

## Category 1 – Leadership – 60% of 140 = 84 points Sterling Challenge Response –2014

Category 1 Question	Strengths	Opportunities
<p>1. How do senior leaders set and communicate organizational vision and values?</p>	<p>Values and vision are established by the Leadership Team. Communication methods includes a monthly Leadership Team meeting, summary reports to the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), an annual report to the National Visiting Committee (NVC), weekly team meetings, a newsletter, and multiple web pages. As an integral part of the culture, Senior Leaders collectively support consensus decisions, despite possible differing personal points of view. Leadership commitment is shown by example of the Senior Leaders' actions in follow-up to Leadership Team meetings. Vision and values are promoted through the web site, and in all meeting agendas. Validation of Vision and Mission is accomplished biannually at the start of the 3 phase evaluation cycle.</p> <p>As an improvement now, all FLATE presentations at conferences and such, begin within with vision, mission, and goals. At every presentation, IAC meetings, NVC meetings, Vision and Values and mission are deployed and re-communicated to stakeholders. The vision, values, and mission are now culturally and procedurally embedded. FLATE "elevator speech" cards, with the vision, values, and mission have been created and distributed to stakeholders and in outreach activities. Data summaries are systematically reviewed with the team members, at leadership meetings, and at IAC and NVC meetings. FLATE performance and commitment to values, vision, and mission has been recognized nationally by the National Science Foundation (NSF) ATE conferences.</p> <p>As an example of commitment, FLATE identified a need for greater outreach to industry, through feedback from several sources including the stakeholder surveys. The Leadership Team reviewed the survey data and established actions in response. The response included press releases published in manufacturer association newsletters and websites, and greater outreach to regional manufacturer associations.</p>	
<p>2. How do senior leaders create an environment for learning, performance improvement and</p>	<p>FLATE has established a key organizational objective and measures focused on the sustainability of the FLATE mission beyond FLATE's grant period. Leadership understands the requirement to institutionalize activities that are effective in sustaining the FLATE mission after grant expiration. Examples include partnering with <i>Dream !t Do !t</i>, the Manufacturers Association of Florida (MAF) outreach brand, to take up this aspect of outreach activity for the long-term (as a</p>	<p>The opportunity exists to develop a systematic succession plan, not just for Leadership but also for key</p>

<p>innovation to guide and sustain your organization?</p>	<p>sustainability option for Made-In-Florida). Similarly, professional development activity is sustainable as it continues through the ET Forum.</p> <p>An element of FLATE sustainability includes annually building strategies and objectives and activities developed through the annual Evaluation cycle, and particularly, the development of a specific strategic goal relating to sustainability. The annual plan includes other activities and objectives for long-term sustainability, also supported by the current budget. Although the total operational budget may shrink, sustainability continues to be related to the core vision and mission, and skills and competencies.</p> <p>FLATE has been recognized as the entity trusted to guide effective use of State educational funding. That is to say, the State of Florida Department of Education (DOE) has designated FLATE in legislation noting that FLATE represents assurances the State investment in research technologies are effectively transferred to workforce development.</p> <p>The system in place for development of strategy and objectives includes a feedback review of data and information, then analysis of the same, followed by action planning, and modifications based on the input. Annual evaluations of team members are conducted. Personal and Professional goals are established in dialogue with the supervisor. Additionally, individual work needs are identified, such as equipment and tools required, or personal and professional development needs, or both, in order to be more capable of accomplishing FLATE goals. Customer and stakeholder focus are continually reinforced through the culture as well as activities involving team members directed at stakeholders around the state.</p> <p>As another example of sustainability of mission, FLATE moved student tour activities into a shared funding model, including Manufacturing Day activities. In this effort, FLATE built and supported educational and manufacturing communities in direct backing of Manufacturing Day activities without direct funding from FLATE; partnerships were built between industry, the community, and schools. Skill sets are identified and documented for team members and the Leadership Team. The Executive Committee (senior partner college administrators) is in place to provide a link for FLATE to the partner colleges' administration, which facilitates selection of potential successors to the Leadership Team.</p> <p>Critiques using surveys of participants in major events, such as the ET Forum and IAC activities, are conducted to identify opportunities to make them more effective. Surveys of customers, partners, and stakeholders are regularly reviewed for actionable information. Discussion are conducted in the Leadership team and with team members regarding actions to make improvements, as well as how best to</p>	<p>FLATE team members and activities needing to be sustained. It is necessary to identify and develop individuals who can take leadership roles, take charge, and manage the activities going forward.</p>
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	<p>analyze the data, through the professional development outcomes survey and stakeholder survey. Other examples of surveys conducted include those of organizations conducting plant tours. This survey actually has been reviewed and improved in that it was found that the last comment question moving to the first position resulted in much more usable information from the respondents. The FLATE newsletter is also followed up to encourage and generate more readership by asking readers to relay and retransmit the newsletters to their colleagues. This provides better and more impactful data to guide the organization.</p>	
<p>3. How do senior leaders communicate with the workforce and encourage high performance and a customer and business focus?</p>	<p>Feedback is solicited at meetings, through the agenda, actively through emails, and at other venues, through multiple surveys regarding stakeholders, and one on one solicitations. Adobe connect is used at meetings when appropriate to facilitate involvement of distant stakeholders and volunteers.</p> <p>Communication methods include those described earlier, plus Principal Investigator (ATE/PI) Meetings, the Made-in-Florida program, weekly team meetings, the web site, the <i>FLATE Focus</i> newsletter, NSF ATE Centers joint exhibits, <i>Florida Trend's NEXT</i> magazine promotion, bi-monthly MAF Board Meetings, MAF advisory committee meetings, the FLATER Blog, the semi-annual ET Forum, and various workshops and presentations. Additionally news alerts are published on a regular basis to selected audiences to highlight certain events an FLATE and FLATE-related activities. Activity over the last 2 years has further developed relationships with state and regional manufacturers associations (MAs) around the state. For instance, IAC and NVC venues around the state, have further expanded effectiveness of FLATE communication around the state with volunteers and stakeholders.</p> <p>The FLATE culture encourages solicitation of and giving feedback and input. The use of a number of two-way tools encourages communication. Every interaction with partners is interactive, and is built into meeting agendas. Additional extensions of FLATE communications is facilitated through MAF newsletter articles, MA meetings and newsletters, and communications through the MA networks. Best Practice Booklets, developed by FLATE, are published and distributed to enhance partnerships with the MAs supporting their activities and their members.</p> <p>Recognition by leaders includes informal recognition for team members, such as lunches or compensatory time for extra work.</p> <p>FLATE leadership focuses the team members on actions related to goals and objectives as defined in the Evaluation Plan. FLATE Industry and Educator awards target volunteers and stakeholders who are active and supportive of the FLATE</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to strengthen ties geographically and the 2-way communication structure to assure interaction with stakeholders in all geographic regions of the State.</p>

Mission, in their daily activities. Recognition is also made and publicized on the web site and through the Industry Honor Roll.

