Checklist for ATE Proposal Development

Updated 2025

Before You Start: Are you ready to do more?

- ☐ Read the current program solicitation.
- ☐ Develop ideas to continue benefiting from ATE funding such as (i) involving additional institutions, (ii) including other technical programs or areas of the college for broader impact, (iii) expanding or further developing programs such as recruiting more students and varied talent, incorporating industry needs, enhancing curriculum based on industry feedback, improving skill-sets of students, including certifications or other credentials, and/or providing faculty development.
- ☐ Discuss your idea with others who need to be involved.
- ☐ Consider the timing of your next grant proposal. It is not necessary to complete your current grant to apply for additional funding; however, you should be far enough into your current project that you have enough results to justify additional support.
- ☐ Seek advice from your prior mentor or from an ATE-funded mentoring program.
- ☐ Discuss your ideas with appropriate college administrators (e.g., department chairs and deans).
- ☐ Develop a one-page description that you can share with college personnel, potential partners, and an NSF program officer.

The Rationale: How will you make your case?

- ☐ Describe the local and regional demand for technicians with the skills and knowledge this project will produce. Emphasize local, regional, and state-specific needs for technicians in the region(s) served by the college(s), rather than broader national needs. Include information on the number of relevant technician jobs gathered from local, regional, and state sources.
- ☐ Engage with business and industry in meaningful ways. Reviewers **expect** you to actively involve business and industry representatives who will commit to support the work of the project and associated technician education programs.
- ☐ Support your project idea and plan by citing current or recent literature on technician education but be concise. Describe how you will build on what you have accomplished and/or what other ATE projects have accomplished. Leverage the work of ATE Centers or projects; include references to that work; and describe how the new project will differ from, build on, and add to the body of knowledge on technician education.
- ☐ Align your project with the strategic goals of your institution, and your community's economic and workforce development plans or initiatives.
- ☐ Discuss the broader impacts of your project beyond the grantee institution.

Results from Prior Support: What have you done before?

- ☐ **See the PAPPG for Results from Prior NSF Support requirements. Currently section II.D.2.d.iii**
- ☐ Include when any PI or co-PI named on the proposal has received prior NSF support (including an award with an end date in the past five years) or has any current funding (including a no-cost extension). If not applicable, you should make a statement to this effect.
- ☐ Include information on both successes and lessons learned in prior project(s) that will be addressed in the new work. Describe results of prior NSF support in terms of what was accomplished and the effectiveness and impact. ***This should not be a repeat of your prior project abstract***. This section is about what was actually accomplished, written in present or past tense; not what you said you were going to do and accomplish in your prior project.
- ☐ In describing results of prior support, address both the intellectual merit and broader impacts of previous awards.
- ☐ Include information on the number of people impacted, including:
  - ➢ faculty: e.g., earning certifications or other credentials, incorporating materials into technician programs, using new teaching methodologies.
  - ➢ students: e.g., taking classes, graduating, being employed in industry, earning certifications, serving in internships and apprenticeships.
- ☐ Qualitative data is also useful. For example, discuss:
  - ➢ not only how many students graduated, but also the jobs for which students were hired, and employer satisfaction with those hired.
  - ➢ not only how many faculty participated in professional development (PD), but also what impact this had on their students.
  - ➢ not only recruitment activities for high school students, but also how the activities have impacted technical education programs, and how secondary teachers were involved.
  - ➢ not only industry involvement, but also how their input was incorporated into relevant college technical education programs.

Partners: Who should be involved?

- ☐ Situate the project in the context of local and regional conditions. Provide names and affiliations of people who will work with the project, including descriptions of their roles and contributions.
- ☐ Include commitment letters from external partners such as secondary schools, other community colleges, and industry partners. Commitment letters must describe authors' specific individual or organizational contributions to the project, instead of vague offers of support. These letters should be unique, not duplicates of each other.
- ☐ Document institutional commitment. A letter from a senior college administrator such as your president, chief academic officer, or academic vice president that describes the commitment to the project and how it fits into the college's strategic goals will strengthen the proposal.
- ☐ If secondary institutions are to be involved, describe how their involvement will create or serve as a pipeline to one or more college technical education programs. Gauging the success of the pipeline should be part of the evaluation.

