grow: If you apply for additional funding from NSF or other sources, you should use your evaluation results to build a case for building on or modifying the project, as the findings warrant.