FLATE Leadership has direct involvement in nominating FLATE team members and stakeholders to independent award solicitations, such as Educator of the Year award, Tampa bay Technology Forum award, FACC award, High Tech award for curriculum, the FLATE educator and Industry reps of the year, MAF awards, internal host awards, and more. The FLATE-developed, Toothpick Factory training workshop received a nationally recognized award. Awards apply in all key organizational objective areas, i.e. curriculum, outreach, and professional development.

FLATE team members are eligible for and is recognized through the host organization rewards system, as well as by other local and regional community organizations (e.g. a local Sarasota-area STEM-relayed foundation).

Data are collected according to measures identified in the Evaluation Plan (e.g. event evaluations, attendance, etc.) These data are reviewed as collected. Data are reviewed with team members at weekly meetings, and at monthly Leadership Team meetings by exception. Annually, the Leadership team reviews and updates each FLATE objective. Measures are being incorporated into a system for review, and is supported by a budgeted activity.

In leadership teams and in team meetings, and IAC and NVC meetings, data are reviewed and used to identify gaps in performance of processes and systems, and to define the expectations of activities. Based on these data, actions are established. Actions are assigned in the meetings and tracked and monitored through accomplishment.

A tracking chart is used for paid team members to track their professional development, encouraged among the team members, such as ATE webinars, college courses, and others.

<p>4. What are your organization's governance system and processes for management and financial accountability, transparency in operations, and senior leader performance evaluation?</p>	<p>External audits in financial and management areas are and continue to be conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the host organization (Hillsborough Community College - HCC). Monthly internal audits are also conducted as a budget item to reconcile HCC accounting records with FLATE's budget. A formal internal and external review and approval process exists for multi-level approval of expenditures. Management accountability comes through oversight by the NVC in annual reviews, supplemented by several annual report mechanisms [NC, Western Michigan University, Annual NSF report, Annual Evaluation report, interactions with NSF program managers at the Annual Principal Investigators (PI) Meeting], as well as monthly Leadership Team meetings. The IAC assists in setting direction and guidelines for management.</p> <p>FLATE interacts with and solicits stakeholders by responding to their needs regarding curriculum, professional development, and outreach. The FLATE Leadership Team has established Guiding Principles to direct activity which inherently protects stakeholder interests.</p> <p>Transparency is accomplished through the publication of FLATE activities and performance through the website, and disclosures of activity at meetings with the NVC and IAC. Transparency is further enhanced by leadership meeting minutes and actions which are posted in the common/shared drive. The <i>FLATE Focus</i> newsletter and news alerts are issued with organizational news and information.</p>	
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<p>5. How does the organization promote and ensure legal and ethical behavior in all interactions?</p>	<p>Guidelines and training are provided by the host facility, are deployed, and enforced. The Leadership team demonstrates desired behavior and sets an example. Ethical behavior is explicitly stated in the guiding principles. Leadership has developed an ethical statement and deployed it to team members, as well as other stakeholders through the website. The ethics statement is incorporated into organizational values. The culture of FLATE is reinforced by Senior Leaders, based on their ethical codes of conduct prevalent in the engineering profession, by the example of the Senior Leaders who project exemplary ethical behavior on the team members. Background checks are conducted, as well as in depth interviews with prospective new hires, based on host organizational procedures.</p> <p>FLATE has developed a statement of ethical expectations for FLATE employees, volunteers, and stakeholders, to further nurture an environment conducive to ethical and legal behavior. The host facility guides a system of checks and balances, and ethical and legal behavior are encouraged. Expectations for employee conduct are written into the Employee Handbook available on the HCC intranet. College policy requires awareness and signed statements, adopted college protocols for volunteers in the school environment.</p> <p>In order to avoid adverse impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Curriculum development – FLATE has used national and state standards and aligned itself to stakeholder needs. Stakeholders such as academic and industry partners are engaged. In addressing risk of potential adverse impact of curriculum not meeting the needs of industry, FLATE reviews the offerings of the adoptive colleges, reviews Engineering Technology (ET) activities and focuses on the feedback and interaction at the ET Forums. Feedback and input come from curriculum framework reviews, detailed interaction with faculty about what they are teaching, MSSC validation, interaction at an annual meeting with four- year schools that articulate the degree, and targeting professional development in areas of need, as well as feedback from the Florida DOE.</li> <li>-Professional development – FLATE matches the subject matter and the expert instructor to meet the stated needs and collect feedback on all professional development activities and events for faculty.</li> <li>-Outreach – FLATE collects and analyzes trends and stakeholder needs to accurately guide promotion of manufacturing career opportunities. Requirements in authorizing the FLATE Tour Director in conducting tours for schoolchildren have become stricter. FLATE has developed a series of Best Practice brochures to document standard processes and to ensure that important activities are sustained</li> </ul>	<p>The refinement opportunity is to better deploy and make more systematic the focus and environment conducive to ethical behavior among the volunteer and stakeholder population.</p>
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and performed systematically, as well as to promote and provide services for stakeholders.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB), initiated by FLATE, is now in place at HCC to review and approve all non-exempt FLATE procedures and processes that involve human interactions. Additionally, the proposal has been reviewed by the IRB, which validated that FLATE procedures and processes do not negatively impact individuals.

<p>6. How does your organization fulfill its societal responsibilities and support its key communities?</p>	<p>FLATE's contribution to the social and economic systems of Florida are explicitly reflected in its mission. Demonstrated actions include: development of the statewide ET AS degree program; outreach supporting the enhancement of the manufacturing industry contribution to society and the overall economy; giving direct testimony to the Florida legislature in support of Statewide manufacturing and education initiatives; and direct input to the Florida DOE curriculum development and implementation activity. Key communities include the students and their parents, the educational community at large, and the manufacturing industry. This is part of the mission.</p> <p>Partnerships are established such as with MAs, with the IAC, the ET Forum, and through events with individual manufacturers or educational institutions, like Manufacturing Day support and participation, as well as through the development of curriculum for distribution to community colleges, high schools, and technical schools. Partnerships are also developed with the Florida DOE and Career Source (formerly Workforce) Florida to jointly identify and support stakeholder needs. FLATE supports and funds travel for faculty professional development, and career outreach for students. Recognition for partners is provided through the Annual Awards system, press items, and the <i>FLATE Hero</i> program, on the FLATE website.</p>	<p>Another opportunity is to systematize the selection process for potential partnerships through use of the Guiding Principles. Another continuing opportunity exists to increase awareness of FLATE among far and wide-ranging stakeholders. There's an opportunity to respond to more activities throughout the state</p>
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**Category 2 – Strategic Planning – 55% of 100 = 55 points**  
**Sterling Challenge Response –2014**

