Webinar Follow-Up

Give Your Proposal a Competitive Edge with a Great Evaluation Plan

Information about this webinar, including links to all resources mentioned during the webinar, is available from http://www.evalu-ate.org/webinars/aug18/

The following questions were asked but not addressed during the webinar:

1. Should the 10% budget for evaluation include travel funds for the evaluator?

Yes, the total costs for the evaluation include the costs for any travel the evaluator needs to do in order fulfill their obligations to the project. For example, the evaluator may need to travel to meet with the project team, collect data, or attend the ATE Principal Investigators Conference (or other relevant conferences). Describe the anticipated travel expenses in the budget justification.

2. Does NSF have any writing material that support the 10% budget for evaluation?

No, NSF does not have an agency-wide policy about budgeting for evaluation. Different programs may offer guidelines, but many—such as the ATE program—do not. All evaluation costs must be justified, whether they follow the 10 percent rule-of-thumb or not.

3. What would you say when an evaluator writes their part of the proposal, the PI receives the money then decides he/she doesn't want to use the evaluator although the PI used the evaluator's credentials to win the award?

Unfortunately, this does happen. The evaluator should be explicit up-front about the expectation that they will be contracted to perform the evaluation if the project is funded—if possible, put the agreement in writing. While the situation described is unethical, it is not illegal or in violation of any NSF policy, so it is a matter for the evaluator and the project's institution to work out.

4. Are there certain programs at universities that we should target to find evaluators?

The most efficient way to locate a university faculty or staff member with evaluation experience may be to contact to university's research and sponsored program's office (it may go by different names) to ask for leads. Otherwise, departments of education/education research, sociology, and psychology are likely locations for faculty with evaluation expertise. The American Evaluation Association has a listing of university graduate and certification programs in evaluation (https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=43), which have faculty with expertise in evaluation and possibly graduate students available to work on evaluation projects for field experience.

5. Sustainability is one question that measures success of project. How do you ask these questions?

Possible evaluation questions about sustainability could be as follows:

- What aspects of the project have the greatest and least potential to be sustained?
- To what extent is the [aspect of project] sustainable?

Indicators of sustainability include things like

- institutional support, evidenced by the commitment of funding, personnel, facilities, or equipment to support the initiative that was started with grant funding
- industry support, evidenced by in-kind or monetary contributions that will continue after the grant expires
- consumer/client/student demand for the service being offered by the project
- realistic business plans for continuing project activities after grant funding ends

If the project has a logic model, an assessment of sustainability should begin with a review of the "Inputs" (or "Resources") section. What special resources are being brought to bear on this project? Which ones must be continued beyond the grant for project activities (or other aspects) to be sustained? If some inputs are removed, do others need to replace them?

6. Can I use this evaluation to design plan about public health intervention?

The general approach described in the webinar should work for the evaluation of most types of projects. However, it is essential that those involved in planning any evaluation attend to the specific guidelines and requirements provided by the funding agency. For example, in public health, it would be important to know the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health and make sure the evaluation plan addresses all six elements of this framework.

7. If you make a really nice evaluation plan with logic model, data matrix tables and things, you could easily burn up 3 or 4 pages on evaluation. What is a reasonable balance here?

For a typical ATE project, we recommended dedicating up to two pages (or 10 percent) of the project description to evaluation. (Projects that are evaluations in and of themselves would take the entire 15 pages to describe the evaluation plan). The evaluation plan for complex projects may need more summary-type information than the evaluation for a simpler project in order to fit in this limited space. The evaluation plan included in our (EvaluATE's) most recent proposal is attached to demonstrate how key evaluation elements can be conveyed in a concise way. The most important thing is to communicate to reviewers that there is a concrete plan for evaluating the project, which can be elaborated after an award is made.

BROADER IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The ATE program is focused on tangible broader impacts in terms of making the United States more globally competitive through improved technological education. EvaluATE's purpose is to support ATE program grantees to conduct high-quality evaluation that can be used to improve individual projects and the program overall. EvaluATE's expanded work will directly contribute to developing the capacity of institutions to conduct evaluation—within ATE and beyond. Our research on measuring equity, diversity, and inclusion will generate actionable findings that can be applied at institutions to assess progress toward broadening participation in STEM, an NSF priority (NSF, 2018a).

