A good place to start when thinking about how to approach the evaluation of an ATE professional development (PD) project is the ATE program solicitation. With regard to professional development grants, it states that “projects should be designed to enhance the educators’ disciplinary capabilities, teaching skills, and understanding of current technologies and practices, and 21st century skills.” It further recommends that the “Evaluation should demonstrate use in the classrooms and sustainable changes in practice of participating faculty and teachers. Changes in student learning outcomes as well as students' perceptions of technical careers should be measured.” (2011 ATE program solicitation, p. 5)

ATE grants are multi-year. However, sustainable, lasting systemic change is a long-term proposition. It is important to consider the potential for systemic change as the project begins, and build in realistic indicators that the project activities are influencing the system.

WHEN EVALUATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ...

1. **It is a good idea to evaluate the design and process of PD interventions, as well as the outcomes.** This is especially helpful for formative evaluation—which provides feedback for improving interventions while they’re underway. It’s also critical for illuminating strengths and weaknesses of a PD effort to aid in understanding why certain outcomes were or were not achieved. The National Staff Development Councils’ Standards for Professional Learning and the Southern Regional Education Board’s Standards for Online Professional Development are a good source of information about what high-quality professional development looks like. Fellow instructors or program deans with content knowledge in the area of the PD can be helpful as collaborators and internal evaluators, providing feedback on the quality of the content, instruction, and materials.

2. **Don’t reinvent the wheel with your evaluation design.** Professional development is one of a relatively few areas where there are well-established frameworks for evaluation. Donald Kirkpatrick is the guru of professional development evaluation and the originator of the “Four Levels” approach. Thomas Guskey adapted this model specifically for education contexts. Jack and Patti Phillips bring a return-on-investment perspective this work. Check out their original works for great ideas for framing your PD evaluation and for guidance in determining the kind of data and data sources to employ. Joellen Killion brings these models together in her book, *Assessing Impact*, with 6 levels to consider: Reaction, learning, organizational support, application, student learning, and return on investment.

3. **Once you embrace the “levels” approach to PD evaluation, project stakeholders can work collaboratively to define the intended outcomes for each level, along with the evaluation data collection methods and sources.** One way to focus this work is to recall NSF’s interest in impacting (1) educators’ disciplinary capabilities, teaching skills, and understanding of current technologies and practices, and 21st century skills; and (2) students’ learning outcomes perceptions of technical careers. To maximize feasibility and minimize cost, think about ways to build data collection into regular project activities.

4. **If a Professional Learning Community (Community of Practice, Virtual Learning Community) is involved, special attention should be paid to capturing the nature of the interactions and associated learning among participants.** In this type of PD initiative, assessing process is crucial. The leading expert in this area is Etienne Wenger (see Resources).

5. **Online PD has its own set of challenges for evaluation, but tools and frameworks are available to successfully evaluate them.** Back end analytics are available via various online venues, and with the technology it may actually be easier because records are kept automatically.
RESOURCES


Etienne Wenger Associates: [http://www.ewenger.com/theory/](http://www.ewenger.com/theory/). Etienne Wenger is an internationally recognized expert in online learning, communities of practice/social learning systems. His website has a number of publications that are useful.


**Instruments for Professional Development Evaluation:**

Professional Development Email Survey – an example from Jane Ostrander’s Destination Problem-Based Learning ATE grant at Truckee Meadows Community College: [http://evalu-ate.org/resources/teacher_professional_development_email_survey/](http://evalu-ate.org/resources/teacher_professional_development_email_survey/)

The SALG (Student Assessment of their Learning Gains) instrument is a Web-based, adaptable instrument for assessing “the degree to which a course has enabled student learning”: [http://www.salgsite.org/](http://www.salgsite.org/)


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