Category 2 Question	Strengths	Opportunities
<p>1. How do you conduct strategic planning, including key steps, participants, and short- and longer-term planning horizons?</p>	<p>The grant proposal provides a structure for strategic planning. Input to development of the proposal is through direct and responsive interaction with stakeholders. The structure of the grant imposes a three- to five-year long-term planning horizon. The proposal has built in consideration of stakeholder needs that include industry technology trends, education and training trends, and educational delivery trends: regionally, nationally, and internationally.</p> <p>The FLATE grant proposal considered a number of environmental factors and influences, including strengths and weaknesses, regulatory environment of the Department of Education and the specific college requirements, partner college requirements, National Science Foundation (NSF) objectives, and State and Federal law. Sustainability and the ability to execute the plan are integrated into the plan through allocation of resources and funding. Trend spotting has been added to the agenda for the monthly Leadership Team Meeting, and is incorporated into weekly FLATE team meetings. Trendspotting is intended to uncover potential new areas of importance to FLATE and to modify objectives and actions to address these areas.</p> <p>There are a number of sources of information and observation of approaches which FLATE incorporates into strategic discussions. These outside opportunities include: review of other NSF center activities, including</p>	<p>The opportunity exists to address continuous improvement of the strategic planning process and to make it more effective based on direct stakeholder feedback, which includes NSF, NVC, IAC, MAs, ET Forum, business and industry, and K-20 educators (with a focus on state and community colleges).</p>

	<p>the FLATE Director's participation in National Visiting Committee (NVC) and other boards throughout the NSF Advanced Technology in Education (ATE) network; wide ranging contacts with the educational network nationwide and overseas; Leadership Team input about technology trends, curriculum updates, and framework reviews.</p> <p>Participants in the strategic thinking process include the Leadership Team, three stakeholder colleges, the NSF program officer, and the NVC. There is a structured voice of stakeholder input in place through the biannual Stakeholder Survey, interaction with the Florida Department of Education (DOE), the NVC, the Industry Advisory Council (IAC), participants in the semi-annual Engineering Technology (ET) Forum, manufacturers associations (MA), and review of technology trends at leadership and team meetings.</p> <p>The evaluation process, integral to strategic planning, is annually cyclical, based on the short-term planning horizon of one year. It includes critical review by stakeholders. It establishes and evaluates FLATE goals and objectives, as well as measures linked to those goals and objectives for monitoring effectiveness. FLATE observes and addresses five-year trend data for enrollment and completion for its programs statewide and using national benchmarks.</p> <p>There is evidence of improvement in the planning process, improvement in the way FLATE leadership thinks strategically. For example, inclusion of trendspotting in meeting agendas, and broadening of stakeholder network to include international and national stakeholders.</p>	
<p>2. How do you use data, information, and comparative data to determine and</p>	<p>Data and stakeholder provided information are essential in determining shifts in technology, customers and</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to continue to build</p>

<p>address strategic opportunities, challenges, and advantages?</p>	<p>stakeholder needs, and the regulatory environment. These are identified through constant interaction with peers, stakeholders, and competitors in multiple venues, such as the annual Hi-Tech Conference, annual NSF Principal Investigators (PI) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Conference, Industry Advisory Council (IAC) member meetings, and with manufacturers associations.</p> <p>Data are reviewed in NVC and IAC meetings for relevancy. These filtered data are analyzed and used to identify performance issues against targets. Established trends are addressed through discussion and action assignments at monthly Leadership meetings and weekly team meetings.</p> <p>The longer term issues are addressed and integrated into the annual planning cycle. For example, the issue of need for mechatronics training has been recognized, and expertise has been integrated to solve the introduction of mechatronics as an area of emphasis in new curriculum. The question of long-term sustainability of FLATE relates to long-term sustainability of its mission, since its life as a grant project from NSF is limited. FLATE's strategic objectives include emphasis on sustainability as a separate goal. The Leadership Team regularly reviews its activities and the segments of FLATE's mission which are opportunities for seeking means to maintain sustainability.</p> <p>Strategic challenges include: achieving sustainability overall, achieving a continuous revenue stream; having a positive image perceived by industry and partners around the state; gaining their active participation in FLATE activities; growing the list of state colleges adopting and implementing FLATE-developed curriculum</p>	<p>sustainability through the use of data proving effectiveness of FLATE activities to convince stakeholders to absorb FLATE management and financial and operational responsibility for those activities.</p>
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	<p>state-wide; gaining broader statewide participation in Made-in-Florida outreach. The Leadership Team addresses challenges by adapting its strategies to address plans.</p> <p>Challenges are addressed by the Leadership Team in the development of concepts which are translated into the Strategic Plan and its objectives as needed. As an example, tour data indicated that tours were popular and impactful. Budget data showed FLATE can't sustain tours indefinitely, nor expand state-wide. In this case, stakeholder surveys identified potential plant-tour participants and financial partners. Consequently, due to partnerships developed and resources shared, in 2013, there were 75-100 tours conducted, none of which were financially supported directly by FLATE.</p> <p>NSF-ATE requires sustainability but did not have a working pathway to accomplish that request. FLATE's strategic planning addressed this challenge with a defined plan that is now documented in NSF-ATE current Request for Proposals as an approved mechanism.</p>	
<p>3. How do you determine key work systems and core competencies and use these in making work system decisions, including what work you will do internally and what you will outsource?</p>	<p>In the Strategic Planning process, core competencies are identified by the Leadership Team through discussion and deliberation around feedback from stakeholders. FLATE's has established nationally recognized core competencies that demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deep knowledge of the community college environment and an informed knowledge of technologies that support manufacturing</li> <li>○ Ability to communicate with academic and industry entities at the appropriate level to efficiently and effectively accomplish a designated project and/or</li> </ul>	<p>Opportunity is to explicitly distinguish what activities are internal versus those that are outsourced to accomplish the mission.</p>

	<p>task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Possession of subject matter expertise in a variety of technical areas in ATE supported disciplines</li><li>○ Ability to build partnerships among stakeholders</li><li>○ Project management skills that assure completion of deliverable(s) on time</li><li>○ Sound management practices of all Center operations and projects</li><li>○ Ability to write competitive grant proposals</li><li>○ Expertise in web-based media production for application to outreach communications</li><li>○ Ability to collect and analyze relevant data that indicate project progress and success</li><li>○ Knowledge and skills to develop appropriate curriculum</li><li>○ Skills and techniques to mentor new programs</li></ul> <p>Collectively, these competencies assure successful completion of Goal I objectives</p> <p>FLATE's work system consists of three work streams to enable the state and community colleges to produce a technically-educated workforce to meet manufacturing industry needs for that technical workforce. The work streams are Curriculum Development and Implementation, Outreach, and Professional Development. FLATE systematically uses its three explicit work systems and explicit work streams to strategically decide the priority for selecting which aspects of FLATE's mission to focus on for transferring or institutionalizing for sustainability. As an example, there are demonstrated pockets of sustained activities: the DOE has adopted the ET</p>	
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	<p>curriculum; articulation of the Manufacturing Skills and Standards Council (MSSC) Certified Production Technician (CPT) certification into the ET curriculum (first in the state); Colleges are adopting the summer camp model and structure; industry-wide support and implementation of industry tours.</p>	
<p>4. How do you develop strategic objectives? Summarize your organization's key strategic objectives and their related goals.</p>	<p>See response to question 1 above. Objective timelines have been established, and are annually updated for feasibility, priority, and impact. The objectives and timetable for accomplishing are incorporated into the objectives timetable document.</p>	
<p>5. How do you convert strategic objectives into action plans and communicate these? Summarize your organization's key action plans and action plan performance measures or indicators.</p>	<p>The FLATE Leadership Team with staff team members develop specific action activities based on review of data for performance measures and identified gaps. These are assigned based on individual skills and experience and are followed up at the weekly team and project meetings, or by exception if and when more resources are needed to accomplish actions. Objectives for each of the four strategic goals, are action plans in themselves, delineating the tactical activities required to accomplish strategies.</p> <p>Resources are allocated and changed as action plans are developed. These action plans are implemented and reviewed for impact. Resources are deployed based on how they affect the outcome of each goal. Human and financial resource allocation is affected not only by federal guidelines relating to the grant award, but also weighting factors and decisions made by the Executive Director, in consultation with the Leadership Team.</p>	<p>The opportunity is to evaluate and improve the approach to converting strategic objectives into action plans to ensure action plans developed are effective. For example, since the State is now recognizing the value of FLATE activities above expectations, there should be action plans developed to leverage that recognition so that sustainability of mission is enhanced.</p>
<p>6. How do you allocate or ensure financial and other resources are available to support the achievement of your action plans?</p>	<p>Resource allocation is based on immediacy and time-sensitivity of each project. The implementation of the mechatronics curriculum is an example of how relevance enters this allocation decision. Objectives have</p>	

