EvaluATE

Evaluator Procurement in the ATE Program
Initial Findings

Almost all types of projects funded by the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program are required to have an evaluation component to assess their quality and effectiveness. A subset of questions on the 2019 survey* of ATE principal investigators (PIs) asked about issues related to evaluation procurement: how PIs selected their evaluators, the institutional guidelines that govern when and how they are allowed to engage with evaluators, and the evaluators' involvement in proposal development. These questions were asked in order to set the stage for EvaluATE's larger study of evaluation procurement in the ATE program.

*For technical details about this survey, see the 2019 ATE Survey report: https://www.evalu-ate.org/annual_survey/ate-survey-prior-reports/

Most ATE projects selected evaluators whom they had **already worked with** or who had been **recommended by a colleague**.
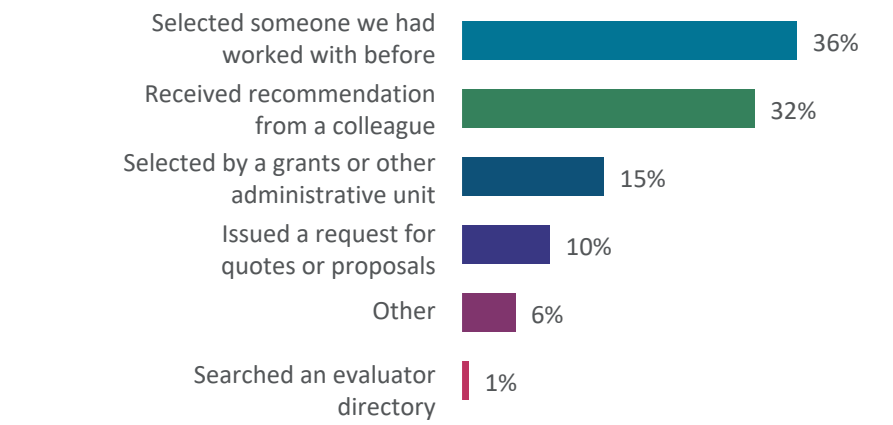

- Selected someone we had worked with before — 36%
- Received recommendation from a colleague — 32%
- Selected by a grants or other administrative unit — 15%
- Issued a request for quotes or proposals — 10%
- Other — 6%
- Searched an evaluator directory — 1%

Figure 1. PIs' reports of how they selected their evaluators (n=238)

Thirty percent of PIs reported that their institutions had **guidelines about when and how they could select an evaluator**.

These 72 PIs were asked about the nature of these guidelines. Table 1 shows their responses.

n	Guidelines Governing Evaluator Selection
10	Cannot select an evaluator before a grant award is made
19	Must choose from a pre-approved pool
26	Can choose any evaluator at any point, but must justify the selection (e.g., with a sole-source declaration)
29	Must conduct a competition in the form of a request for quotes or proposals
4	Other

Table 1. PIs' reports of institutional guidelines about procurement (n=72)

Most PIs reported that their **evaluators were involved in developing the evaluation plans for their proposals**, which they believe was **important for their proposals' success**.
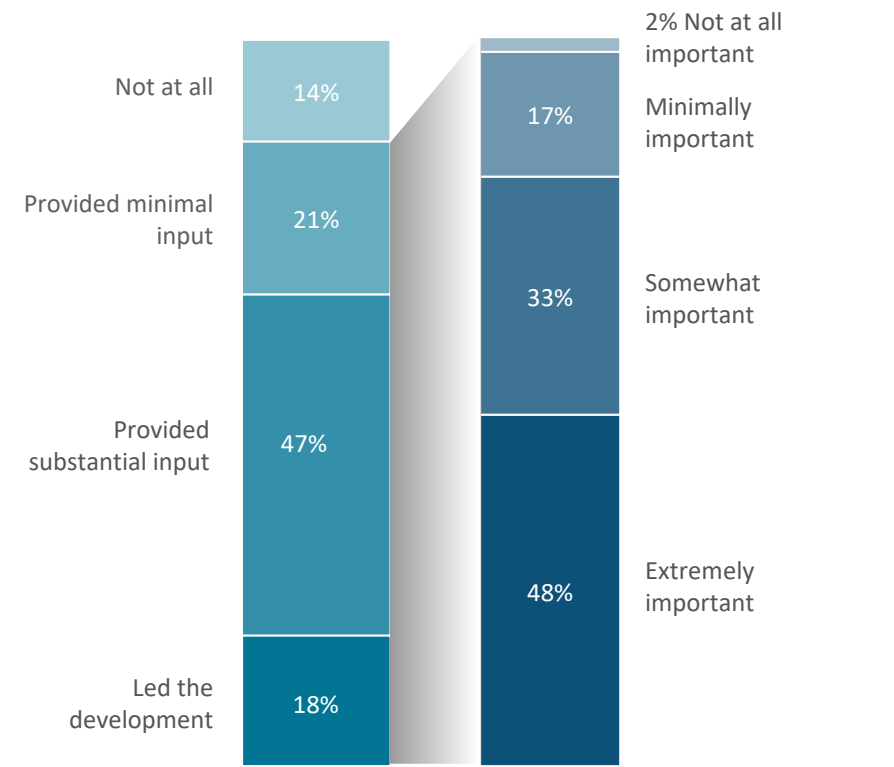

Figure 2. PIs' reports of the extent to which their evaluators were involved in developing their evaluation plans (n=241)

- Not at all — 14%
- Provided minimal input — 21%
- Provided substantial input — 47%
- Led the development — 18%

Figure 3. PIs' reports of the extent to which they believe evaluators' involvement was important to proposals' success. (n=208)

- 2% Not at all important
- Minimally important — 17%
- Somewhat important — 33%
- Extremely important — 48%

The vast majority of PIs reported that their evaluators were involved in the development of the evaluation sections of their ATE proposals (Figure 2). More than half of these PIs said their evaluators were either "extremely" (48%) or "somewhat" (33%) important to the success of their proposals (Figure 3).

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