The Work Plan: What are your project goals and objectives, the activities to accomplish those goals, and your planned deliverables and outcomes?

- ☐ Describe in concise terms, and with graphics that reviewers can clearly understand, what the project plans to do. This is likely to be the longest section of the Project Description.
- ☐ Make sure that your goals and objectives are S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based). Activities and deliverables should be realistic for the resources requested or available and fit your project's timeline/length.
- ☐ If relevant, provide details on the professional development that faculty will require to accomplish project goals (e.g., timing, compensation, topics, provider, certifications).
- ☐ Provide details on how you will recruit and engage participants: i.e., how will high school students, faculty or other participants be recruited? Who will assist in this recruitment? Will incentives or stipends be provided? What audience-specific activities will be conducted?
- ☐ If activities are included to broaden participation, describe specific strategies to be used based on prior work, successful practices in other ATE projects, or successes identified in the literature.
- ☐ If equipment is requested, a description of that equipment, why specific items were selected (e.g., industry recommendations, or alignment with current industry practices), and its importance to the project should be included in the Project Description.

The Management Plan: Who is going to do the work?

- ☐ Right-size your project team. The larger the project, the more people you will likely need to achieve the project's goals. Match project personnel's talents with their tasks to be completed.
- ☐ Carefully consider staffing requirements, including the PI, Co-PI, senior personnel, other personnel, and contractors, in light of the project's scope of work and budget.
- ☐ Briefly describe the role of each person who is involved in the project, as well as their capabilities. Highlight the qualifications and capabilities of individual team members, both members from previous projects and new members.
- ☐ Compensate college faculty to work on the project, rather than only hiring other people (e.g., outside consultants) to do most of the work. Remember that the ATE program allows overload pay for faculty doing grant work, as long as the compensation follows established institutional policy on faculty compensation.
- ☐ If other people are to be compensated, describe their contributions to the project in clear terms and include appropriate compensation in the NSF budget.
- ☐ If others (such as recruiters, curriculum developers, or consultants) at the college will be involved in the project, but compensation is not requested for them, include their names and positions in the management plan and in the Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources form.

- ☐ If industry people will participate on Advisory Committees or Business and industry Leadership Teams (BILTs), include their names and affiliations in this section, or in the Motivating Rationale section; and attach commitment letters from them in Supplementary Documents.

Budget and Other Resources: What funding do you need to complete the project?

- ☐ Submit a budget and Budget Justification that are appropriate for the work to be accomplished.
- ☐ Prepare the Budget Justification in narrative form, using a format that matches NSF's budgetary categories. It is often best to prepare the Budget Justification first, instead of first filling out the online budget forms on Research.gov.
- ☐ If overload pay is requested, include a statement in the Budget Justification that college policies allow this.
- ☐ If consultants are included, NSF requires that the requested compensation must be fully justified with the scope of work. Daily or hourly rates and time commitments must be stated.
- ☐ Include participant support funds only for faculty and teachers at other institutions, per the current ATE program solicitation; or for students at your college who are project participants and will benefit from project activities. Conversely, faculty and students at your institution who will perform work should be listed in Parts A and B of the budget. Faculty and people at other institutions who are providing services to the project are usually included in Section G, most often as consultants or as part of subawards issued to their organizations.
- ☐ Describe in the Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources form other resources or people that will materially contribute to accomplishing the project's goals.
- ☐ Do not request funding for expenses that are unallowable in ATE projects, such as student scholarships (though you *can* request scholarship funding through Dear Colleague Letter NSF 24-094, once your proposal has been awarded!).

Evaluation: How will you know if the project has been successful and what adjustments may be needed during implementation?