	<p>appropriate measures (with data file locations identified). These are periodically reviewed by the Leadership Team and team members as well as the IAC and NVC annually. An example of resource allocation modification is the decision to end the annual promotion of the manufacturing advertorial in Florida Trend's NEXT magazine targeted to high school students. Data showed that the effectiveness of the advertorial in outreach to high school students was not measurable. Resources were directed to other areas where effort could translate more effectively into direct effort.</p> <p>Before undertaking new initiatives, all action plans are filtered through FLATE's Guiding Principles. If approved, FLATE allocates appropriate resources. FLATE uses and defines Effectiveness Measures to monitor progress against objectives. They are reviewed both for appropriateness of measures as well as progress. Action plans are changed as results of periodic reviews by the Leadership Team. Sustainability is one criteria element for judging action plan success. Long-term sustainability of FLATE mission follows NSF's concept of shifting ownership to other institutions.</p> <p>The budget adheres to NSF guidelines. The budget also includes allocation of team members to support the planned activities and to achieve the strategic objectives. As described earlier regarding tour costs, part of this response is related to sustainability efforts to transfer management and financial responsibility to other institutions for segments of the mission. Funds may be reallocated as data indicate and action plans are modified.</p>	
<p>7. How do you monitor progress against your objectives, and make</p>	<p>See response to Question 6 above. FLATE reviews the objectives and timetables in</p>	

changes to action plans when needed?	Leadership Team meetings and staff team meetings.	
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Category 3 – Customer & Market Focus – 55% of 100 = 55 points  
Sterling Challenge Response – 2014

Category 3 Question	Strengths	Opportunities
<p>1. How do you listen to the voice of the customer?</p>	<p>FLATE actively listens to customers through a number of methods such as: survey of industry and stakeholders, reviewing statewide surveys including the biannual Stakeholder Survey, focus group results and published data, soliciting guidance from the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) and National Visiting Committee (NVC), semi-annual FLATE workshops at the Engineering Technology (ET) Forum (a focus group format), state and regional manufacturers associations (MAs), other customer focus groups, advisory committees consisting of members from various community and state colleges, and interaction with customers at public exhibits. Information is collected and analyzed for specific tasks or projects, then distilled through the Leadership Team meetings, exchanged at team members meetings, and applied as appropriate. Formal FLATE Event Reports are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the various elements of customer feedback and include action items, targeted follow-ups, and relevant data and contact information. Customer/stakeholder input is reviewed by the Leadership Team, FLATE Team members, the NVC and IAC; and shared with other stakeholders, to close the loop.</p> <p>FLATE surveys all groups it contacts, such as teachers at professional development workshops,</p>	<p>Review current VOC channels to determine where additional refinements can be made in soliciting feedback from customers and stakeholders.</p>

	<p>students at plant tours, and ET Educators at FLATE workshops.</p> <p>To simplify the collection of customer information many surveys are conducted on line. Additionally, surveys are subject to continuous improvement and changes to surveys have included more standard/core questions across different types of surveys to provide a baseline of commonality in survey responses.</p>	
<p>2. How do you determine customer requirements for product/services and communication methods to support customers?</p>	<p>Any new product or service developed is checked against organizational goals for alignment and put through the filter of the FLATE Guiding Principles to ensure alignment with objectives. Customer input is collected through the Stakeholder Survey, focus groups, and other informal means of communication. Customer support is provided directly by FLATE team members and volunteers as well as indirectly through users of FLATE curriculum frameworks and other products. Key customer support mechanisms include communication access through the FLATE and the Made In Florida (MIF) websites, numerous tours and events, the semi-annual ET Forum, IAC and NVC meetings, as well as the typical communication methods of email and telephone. Support materials are developed and made available to users of FLATE frameworks, professional development support materials and training sessions, and workshops and materials like the Toothpick Factory. The biannual Stakeholder Survey was initiated as a result of opportunities identified in previous Florida Sterling self-assessments. This is an example of a proactive approach undertaken to assure stakeholder expectations are identified and met.</p>	<p>Opportunity to post responses to aggregate inquiries (VOC) on the website. Provide greater access.</p>

	<p>Key customer support mechanisms include communication access through the FLATE and MIF websites, numerous tours and events, the semi-annual ET Forum, IAC and NVC meetings, as well as webinar based meetings, social media and news alerts, and the regular typical communication methods of email and telephone. Links on websites have been added in many areas that can lead customers and stakeholders to the information they are seeking. This approach was undertaken in response to customer feedback from web site users asking for better ways to access FLATE information. Evidence of evaluation and improvement of access methods includes, changing the FLATE FOCUS into a blog format, providing more opportunities and tasking team members with more outreach and customer contact responsibilities.</p>	
<p>3. How do you build and manage customer relationships?</p>	<p>Many of the customer access and stakeholder feedback approaches described in the items above also double as means to build relationships with customers and stakeholders including, supporting associations and industry organizations through attendance at conferences and meetings, and use of the exhibit booth at events, campus visits, providing common marketing support materials to ET curriculum framework adopters and MAs, building of relationships and connections through the Florida Department of Education (DOE), partnerships with industry groups, and making and keeping contacts with State agencies, MAs, and all stakeholders. FLATE provides broad ranging support to customers financially and intellectually. Mentoring in curriculum development, and direct support in developing</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to develop a systematic approach to extend FLATE branding statewide, perhaps through state funding, the ambassador program, MAs, or new partnerships, in order to contact and connect with potential customers and stakeholders. Develop a method specifically for building relationships with potential partners and stakeholders to</p>

