

# Evaluation Plan Requirements for New Grantees

Revised 11/18/2010

If your grant began in 2010, your evaluation plan is due March 1, 2011. The evaluation plan should be 3-5 pages in length. Plans should cover all the areas listed below. If you think that the evaluation plan that you submitted with your application was thorough and covers all the topics listed below, then please submit the evaluation plan part of your application as a separate document.

Do not forget to submit the resume for your outside project evaluation when you send your plan to [susan.lehmann@ed.gov](mailto:susan.lehmann@ed.gov). **Plans must contain the grant number in the subject field of the e-mail or they will be returned unread.** We do not have the staff to look up 300 project directors to determine their grant numbers.

## Step 1: Refining the Project

### Main Themes a.k.a "Project Goals"

List 2-5 main themes that your project seeks to address. Ask yourself, "What was our impetus for applying for this grant?" What innovation in education did we want to develop or explore?

Focus on documenting learning **outcomes** for students and/or faculty, not just the inputs (meetings, brochures, textbooks, course modules, travel, etc.) More is not always or obviously better! Just because you held more meetings does not mean that you were more effective in improving student learning than someone who held fewer meetings. Focus on 2-5 main themes for your evaluation report.

### Key Questions a.k.a "Project Objectives"

For each of your themes, identify a couple of key questions that you seek to answer. *These questions should be relevant to your project goal(s), focused, and measurable.* Think about what data you will need to collect in order to document program outcomes. What data will you need in order to demonstrate how your project is/ or is not an improvement over the pre-grant status quo? (Negative findings are fine. They help us define the cutting edge of research.) Think about what evidence you need to gather to be able to convince others at similar institutions to replicate or modify some or all of your program activities.

### What is being documented or measured so that by the end of the grant we will be able to determine if you met your project objectives?

Examples: Change, improvement (or lack of improvement) in knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, behaviors, educational or professional goals, school or work environment. Cost efficiencies, increased access to programs by underserved populations, immediate educational or career impact on students, long-term educational or career impact (5+ years post) on students, and change in the number and/or strength of professional ties, academic or professional achievements of faculty. The diffusion effect of training colleagues and students, and the community impact. **You may also document participation in special activities/internships/events and satisfaction with project management but these last two alone are insufficient for a thorough project assessment.**

## **Speed and Extent of Change**

Now that you have identified your objectives and thought about your possible outcomes, you need to tell us in your evaluation plan: (1) **Who** will change?; (2) **What** is going to change?; (3) **When** do you expect the change to take place?; and (4) **How** much change is expected? If you cannot identify this at the start, then you will not know what to monitor. You cannot just wait to see if something, anything, happens.

## **Step 2: Planning Data Collection**

### **Baseline Measures**

Do you need to collect any baseline data before you start so that you can measure how far you, your institution, your project, or your students have come by the end of the grant? Some common baseline measures to consider are: standardized test scores; field specific test scores; departmental placement test scores; and GPA. In addition, always keep basic demographic info on file including: student ID#; major; year of graduation; e-mail contact; and any other relevant demographic information that would allow you to follow-up with students in the future, should you decide to do that.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Examples: How will you monitor and document change? Pick measures that work best for you. Make sure your methods are thorough but feasible, and really address your project goals. Surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, unobtrusive measures, standardized tests, exams, GPA, your own measurement tools, student journals, faculty publications, courses designed, teaching modules created, institutional procedures designed or improved, cost efficiency measures, etc., are all data that you should consider collecting.

### **Who is the respondent, interview subject, focus group participant, etc?**

Examples: Students; faculty; administration; community thought leaders; institutions; advisory board members; local citizens, etc. Are you gathering data from the major groups that you expected to be impacted?

### **Describe a possible comparison group or control group, if relevant.**

Examples: Last year's students who were taught under the old curriculum; students in another section of the course who were concurrently taught with the unrevised curriculum; a similar, untreated group such as students in a similar course at another institution; a large state or national population, national data collected by your professional association, etc. Your outside evaluator can work with you on this. **A comparison or control group is not an evaluation requirement.**

## **Step 3: Constructing a Timeline**

### **When will your evaluation instrument(s) be drafted?**

Please indicate the timeline for designing *each* major data collection instrument.

### **When will you collect your data?**

Please enter approximate dates. Please first consult with your outside project evaluator about what is feasible.

**When will you analyze your data?**

Please enter approximate dates. Please first consult with your outside project evaluator about what is feasible.

**Will your evaluation results provide feedback during the project that will enable you to modify project activities?**

Please explain at what point project administrators and the outside project evaluator you hire will review preliminary evaluation findings and make decisions about whether to modify activities. Discuss what project activities could be modified midstream if feedback warrants making changes. Please make sure that you and your outside project evaluator are on the same page about this activity.

**When will your written findings be ready for an outside audience?**

Please enter approximate dates.

<b>Step 4: Thinking about Dissemination - Who needs to hear about your project findings and why?</b>
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Please make sure that your outside project evaluator is aware of who the audience for your findings will be. That information will be very useful in the design of your project evaluation.

**Campus**

For example: Dean; Provost; Department Chairs; Head of Computing; Head of the Library; Faculty Senate; professional school faculty; students; prospective majors.

**Local Community**

For example: Local community leaders; parents; alumni; the superintendent of schools, etc.

**Similar Institutions**

For example: Your colleagues at a neighboring institution; professional associations of like institutions, etc.

**Professional Groups**

For example: Professional associations in your field; multi-field professional associations, etc. Are you planning to make a professional presentation, write for an association newsletter, post on an association blog, or write to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Inside Higher Ed*?

**Professional Colleagues**

Can you identify a few professional colleagues who work on similar projects who should be aware of your findings?

**Local, State, Federal Agencies and Officials**

In addition to the Department of Education, what state and local leaders might be interested in your findings? Did you know that the National Governors' Association has a Web site and a committee on education, for example?

## **Interested Others**

Will you create a Web site, host an exhibition, hold a conference, present a paper, etc., to let the public know what you found?

### **Step 5: Reality Check**

When you think that you have written a good evaluation plan, hand your evaluation plan to a friend who works in your field. When she is done reading it, ask her three questions:

1. Do you think a stranger on the street could read this plan and know what academic field the project is in without looking at the title?
2. Would the data I plan to collect tell you not only what the project did, but how effective it was?
3. Would the data I plan to collect tell you what you would want/need to know about in order to decide whether it would be worth your time and effort to adopt my project?