

## Science, tech evaluation tools studied

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Researchers are developing tools to evaluate the effectiveness of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education programs in the United States.

Cornell University investigators say nearly every federal science grant requires researchers to inform the public about their findings and support science and technology education in general.

However, each grant also requires an evaluation of the results of the outreach, which most researchers consider an onerous chore.

With a 2-year, \$605,000 National Science Foundation grant, Cornell researchers will create a set of tools to evaluate NSF's science, technology, engineering and mathematics education programs.

"Evaluation is merely feedback and organizational learning," said postdoctoral associate Derek Cabrera, a co-investigator. "We want to shift people's thinking from seeing evaluation as just a grant requirement to seeing it as feedback that will assist other researchers."

Evaluation is a social sciences field with its own specialized methods and language, but Cabrera said the goal is to produce a "paint-by-numbers" system that anyone can use. "We also hope to make significant contributions to the field of evaluation," he added. "We hope to develop theoretical foundations that relate the field of evaluation with the ideas of systems thinking.

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