	<p>frameworks, review of programs for equipment and facility needs. FLATE has developed its name as well with the Made in Florida brand in Florida and nationally. FLATE extends and builds the customer relationship with prospective partners. Relationship building and maintenance begins with initial contact. Interaction with various customer and stakeholder segments includes the FLATE Focus newsletter, contacts through MAs, and through meetings of the IAC and NVC, use of web media tools, and personal contacts.</p> <p>The FLATE organizational culture is emphasized within team members and within the volunteer/stakeholder core, reinforcing personal interactions and pro-action in maintaining relationships. Action items are reviewed with the team members at weekly meetings to reinforce the customer-focused culture.</p> <p>As stated in the questions above, multiple communication access methods provide conduits for soliciting and collecting feedback from stakeholders, customers, and partners. The biannual Stakeholder Survey, conducted in 2009, 2011, and 2013, provided a direct means of collecting feedback and ideas for new or expanded services, products, and activities. The stakeholder survey results have instigated a more active relationship and partnership with the regional manufacturers associations, including providing support for industry tours, invitations to attend IAC meetings, encouraging industry tours for students, Manufacturing Day tours and activities, hosting FLATE meetings and events, and general outreach. In 2013, a total of 555 students took part in</p>	<p>transform them into actual customers, partners, and stakeholders.</p>
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	<p>Made-In-Florida tours. In addition, FLATE organized, promoted, and executed a huge statewide initiative for Manufacturing Day tour events in partnership with Dream It! Do It! in October 2013. Activities on this day involved 23 counties, 2,307 students, 67 Florida Schools, 110 teachers, and 66 parents. There was participation by 225 employees from 71 manufacturers and state colleges.</p> <p>Outreach to manufacturing has been enhanced through MA activity, FLATE participation in the annual Manufacturers Association of Florida (MAF) Summit and related activities, and the Florida Sterling Conference, including the STEM Forum and the Education Summit, and the Manufacturing Day activities.</p> <p>With the advent of the Stakeholder and other surveys, and the development of actions within the FLATE team members and the IAC and NVC, the focus on customer is enhanced in all aspects of FLATE activities.</p> <p>A basis for customer segmentation is defined by the governing proposal and contract with the National Science Foundation (NSF). Also, the Stakeholder Survey is used to expose the fact that there are many of the FLATE stakeholders unaware of FLATE's diversity of services and products. These data offer FLATE leads for greater outreach and dissemination for information about itself. FLATE also partners with the MAs and the MAF Center for Advanced Manufacturing Excellence (CAME) and the national Manufacturing Training Institute, to jointly identify customer/stakeholder segments that have been or are or should be involved with FLATE activities.</p>	
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	<p>Additionally, targeting of groups and segments is based on FLATE Goals and Guiding Principles as well as guidelines and requirements from specific FLATE contracts, current or completed, such as FESC, NSF, HiTec Corridor, and BITT.</p>	
<p>4. How do you determine customer satisfaction and engagement and use this information to make improvements?</p>	<p>A biannual Stakeholder Survey is conducted to collect information and feedback relating to customer/stakeholder satisfaction. Satisfaction surveys are conducted at every MIF tour (both industry host and student/teacher participants) and at other FLATE and partner student experience. Partner organizations also use the FLATE tour survey instrument to collect and aggregate input. Other means of satisfaction determination include those methods described in Items 1 above.</p> <p>Customer loyalty is demonstrated by repeat support for FLATE activities and participation by individuals from the various segments of stakeholders. Loyalty is also determined by event survey questions, and indicated by active participation in events, committees, and other FLATE activities. Data updates are circulated within the team, discussed at team member meetings, and Leadership Team meetings, and summarized in annual reports. Comments are collected from team members about potential responses to the data and appropriate action is taken. For example, in relation to Summer Robotic Camps, briefings are conducted for all team members and volunteers before and after each camp, and data are collected regarding participant and parent satisfaction. Data are compiled and circulated for review on a regular basis, and compared with other camps to achieve benchmarks for establishing</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to refine methods of systematically determining dissatisfaction. For example, a means to dissatisfaction determination could be the development of an “exit” survey for monitoring reasons for loss of stakeholders and customers. Also the biannual Stakeholder Survey could be modified to include a question about loyalty.</p>

	<p>baseline comparative performance. Surveys for professional development, the ET Forums, and other activities include questions based on national benchmarks which are reviewed annually. Questions address if participants felt they learned content, could apply content, and would recommend the experience to others. All questions encourage participants to share explicit reasons for any questions reflecting dissatisfaction. Survey information is compiled and reviewed aggregately at team meetings and Leadership Team meetings, and action items are developed. These data are also used to develop new or improved processes and procedures. An example is the development of the Tour Agenda checklist used to standardize the approach to all activities required for all tours.</p>	
<p>5. How do you manage and resolve customer complaints and recover their confidence?</p>	<p>As inquiries/complaints come in, they are handled on a case-by-case basis individually by team members, with guidance from senior team members and leaders if necessary. At the weekly team members meeting, and monthly Leadership Meetings, issues are brought up to deal with the inquiry/complaint systematically from an organizational point of view. The weekly team members meetings provide the venue for team members to be exposed to customer issues across the organization. Once the complaint is brought into the formal FLATE structure, the complaint is addressed proactively.</p>	<p>The opportunity exists to aggregate complaint information for analysis which would facilitate identification and response to trends.</p>

Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, & Knowledge Management –  
 45% of 100 = 45 points  
 Sterling Challenge Response – 2014

Category 4 Question	Strengths	Opportunities
<p>1. How do you measure, analyze, review, and improve performance through the use of data and information at all levels and in all parts of your organization?</p>	<p>Organizational measures and results are consolidated for reporting in four key documents. These are the NSF annual report, the ATE Survey, the NVC report and the external evaluation report.</p> <p>Selection of measures is guided by the grantee's, National Science Foundation (NSF), requirements, although specific measures are decided within FLATE's Evaluation Plan where selected measures are aligned with the four high level key organizational objectives and goals pertaining to Sustainability, Curriculum Development, Outreach, and Professional Development. High level Effectiveness Measures aligned with these are identified, as well as lower level objectives with measures. The Annual National Visiting Committee (NVC) meeting, monthly Leadership meetings, and weekly team member meetings are used to monitor FLATE objectives and actions through these key measures. Periodic collection and compilation of data is reviewed during the year to</p>	<p>While systems for seeking and collecting comparative data are in place, an opportunity exists to continually seek more meaningful and impactful data.</p>