- ☐ Include a detailed and project-specific evaluation plan that is tied to the project's goals, objectives, activities, and deliverables.
- ☐ Specify what parts of the project will be evaluated and when. Remember that good evaluations determine not only ***if*** activities are completed, but their ***impact***.
- ☐ Include the name of a well-qualified evaluator, if possible, and work with this evaluator during proposal preparation.
- ☐ If your college requires that evaluation services be contracted via a competitive bidding process, describe the process and outline the required qualifications for the evaluator.

Dissemination: How will you let others know about your accomplishments? Who needs to know?

- ☐ Describe how you will share project information within your college and with your partners.
- ☐ Describe how you will share your accomplishments locally with businesses and industries, schools, other workforce development organizations, and nearby community colleges.
- ☐ Describe how you will share your accomplishments more broadly. Examples include:
  - ➢ sharing with partners, and having partners share with others.
  - ➢ hosting workshops or other events for educators, as part of your project plan.
  - ➢ exhibiting or making presentations at state meetings of community colleges, national meetings that attract technical education or related STEM educators, and national conferences of industries or professional organizations.
  - ➢ publishing outcomes in articles or peer-reviewed publications, such as conference proceedings.
- ☐ Describe how you will share curricular materials and events via ATE Central and with other ATE projects. Plan a web presence for your project, keeping in mind the availability of a cost-free microsite provided by ATE Central. ***Don't*** rely exclusively on a website to disseminate your project's products and results.

Sustainability

- ☐ There is no expectation that everything in a grant-funded project can or will be sustained, but some elements should be continued for a successful project to have lasting value.
- ☐ Discuss what project-related work that you anticipate will remain and/or be supported beyond the duration of the grant: e.g., project activities that can/will be institutionalized, such as:
  - ➢ improved/increased industry involvement, curriculum that has been integrated into a program or added to the college catalog, improved teaching methodologies, new faculty credentials, certifications, or other updates to faculty knowledge and skills; or,
  - ➢ alternate financial resources used to sustain project-related work: including industry-paid internships; college support funded by increased program enrollment; and industry support for some aspect of the grant-developed program, such as software or equipment.

Check before you submit: What might improve your submission and help make your case?

- ☐ Ask someone with reviewing experience to read the proposal for content, organization, spelling, grammar, and clarity.
- ☐ Maximize the benefit of submitting your proposal via Research.gov by carefully adhering to its instructions and guidance, and responding to all alerts generated within Research.gov to denote errors and omissions.

Check before you submit: What might improve your submission and help make your case (continued from previous page)

- ☐ Submit ATE proposals using the Research.gov platform, not Grants.gov.
- ☐ Familiarize yourself in advance on current PAPPG requirements, including:
  - ➢ required forms and formats for Current and Pending Support, Biographical Sketches, and Collaborators and Other Affiliations. Prepare Synergistic Activities forms separately.
  - ➢ allowable font, font sizes, and proposal margins. Consider readability. Even though NSF allows some 10-point fonts, many of these are difficult for reviewers to read. If you use 10-point font, limit it to tables and charts, and include white space to make reading easier.
  - ➢ other current requirements in the ATE program solicitation or PAPPG: e.g., including a separately labeled "Broader Impacts" section in the Project Description.
  - ➢ page limits for the Project Summary (1 page) and Project Description (15 pages).
- ☐ Do not focus the project on activities or audiences that align poorly with the ATE program's focus. For example, avoid projects that focus on:
  - ➢ engineering, computer science, or other STEM 2 + 2 articulation programs.
  - ➢ STEM programs or students generally, rather than technician education specifically.
  - ➢ K-8 students.
  - ➢ high school STEM camps that do not describe how they will be a conduit into college technician programs.

✓ Items to Avoid: The following are likely to have your proposal returned without review

- ☐ Vague letters of support, rather than specific and detailed letters of commitment.
- ☐ Including anything in the Supplementary Documents section that is not specifically allowed in the ATE program solicitation.
- ☐ Omission of required forms, such as the Data Management and Sharing Plan.

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Thanks to Elizabeth Teles (ejteles@yahoo.com) who assisted with creating the original form in 2000 and updating it.