

Evaluation Basics for Non-evaluators

Q&A FROM THE WEBINAR

Due to the large volume of questions during the webinar, we were unable to answer them all. Below are the questions that were not answered during the webinar. If there are further questions, please do not hesitate to follow up via email: info@evalu-ate.org.

Can you provide a list of potential evaluators?

EvaluATE does not supply a list of ATE evaluators, but most ATE evaluators are on the [ATE Central Evaluator Map](#). The National Science Foundation does not maintain a list of evaluators. Evaluators are typically selected at the discretion of the project's leadership and home institution.

How do we write the evaluator into our grant if we are already utilizing them before the proposal is submitted?

If you already working with an evaluator—on an existing project or to assist in developing a proposal—ask them for a letter of commitment, bio sketch, and budget that you can include with your proposal package. To learn more, see Question 5 in EvaluATE's guide, [Finding and Selecting an Evaluator for an ATE Proposals](#).

This [10% for evaluation] is too high? Other agencies required at least 3-2%.

As noted in the webinar, the general rule of thumb is for 10 percent of a project's total costs to go to evaluation. Some projects may require substantially more evaluation effort, some substantially less. If a funding agency or program provides its own guideline, that is definitely what the grant seeker should follow.

Would an internal evaluator be considered independent if he/she is in the same department (i.e., institutional research) which the project team must interact for ongoing data collection?

The ATE program solicitation states that "The evaluator may be employed by a project's home institution, as long as he or she works in a separate organizational unit (e.g., a different department) that has a different reporting line than that of the project's home unit. The evaluator can work the same institution where the project is located, but the evaluator must work in a separate unit with a different reporting chain" (p. 12)

Thus, from the ATE program's perspective, an evaluator who is a staff member in a college's institutional research office would be considered sufficiently independent, as long as they don't have another substantive role of the project, such as designing or delivering the funded project's activities (other than evaluation).

Can you change your evaluator?

Yes, evaluators are selected, hired, and fired at the discretion of the funded project's leadership and home institution.

What is needed to become an evaluator?

Evaluators should have skills in both qualitative and quantitative research methods, working knowledge of evaluation theory, and strong communication and interpersonal skills.

In the ATE program, it's beneficial if evaluators are familiar with NSF and two-year colleges. ATE principal investigators appreciate evaluators who have knowledge of the project's discipline as well.

To learn more about what professional evaluators should know and be able to do, see the following resources:

- [The Program Evaluation Standards](#)
- [American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators](#)
- [Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice](#) (U.S. evaluation competencies are being drafted)

How do we resolve differences in what the project leaders and evaluator think is important?

A project evaluator brings program evaluation expertise to a project and may have content area expertise in the project's disciplinary area. However, they are a contractor or consultant that works in service of a client, i.e., the leaders and home institution. The evaluator can provide their expert advice and insights based on the evaluation evidence, but the project leaders lead the project and are responsible for the project's quality and outcomes.

Does the PI (Principal Investigator) have to be a faculty member or can it be a grant project manager?

The matter of who can and cannot serve as a principal investigator (PI) is largely determined by a college's policy. Typically, a PI brings intellectual leadership to a project.

Do we need to write a contract for the evaluator?

This would be determined by the organization where the project is located. When entering into any business relationship in which one party is providing services for a fee to another, it is good practice to have a contract in place. If an evaluator works for the same institution, a memorandum of understanding could be used instead of a contract.