	<p>communicate progress and performance. Measures encompass the entire organization, and are used for tracking overall performance and accomplishment of strategic objectives.</p> <p>Data selection is guided by finding similar programs and processes and collecting comparative performance data (e.g. for summer robotics camps and curriculum effectiveness activities). FLATE Leadership seeks comparative information and data, and benchmarks when interacting with other NSF ATE organizations. Other NSF ATE Centers, such as CARCAM, have similar resources and activities which provide good comparisons for effectiveness.</p> <p>Voice of the Customer and customer feedback and input are selected through data collected in different surveys of customers and stakeholders. Surveys, guided by organizational goals and objectives, by the NSF award contract, by the NVC as a governing body, and the Industry Advisory Council (IAC). Information from these surveys is compiled, and analyzed in team member meetings, Leadership Team meetings, and NVC and IAC meetings. Actions are developed based on these analyses.</p> <p>The National Visiting Committee (NVC) evaluation is used annually to review</p>	
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	<p>performance and to identify opportunities at the strategic and objective/operational levels. The Leadership Team and the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) are also involved in the performance review process and in the implementation of operational priorities. At weekly meetings, team members review a segment of performance data and establish priorities for improvement actions as necessary. Goals and the objectives timeline are reviewed regularly at Leadership and Team Member meetings, to make adjustments based on the current environment. The External Evaluator continuously monitors the evaluation processes and procedures and submits a formal annual evaluation report to NSF. FLATE submits the required annual report to NSF, and completes ATE survey.</p>	
<p>2. What are your key organizational performance measures?</p>	<p>Key organizational measures include those that monitor and track the four key organizational objectives in Sustainability, Curriculum, Outreach, and Professional Development. The FLATE Effectiveness Measures table outlines the key organizational measures. Additionally, FLATE budget is tracked by the host college and is overseen by NSF.</p>	
<p>3. How do you select comparative data and use it effectively to support decision making?</p>	<p>As described partially in question 1, we review other organizations including ATE Centers, for analogous activities. Comparisons for relevant data are</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to collect and deploy use of comparative data in other key areas of operations, such as in professional development,</p>

	<p>progressively sought internally, from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), and other external sources. The process for collecting comparative data had been more random. Consequently it was found that data collected wasn't of much use in improvement. Therefore this system for seeking and collecting comparison was developed. Criteria for selection includes analysis of answers to these questions: is there a center or other organization analogous in mission, do they collect reliable data for analogous activities, do they have a focus in similar discipline areas.</p> <p>An example of use of comparative information in decision making, robotics camps are categorized either STEM or Manufacturing focused, giving us an internal comparison, but also in comparison to CARCAM for identifying opportunities to improve the robotics camps. Also, use in this way has led to modifications of the survey for collecting more relevant data.</p>	beyond curriculum and outreach.
<p>4. How do you identify internal operations that are high performing and select and share their best practices with other areas of your organization?</p>	<p>Sharing comes in Leadership Team meetings and Team member meetings during review of organizational results and progress. Best practices are captured in Best Practice booklets published and distributed by FLATE within and beyond the FLATE organization.</p>	<p>Opportunity is to increase efficiency in dissemination effective internal operations with FLATE, HCC and Within the volunteer corps and partner schools.</p>
<p>5. How do you build and manage knowledge</p>	<p>FLATE information is readily available to</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to more</p>

<p>assets?</p>	<p>Team Members, through methods including use of the website and posting of goals and objectives in the FLATE office. Discussions of implementation level tasks occur at weekly Team Member meetings. Processes and procedures are documented and updated regularly in a HCC online system. Additionally other forums, as discussed earlier in categories 1 and 3, are available for collection and transfer of knowledge and identification of best practices, such as surveys, the FLATE Focus newsletter, Best Practice Booklets, and participation in meetings. With Process improvement knowledge is built into modified processes. In ET Forums, participants contribute and add to improvements in FLATE approaches to aspects of FLATE mission.</p>	<p>systematically review to match customer and stakeholder knowledge with guiding principles, as knowledge is integrated into FLATE business processes.</p>
<p>6. How do you ensure the quality and availability of needed data, information, software, and hardware for your workforce, suppliers, partners, collaborators, and customers and ensure availability in the event of an emergency?</p>	<p>Data are reviewed and spot-checked by senior leaders to ensure data entry accuracy. The review consists of seeking and identifying “outlier” and inconsistent data. Shared directory files are regularly reviewed with the entire team to ensure files are up to date. Security is enhanced by use of passwords, restricted access, firewalls, and anti-virus software, and is supported by the host organization, Hillsborough Community College (HCC). Collecting information on line minimizes transcription errors and multiple-handling on paper.</p>	

Based on FLATE's affiliation with its host, HCC, there is an extensive network of data backups and system redundancies; specifically by using two independent servers in two geographically separate locations, two websites for information availability, and two independent resources for information technology support. FLATE participates in the HCC Emergency Preparedness Plan. Emergency procedures for all emergencies are prescribed by HCC. Local data is backed up to servers on a regular basis. Maintenance of the shared directory is locally reinforced to ensure timeliness and accuracy of data. FLATE has a standardized procedure for prioritized data collection and entry. There are criteria for weighing priorities. Expectations are established for documenting and entering data. Data security is governed by HCC policies and procedures. Confidentiality is not significant except for administrative data (employees, pay, etc.) which is governed by the college processes as well. Confidentiality is not an issue with FLATE performance data since that is aggregated and contains no confidential information. Data is made available to the Team Members through password access. Availability to customers and stakeholders is through distribution in the

	<p>FLATE Focus newsletter, websites and wiki site, and at IAC and NVC meetings, and conference presentations and publications. Some data are housed at the Florida Department of Education.</p>	
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Category 5 – Workforce Focus – 45% of 100 = 45 points  
Sterling Challenge Response – 2014

Category 5 Question	Strengths	Opportunities
1. How do you manage workforce capability and capacity to accomplish the work of the organization?	<p>Capacity and capability needs are defined by the strategic goals based on National Science Foundation (NSF) and Industry and education community input and needs, as well as the National Visiting Committee (NVC) added tasks. Capacity needs remain constant throughout the term of the grant award. Positions are defined up front in the grant application and award. Due to contract limits, additional paid workforce cannot be added. Additional tasking is adjusted by manipulating the number and capabilities of volunteers. Assessing workforce capability and capacity is accomplished informally by the FLATE Executive Director in reviewing personnel skills and knowledge against the needs of FLATE to accomplish its mission.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity to systematize the method used by for matching FLATE expertise with new tasks and assignments, or appropriately outsourcing to recognized experts. (ex: MATEC contracted for LinkedIn portal).</p>

<p>2. How do you recruit, hire, place, and retain new workforce members?</p>	<p>Diverse thinking in the full time and volunteer workforce is enhanced by inclusion of an array of volunteers from education, industry, business, government agencies, and industry community groups. Diverse thinking is addressed through feedback from the varied stakeholder groups and advisory councils. Staff recruiting and hiring rigorously evaluates prospect capabilities, background and experience for integration of various perspectives into the workforce.</p> <p>Diverse thinking in a geographic sense is enhanced by increased interaction with additional stakeholders state-wide, including membership on the NVC, in the Industry Advisory Council (IAC), and rotating meeting venues to various locations around the state.</p> <p>Retention of the workforce is accomplished through systematically providing challenging opportunities and engaging and empowering the workforce. At weekly staff meetings, staff is involved in review of performance measures, then engaged in problem-solving activities when measures indicate unfavorable levels and/or trends. Workplace climate includes flexible time, employment as HCC employment provides good benefits.</p> <p>Hiring practices, governed by the host college, ensure that all candidates for positions have equal opportunity for selection, and are selected from the general pool of prospects available to the college.</p>	
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3. How do you maintain a healthy, secure, and supportive workplace?