Logic Model

As shown in our logic model (Figure 2), EvaluATE's research on evaluation, training and technical assistance, and evaluation network facilitation activities are oriented toward enhancing the capacity of ATE program community members to conduct and use high-quality evaluation in the interest of advancing the goals of the ATE program.

Figure 2. EvaluATE's logic model

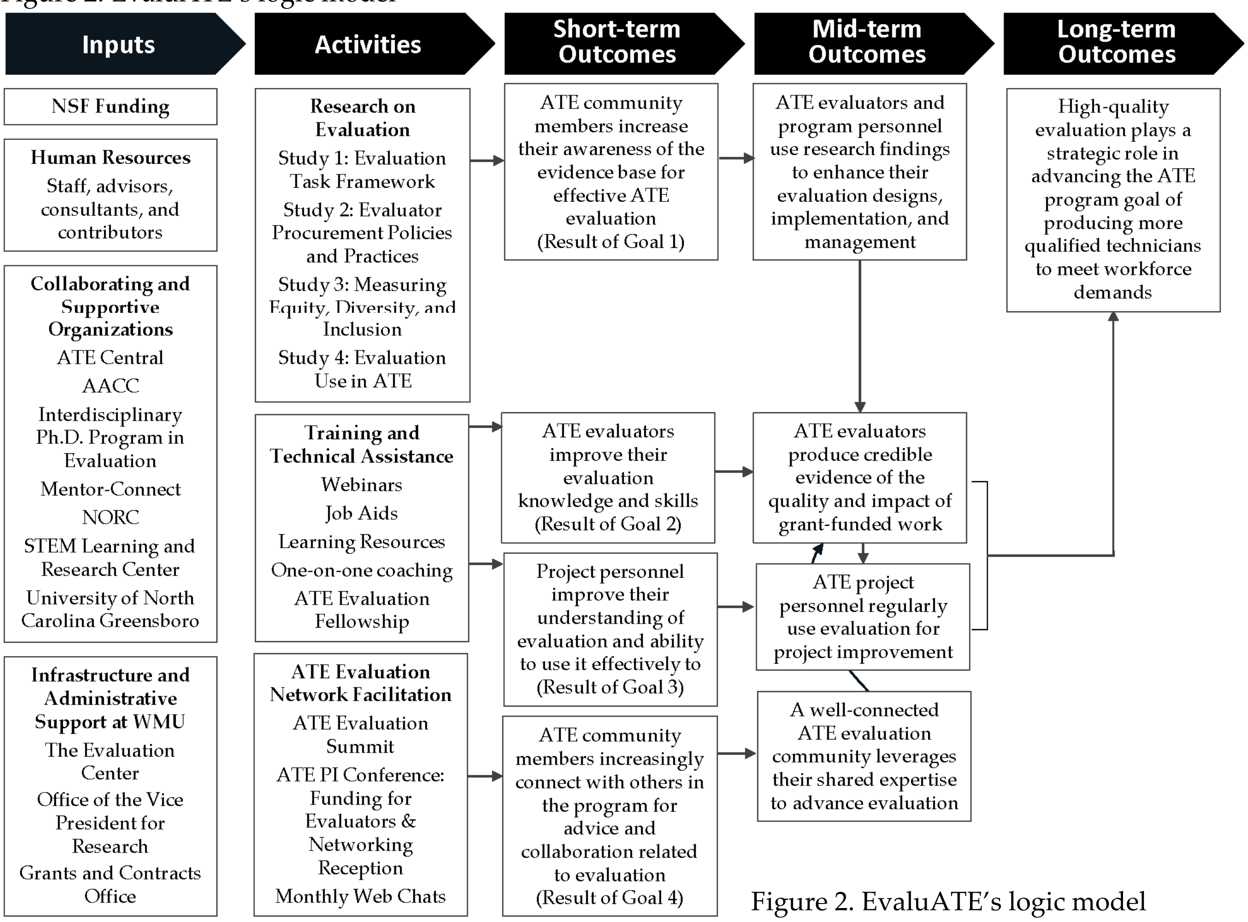

Figure 2. EvaluATE's logic model

Evaluation Plan

EvaluATE's outcomes and implementation will be assessed through a combination of external and internal evaluation. The internal component primarily serves accountability and formative evaluation purposes—documenting our processes and outputs and answering questions regarding user engagement, satisfaction, and immediate learning. The external component is more outcome-oriented, addressing questions regarding sustained learning, use, and impact. The external portion of the evaluation will be led by Dr. Lana Rucks of The Rucks Group.

EvaluATE's evaluation is driven by six overarching evaluation questions. Table 2 presents these questions, along with the key indicators that will be used to answer each question, data sources and methods, and whether responsibility for data collection and analysis lies with the internal (I) or external (E) evaluation teams. The indicators are based on a body of research on evaluation capacity building (Labin, 2014; Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersman & Lesesne, 2014; Leviton, 2013; Preskill & Boyle, 2008) and evaluation of training and communities of practice (Guskey, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011), which conveys the importance of measuring not only individual changes in attitude, knowledge, and practice, but also organizational changes, such as the degree to which evaluation is reflected in an organization's culture and the daily work of personnel.

Table 2. Evaluation Plan Overview

Questions	*Key Indicators*	*Methods and Sources*
1. To what extent has EvaluATE engaged its intended and other audiences? (Engagement)	- Webinar attendance and participant characteristics - Users' reports of sharing information from EvaluATE with others	- Participation records (I) - Biannual external evaluation surveys (E)
2. To what extent are EvaluATE's users satisfied with EvaluATE's activities and resources? (Satisfaction)	- Users' ratings and descriptions of satisfaction with EvaluATE activities and resources	- Event feedback surveys (I)
