Grant Management Checklist – Getting Started

☐ **COMMUNICATION-*PRESS RELEASE***: It is a good practice to issue a press release and otherwise announce receipt of your NSF grant. Your institution is relatively unique among community or technical colleges in receiving funding from the National Science Foundation. It is a notable accomplishment! Press releases should include attribution to the National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education Program. When a news item appears in print or online, capture it and have the PI send it to the project's Program Officer. NSF logos are available for your project's use: https://www.nsf.gov/policies/logos.jsp

☐ **COMMUNICATION-*PARTNERS/CONTRACTORS***: Be certain to notify all partner organizations and individuals who assisted with or contributed to your grant proposal that your proposal resulted in a grant award. This includes those who provided commitment letters, your external evaluator (if named in the proposal), your Mentor if you were in a mentoring program like Mentor-Connect, and your team, colleagues, and administrators within your institution. Very often with subsequent grants you will call upon and work with some if not all of the same people/organizations. You want to reinforce at every opportunity that you value their support and assistance, and that their involvement is critical to the success of the project.

☐ **FINANCIAL-*RECEIVING AWARD FUNDS***: Identify person in business office who will have responsibility for accounting for grant funds. NSF does not send a grant award check to the grantee but rather distributes grant funds by enabling the college to "draw down" funds as expenses are incurred. If your college business office and /or person responsible for grant accounting is new to financial management of NSF grant awards, you may want to share the following information about how to draw down funds. Transactions with NSF are all electronic. To access the Mentor Connect tutorial demonstrating how to draw down funds, go to www.Mentor-Connect.org, Find a Resource, Library, and then use the search term "NSF Funds," resource title: **Steps to Draw Down NSF Funding.** Alternately, use this link: https://library.mentor-connect.org/index.php?P=SearchResults&FK=nsf+funds

☐ **FINANCIAL-*TRACKING/MANAGING GRANT FUNDS***: The PI needs to make sure he or she knows the specific budget codes the college has assigned to your grant budget line items. Codes will be assigned when the grant budget is loaded into the college's accounting system. There will likely be far more college codes assigned than there are grant line items in the NSF budget. The PI and others who will have budget authority for the grant need to thoroughly understand the cross-walk between the two. *BEST PRACTICE TIP #1*: Include the college-assigned budget codes on reimbursement requests, as well as to personnel and other contracts, prior to submitting or forwarding from your project for payment. The same is true for Purchase Order numbers, once assigned. Only project personnel understand what each expense is and where it fits into the overall project budget. The risk of error is greater if this coding is done by someone less familiar with the grant budget. If participant support costs are involved, it is especially important that mistakes in payment coding be avoided. *BEST PRACTICE TIP #2*: Once Purchase

Order numbers have been assigned for grant purchases or contracts, add the PO # to all documents being forwarded for payment associated with the PO. This will be of great help to those who process invoices for payment and build good will for you and your project at the college!

☐ **FINANCIAL-*REPORTS*:** The PI should confirm with the business office how and when reports of grant accounting will be provided to the PI and appropriate administrators. There is always a lag time between when these reports become available and when an expense was approved for the grant. It is important to keep up with grant expenditures throughout the life of the project. *BEST PRACTICE TIP:* Keep a separate spreadsheet accounting system for PI/project team use that lists expenditures as they are incurred or requested so that remaining budget amounts by category are readily available to guide future spending decisions. In-project accounting can then be compared to college reports when they become available to make sure that there are no discrepancies. It is not unusual for expenses to be incorrectly coded which can result in an expense being charged to the wrong line item; or worse, expenses incurred elsewhere at the college may inadvertently be charged to the grant. Someone working with the project outside the business office who thoroughly understands the grant budget needs to keep an eye on the money.

☐ **DATA – *WITHIN PROJECT/INSTITUTION***: As quickly as possible, determine what data you need to collect for your project and where the data are located. If requests for data will need to be made to your college institutional research person/office (IR), be very specific about what you need and when you will need it. Work with IR to make sure you understand the specific information that you will need to provide for data to be pulled from college databases. Data queries require details you may not have considered. Consult with your evaluator about data requirements and be sensitive to requirements for protecting student data. Adhere to IRB requirements and your Data Management Plan.

☐ **DATA - *PARTNERS***: Timely collection of data from partners is perhaps one of the most challenging tasks for any PI. As partnership agreements are put in place for your project (e.g., contract, memorandum of agreement, subaward), always make delivery of essential data integral to the agreement. Make expectations clear from the start. On occasion, it may be essential to withhold grant-funded financial support from an external entity to stimulate or ensure cooperation. When having this data is essential to project evaluation and to assess and document project outcomes and impact, partners who can't or won't provide data about their students or other essential data will detract from your project and chances of success. Allowing this to happen could also negatively impact your ability to receive future grant funding that will require strong results of prior support. Be tough about this. It is important. Also be diligent about adhering to IRB requirements and your Data Management Plan.

☐ **HUMAN RESOURCES-*PROJECT PERSONNEL***: Reread the project proposal carefully, noting all personnel who are named. Individuals receiving compensation or release time should appear in the project description, in the budget/budget justification, and in a list of individuals who will receive funding from the grant (a required proposal document). Make sure that all named individuals understand the time commitment made to the project, or release time that is to be provided. Work with appropriate administrators to get faculty and personnel schedules set up for grant implementation. Be sensitive to the fact that relieving faculty from teaching responsibilities to work on a grant-funded project can be very challenging for those who manage class scheduling and faculty loading. Whether grant-supported time is within normal work schedule or an individual is being compensated via overload or stipend, reinforce the importance of each individual dedicating the time to grant work that has been planned and/or is necessary to achieve project goals.