The host college, Hillsborough Community College (HCC) plans and policies are used to ensure workplace health and safety and staff security. Needs are driven by OSHA and regulatory requirements and, on tours and outside events, by the individual host facilities, whether schools, businesses, or others.

At Staff Meetings, and during staff on-boarding, the staff is oriented to health, safety, and security requirements.

Workforce policies pay and compensation, and benefits are governed by personnel policies of the host college. Flexible time is afforded to team members. Employee P-cards are available to purchase items as necessary without prior approval.

At weekly Team Member meetings, the staff is organized around required functions and specific projects initiatives linked with strategic objectives, and as needs arise. Ad hoc teams are formed as needed to work on these projects and initiatives.

A dedicated staff person is assigned to manage the various volunteer project teams including the IAC, NVC, and the Executive Committee.

The focus on stakeholders is reinforced through deployment of organizational guiding principles, and review of metrics, which inherently are focused on stakeholders and customers, and problem-solving activities in response to metrics review.

Tenure of full time employees is high relative to other ATE centers. Three of the five Team members have been employed full time for more than 5 years.

<p>4. How do you engage, compensate, recognize, and reward your workforce to achieve higher performance?</p>	<p>FLATE determines engagement through weekly Team member meetings, tour and event surveys of company staff, industry volunteers, and participants and the bi-annual stakeholder survey. This survey has been conducted in 2009, 2011, and 2013. The Stakeholder survey demographic information allows identification of satisfaction by various segments, including educators, administrators, industry, and others.</p> <p>FLATE fosters a culture of open communication and engagement through discussion and weekly follow-up with staff at regular meetings and ongoing interactions regarding projects progress tracking. The culture of FLATE is to be inclusive of ideas and opinions of staff, partners, and other stakeholders. This is nurtured by the many venues for stakeholder interaction, such as IAC meetings, NVC meetings, industry tours, the ET Forum, and other events. FLATE Team member individual annual goals are established and reviewed in discussions and communication with the Executive Director. For example, regarding the FLATE Ambassadors, ideas are discussed and shared at meetings of the team, the IAC, and other volunteer groups.</p> <p>There is the FLATE Hero recognition for industry partners regarding their support and participation. Recognition is spotlighted in the FLATE Focus newsletter, to highlight volunteer activity, and the annual FLATE awards for educators and industry supporters.</p> <p>Leadership team meetings are used to identify information and to help to transfer knowledge across the organization to volunteers and other</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to develop a system for providing recognition to volunteers when high expectations are met.</p>
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stakeholders. Also, communication is exchanged with participatory colleges, as well as with prospective participant colleges on an expanding list. There is also regular two-way communication with several divisions of the Florida Department of Education as a conduit for openly sharing knowledge with other colleges. There are a number of social media vehicles used by FLATE as well. Recognition (either personally or in email) is given to team members whenever specific high performance is noted. The host college cyclical performance evaluation system is used annually and supplemented with the FLATE annual goals discussion for each Team member. Support for high performance is provided to the team through the use of tools and other resources. The Team member evaluation system includes individual goals linked to FLATE objectives.

FLATE uses the host college recognition systems for recognizing team members as well as informal recognition in Team member meetings and in the office.

Team members are engaged regularly at weekly meetings used for general communication of information as well as review of performance measures and action planning to solve problems and improve performance.

FLATE performance measures implicitly bring attention to customers, stakeholders, and the business. Reviewing organizational performance measures linked to strategic objectives consequently brings focus, which is reflected in the FLATE guiding principles. Emphasis is placed on

	<p>customer focus at Team member meetings, such as timely and responsive callbacks to stakeholders. With regard to the volunteer workforce, high expectations are established, such as through conference calls and guidance with regional manufacturers Associations in preparation for Manufacturing Day activities.</p>	
<p>5. How do you assess workforce engagement and use the results to achieve higher performance</p>	<p>This is accomplished through interaction with Team members, at weekly meetings, and through tour and event surveys of industry volunteers. The biannual Stakeholder Survey is conducted among all stakeholders. Event reports also capture description of some of the anecdotal situations related to workforce and stakeholder engagement. Performance overall is tracked by discussion of data and trends and tracking charts. Some differentiation occurs through the various methods, such as, informal means in the office, and feedback at FLATE events and surveys at tours. Engagement is judged by the level of contributions and ideas provided, unsolicited, for suggestions and making improvements. The Monday Team member meeting is key to assessing engagement and using that determination by additional tasking thereby creating greater responsibility and commitment. Engagement of volunteers is demonstrated by response level to stakeholder survey, levels of involvement for manufacturing day activities and other events.</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to develop a system for using volunteer engagement assessment to improve engagement and achieve higher performance.</p>

<p>6. How are members of your workforce, including leaders, developed to achieve high performance?</p>	<p>This is accomplished through FLATE Team discussions about individual goals. The Executive Director and each individual Team member separately identify goals and come together annually in dialogue to reconcile and agree on a set of individual goals that are aligned with FLATE goals. Specific individual needs are assessed for a match with the person and personality, and appropriate training is identified. Just-in-time training is provided to staff members regarding individual needs in support of goal accomplishment. FLATE and staff take advantage of host college (i.e. HCC) resources particularly in the IT support and training area.</p> <p>Professional development is tracked by hours and reported and reviewed by the FLATE Team. Feedback from joint reviews within the Team is focused on improving overall performance of individuals and organization.</p> <p>Although individuals may not be in a leadership position by title, they are expected to perform as leaders, situationally. People are hired and brought in to the organization based on a basic, threshold level of skills and capabilities for the open position. They are then placed in working situations and expected to perform and learn, with some mentoring by the senior leaders or other experts. Sterling criteria are used as the template for leading and managing the organization, and enhancing the development of senior leaders and the leadership team. Further development is reinforced through cross-pollination at meetings and in other venues and with other methods to share knowledge and</p>	<p>There is opportunity to systematic follow-up and reinforcement of whether professional development and learning is used on the job.</p>
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expertise. Team members are expected to ultimately take ownership of all aspects of projects and activities for which they are the primary contact. As core competencies and strategic challenges are addressed, learning and development activities are developed to support sustainability of the FLATE mission; skills and capabilities and knowledge are pursued to enhance or develop new core competencies of FLATE which support the mission. Cross-training is endemic because of the small size of staff; staff cross-training is pervasive so that most critical skills are covered by backups, or plans in place to bring in outside skills for certain tasks. The host college, HCC, provides mandatory ethics and diversity training for staff. Focus on customers at FLATE is accomplished through individual performance evaluations and follow-on discussions and the establishment of individual Team member goals which link back to high level FLATE objectives which focus on stakeholders. Individual evaluations and goal planning sessions serve to meet FLATE-identified and individual-identified personal training and development needs. The FLATE Executive Director immediately gives opportunity to staff members to explicitly use new knowledge and skills on the job after returning from training or outside developmental events. The breadth of development opportunities include education, training, coaching, mentoring, and work-related experiences, as appropriate. Evaluation of development and learning systems ties back to organizational performance. Overall