3. To what extent has EvaluATE's work led to improvements in users' knowledge of and attitudes toward evaluation? (Learning)	- Users' ratings and descriptions of how much they learned from EvaluATE - Users' attitudes toward evaluation	- Event feedback surveys (I) - Biannual external evaluation surveys (E)
4. To what extent has EvaluATE's work prompted users to (a) modify their evaluation practices and (b) extend their network of evaluation colleagues? (Application)	- Users' ratings and descriptions of their intent to apply what they learned from webinars and workshops - Users' ratings and descriptions of EvaluATE's influence on their evaluation practice - Social network analysis	- Event feedback surveys (I) - Biannual external evaluation surveys (E) - Interviews with TA recipients, including review of pre- and post-TA evaluation materials (E)
5. To what extent has EvaluATE contributed to improvements in evaluation quality? (Impact)	- Users' ratings and descriptions of changes in the quality of their evaluations attributable to EvaluATE's influence	- Event feedback surveys (I) - Biannual external evaluation surveys (E) - Interviews with TA recipients, including review of pre- and post-TA evaluation materials (E)
6. How is EvaluATE influencing the program's overall evaluation capacity? (Impact)	- Changes in organizational processes and practices related to evaluation - Diffusion and uptake of EvaluATE's research findings	- Biannual external evaluation surveys (E) - Key informant interviews (E) - Environmental scan, plus all data sources (I, E)

Qualitative data will be analyzed by a two-member team working collaboratively to identify themes. Quantitative survey data will be analyzed using mainly descriptive; inferential tests will be performed to compare results for different types of EvaluATE users (e.g., evaluators, project staff). Biannual external evaluation survey findings will be compared against baseline results and interpretive rubrics developed jointly by The Rucks Group and EvaluATE. Because of the extensive dataset across multiple years, biannual external evaluation survey results can be compared against previous iterations. To augment self-reported data, the external evaluation team will compare TA recipients' evaluation materials pre- and post-technical assistance to assess the degree of improvement. Conference calls between the external evaluators and EvaluATE staff will keep all parties apprised of the evaluation's progress and results. Reports will be prepared in accordance with the schedule indicated in the project timeline (Table 3). Results will be shared with the broader evaluation community via conferences and publications.