☐ **HUMAN RESOURCES-*GRANT FUNDS ALLOCATION***: The PI should make sure that the college human resources (HR) department knows if a portion of any employee's salary is to be charged to a grant. If there are part-time contracts or overload pay amounts to be charged to the grant, HR should know this in advance of the work being done. It may be the PI's supervisor or someone else needs to have this conversation with HR, but the PI can alert the appropriate person and provide information for this communication. *BEST PRACTICE TIP*: Code each personnel request with the appropriate budget code that aligns with the budgeted funds for payment.

☐ **TIME & EFFORT REPORTING**: This is a requirement for anyone receiving grant-funded compensation (including an adjunct faculty teaching to provide release time for another person) and anyone receiving grant-funded release time. Forms that meet NSF expectations and instructions are available from the Mentor-Connect Resource Library. Click on Find a Resource, Library, and use search term "Time and Effort," or access via this link:
https://library.mentor-connect.org/index.php?P=SearchResults&FK=time+and+effort

☐ **EVALUATION-*GETTING STARTED***: The PI needs to jump-start this activity. The grant proposal included an evaluation plan, but the plan should be reevaluated and perhaps expanded upon as this activity begins. The PI needs to make sure that the evaluator has a contract (or that the bid process has been initiated if the college will hire an evaluator this way). These things will not happen automatically! Someone must request that action be taken to get an evaluation contract in place. *BEST PRACTICE TIP:* If there were adjustments to the project made during pre-funded negotiations with NSF, this may impact the evaluation plan. Any changes should be discussed with the evaluator and/or may need to be incorporated in a RFP during a bid process.

☐ **EVALUATION-*RESOURCES***: Evaluation should be integral to your project. For information, tools, and resources to enhance this component of your NSF ATE grant, seek out the services of EvaluATE, an NSF ATE-funded resource for ATE grantees. www.Evalu-ATE.org

☐ **EVALUATION-*ATE SURVEY*:** In addition to the specific data and information needed by your evaluator for your project, other data and information are likely to be needed for the project to respond to the annual ATE Program Survey. This survey is administered by EvaluATE, an NSF ATE-funded initiative based at the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University. All PIs are expected to respond to this survey and provide requested information. The survey is administered in the February-March timeframe each year.
A new survey is under development for 2021, but to get an idea of what to expect, 2020 survey information may be accessed at https://www.evalu-ate.org/annual_survey/survey-info/ (on the EvaluATE website).

☐ **PROJECT WORK-*MANAGING TIMELINE*:** It has likely been many months since your proposal was finalized and submitted. Once an award letter is received, encourage project team members to re-read the project proposal. Very often, work plans and timelines included in the proposal will need far more specificity than could be included in the proposal to be a good guide for project implementation. Begin by expanding the work plan for the first year, confirming activities, deadlines, and responsibilities. For example, preparing for the ATE PI Conference is an activity that will occur relatively early in the grant year, and work on this may begin as early as the first of July each year when conference information is distributed by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) who produces this conference for ATE grantees.

☐ **PROJECT WORK-*AS ATE GRANTEE***: Are you having fun yet? As you launch your project and reflect on all of the work you have committed to do, take time to enjoy what you are doing and to appreciate the privilege that it is to have an ATE grant that empowers you to make a difference. The toughest part may be start up, when new activities and procedures are being initiated, and you don't yet know what impact your work will have. Keep the faith! You may be amazed at all you accomplish by actually implementing your project. Also remember that help is just an email or phone call away. The Mentor-Connect Help Desk (Mentor-Connect@fdtc.edu or ph. 843-676-8547), ATE Program colleagues, and Program Officers are available and want to help you overcome the challenges that are inevitable with any project that designed to bring about change.

☐ **PROJECT WORK-*ANNUAL REPORT TO NSF*:** Annual reports become due 90 days before the anniversary date of your grant award. The report must be submitted prior to the anniversary date, and submitting your report about a month prior to this deadline is preferred. Mentor-Connect Resource Library resources are available to help: Program Officer tips for preparing your annual report, Guidance in submitting annual reports via Research.gov, and helpful hints from experienced PIs about how to organize and collaborate on report writing and submission. www.Mentor-Connect.org, Find a Resource.

☐ **DISSEMINATION-*SHARING PROJECT INFORMATION***: It will be awhile before you have significant outcomes or products to share with others, but keep in mind that proposals to present at conferences must be submitted far in advance of the actual event. In the meantime, focus on developing clear communications about what your project will accomplish when successfully completed and who can benefit from what you have done and what you expect to learn about technician education in the process. Take an "elevator speech" approach to quickly and succinctly explain your project work (don't expect others to read descriptions excerpted from your grant). Use pictures and graphics to tell your story and as few words as possible. Check out the "ATE Outreach Toolkit" among resources available from ATE Central, https://ATECentral.net.

☐ **DISSEMINATION-*WEBSITE(S)*:** Having your project information accessible via Internet is often an important component of a dissemination plan. However, don't expect to "build it and they will come." If you have a web presence, you need to proactively work to give people a reason to seek out information about your project and make it easy for them to look you up. *BEST PRACTICE TIP:* quickly set up a web presence for your project by working with ATE Central to establish a "microsite," which they provide for ATE grantees at no cost. You can quickly upload basic information about your project, and you will have a URL to distribute for your project. This will be much faster and more cost effective than creating web pages for your project within your college's website or creating a stand-alone, external website for your project. Should your project evolve into a larger initiative later, microsite content can be transferred to a more complete project website. Go to https://ATECentral.net and then find microsite service under the Resources tab. This is the direct link: https://atecentral.net/microsites.

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