

**Best Practices
shared by the CCTA:**
Centers Collaborative for
Technical Assistance

The National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) program focuses on the education of technicians for the high-tech fields that drive the nation's economy. The faculty members of community colleges, which are the main source of technician education in the United States, have leadership roles in the initiatives that involve partnerships with industry and other educators. Since 1994, NSF ATE initiatives have developed a wide range of innovations to serve students and inform educators.

Five NSF ATE centers formed the Centers Collaborative for Technical Assistance (CCTA) in response to a Department of Labor request to NSF for technical assistance services to recipients of Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants. The five centers are National Center for Convergence Technology (CTC), South Carolina ATE National Resource Center (SCATE), Florida Advanced Technological Education Center (FLATE), Bio-Link National Center (Bio-Link) and Maricopa Advanced Technological Education Center (MATEC). The identification and sharing of NSF ATE best practices are among the services CCTA offers.

MOVING UP TO LARGER NSF ATE PROJECT GRANTS

The following tips are intended to help people seeking larger project grants from the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) program. The tips have been tailored to assist two-year college educators who have been principal investigators (PIs) of Small Grants for Institutions New to ATE and others who have had previous grants outside of the ATE program. This information is a synthesis of the wisdom shared during a roundtable discussion at the 2016 ATE PI Conference. The discussion participants included NSF program officers, other ATE PIs, and other individuals from the ATE community.

1. Results of prior support matter. Submit a new project proposal when you have evaluation data from a funded project and can answer the following: What did you learn? How do you know it? What was accomplished? Why is more money needed? How will new funds leverage the first project to catalyze something new?
2. Read the most current program solicitation carefully—several times—to assure your ideas align with the program goals.
3. Make sure the college's authorized organizational representative (AOR) pays attention to the latest version of the NSF *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG).
4. Follow the instructions for supplementary documents.
5. Prepare a one-page summary of the new project well in advance (e.g. six months or more) of the deadline, send it to an NSF program officer, and schedule a phone call to discuss it. Consider creating and sharing a logic model for the project too.
6. Ask PIs at institutions that have received second ATE awards about the lessons they learned and request copies of their funded proposals. Be careful not to replicate errors.
7. Make sure the budget request matches the project's scope.
8. Be clear about the scope and importance of the project to local employers with data that explains the local need that the project will address, and how it fits with wider trends.
9. Utilize effective communication tactics to build a cohesive project team.
10. Build effective partnerships. (See sidebar.)
11. Focus on what your college and partners value and have the capability to do.
12. Utilize consultants and advisors to provide additional expertise.
13. Access Mentor-Connect resources and follow its grants development principles.
14. Work with an evaluator who provides feedback and suggestions for improvement, not just data summaries.
15. Prepare your institution and yourself to receive funding.

Effective Partnerships Expand Impact

As an ATE subsequent grantee you will not only be building on what you have accomplished, but you will be expanding your impact.

- Think bigger—have more partners.
- Recruit diverse partners to explore what works, for whom, and under what circumstances.
- Ask partners to prepare authentic commitment letters that describe their precise role in the new project.
- Align your project with college priorities and documented workforce needs of the community.
- Agree to productive new partnerships.
- Drop partnerships that do not work.
- Make sure your team consists of people who have a passion for the project and are committed to achieving its goals.

View extended version at: atecenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BestPractice_NSFGrants.pdf

CCTA | **CENTERS COLLABORATIVE
FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

For more information, contact:

Christina Titus, Program Director at ctitus@collin.edu or 972.377.1786
Ann Beheler, PI at abeheler@collin.edu or 972.377.1649

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1205077. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