	<p>organizational performance is an indicator of the effectiveness of training and development systems. Organizational performance is informally used to gauge effectiveness by the degree of goal accomplishment, and potentially by reviewing complaints received. Additionally, peer recognition and recognition by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the form of grant renewal are indications of effectiveness. Also, when putting the new skills and knowledge to use after training, whether the staff member is able to accomplish the task in a better way, is also a measure of effectiveness. Additional professional development opportunities follow as performance levels are achieved.</p> <p>Volunteer workforce development opportunities are provided, such as through webinars, tour tips and best practices and procedures for plant tours, individual coaching in data collection and compilation, coaching about summer robotic camp performance and practices.</p>	
<p>7. How do you manage effective career progression and succession planning including the transfer of knowledge from departing or retiring workforce members?</p>	<p>Career progression is managed through monitoring and evaluating individual performance and individual goals setting and development. Besides preparing the employee for current work within FLATE, there is also an eye toward the expiration of the grant so that employees are prepared beyond FLATE for follow-on positions, perhaps at the host college. Employees are empowered and take leadership roles and decision-making roles in specific projects assigned in the course of regular FLATE business.</p>	<p>An opportunity exists to establish a systematic succession plan comprised of identifying the positions requiring succession, identification of prospects to fill those positions, and a plan for developing those individuals.</p>

Category 6 – Operations Focus 55% of 100 = 55 points  
Sterling Challenge Response – 2014

Category 6 Question	Strengths	Opportunities
<p>1. How do you design your products/services and the key work processes that deliver these, and determine key product/service requirements and key work process requirements?</p>	<p>Driven by the National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, work systems define work streams and are developed and based around the core organizational goals: organizational sustainability, curriculum development, professional development, and outreach. Each of these is a work stream, although they are interconnected, and drive required key products and services.</p> <p>Additional influences behind the goals and work streams are established through information collected in funded projects, in focus groups, leadership monthly meetings, meetings with experts in the field, and with other organizations. FLATE takes advantage of support process services at the partner institutions [i.e. Hillsborough Community College (HCC), St Petersburg College (SPC), and University of South Florida (USF)].</p> <p>This information is supplanted by knowledge gained through established partnerships, in teams, from Team members, and advisory groups, such as the Industry Advisory Council (IAC), National Visiting Committee (NVC), ad hoc communities, and the community college advisory groups and the ET Forum. A dedicated Team member is assigned to manage the various volunteer groups, and their activities supporting FLATE work streams. Support processes have been documented and coordinate</p>	<p>There is no systematic means for coordinating support processes and to determine support process requirements to enable key operational processes</p>

with the key work system processes to ensure they are enabled.

Based on defined core competencies, some supporting activities are outsourced, while the core is not. For example, overall development of curriculum is a core competency retained internally, but some outside expertise is needed and sought to support final development. External sources for key processes are determined as necessary. The Leadership Team uses FLATE's Guiding Principles to make decisions for external or internal sources for key processes.

Key requirements are determined through evaluation of industry standards and procedures, focus group input, formalized feedback collection, accepted best practices comparisons, and feedback collection and interaction with the work or support process customer at all stages of process development. The same approach used for developing curriculum is scaled down and similarly applied to the appropriate process level.

Key Work System Requirements:

**Curriculum:** Develop and align AS curriculum frameworks to meet Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) standards, and NSF expectations for improved technician education in Florida.

**Professional Development:** Enhance skills, as appropriate, to meet the needs of Florida secondary and postsecondary faculty.

**Outreach:** Increase awareness of manufacturing careers among future prospects to increase the number of current and future technicians to service

	<p>and meet the needs of the high-tech industry.</p> <p>Innovation and improvement of work processes are accomplished through collecting feedback and identifying needs from stakeholders, to define then implement best practices. Innovation is also supported beyond the use of accepted work practices by cultivating a culture that encourages innovative ideas. An example is the use of the required curriculum framework as a survey template for determining how industry needs are being met. Additionally, the establishment of the ET curriculum framework and implementation of the Sterling criteria for performance excellence further demonstrate innovation at FLATE.</p>	
<p>2. How do you manage, measure, and improve key work processes and support processes to improve performance and reduce variability?</p>	<p>Key work processes build in evaluation and improvement, like debriefs for tours and framework reviews every 3 years for curriculum. Team members consistently review progress of processes at weekly meetings and seek to identify opportunities for improving performance.</p> <p>Comparisons and benchmarking opportunities are based on analogous processes in other organizations, are systematically selected through a set of selection criteria to identify best practices and innovations for assimilating into FLATE. Work and support process requirements are more specific at the point they intersect the key operational approaches. Key work processes have built-in evaluation and improvement steps.</p> <p>New technologies are identified through feedback, and observance of trends and best practices in similar NSF ATE Centers nationally. These are</p>	<p>An overall opportunity here is to improve deployment of FLATE systems and approaches for improvement and problem-solving to the volunteer workforce.</p>

evaluated by the Leadership team and integrated into FLATE's work and support processes as deemed useful. Use and integration of social media channels to enhance the outreach work system, are demonstrated examples of adoption of best practices to improve operational processes. Standardized procedures are tested and modified as necessary.

Key work processes are:

**Curriculum:** needs assessment (defined by state and individual college requirements), curriculum development, delivery of curriculum, feedback collection; implement improvements

**Prof Development (PD):** needs assessment, development of customized content, presentation, feedback collection; implement improvements

**Outreach:** Analysis based on market segment, product development, product delivery, and feedback collection, improvement implement, event management (e. g. camps, PD events), newsletter and blog.

These work processes and FLATE's enabling support process contribute to organizational success and sustainability by providing resources, supporting partnerships with stakeholders, and providing services and products to customers/stakeholders. Work and support are managed through evaluation and analysis of performance measures and data. Leadership and Team members monitor measures to identify actions required to modify and guide performance of the processes. The Leadership team monitors performance of the processes and work systems using feedback from stakeholders and

	<p>customers and tracking progress through metrics. Processes are measured by evaluating the contribution of the specific work process to the overall goal level accomplishment. Processes are managed by ensuring adherence to accepted procedures, reviewing feedback from stakeholders in each step, and analyzing and making improvements as necessary. Review of collected feedback is accomplished at weekly Monday Team meetings, and using other communication channels. Information is also collected through FLDOE from other entities for use as best practices, and from published papers.</p> <p>A structured process improvement method is implemented, in any process improvement situation, to determine the current situation based on process information and measures, determination of causes if process performance does not meet needs, development of corrective actions, and monitoring of process progress.</p>	
<p>3. How do you control the overall costs of your operations?</p>	<p>Overall costs of these work and support processes are controlled by shifting ownership (i.e.in an effort to establish sustainability of FLATE’s mission at grant expiration) through partners, with guidance and instructions for operating the processes. Volunteers are used to supplement FLATE funding. This demonstrates an innovative approach and strategy of distributed sustainability. In other words this is a means for assuring sustainability of segments of FLATE’s mission beyond the life of the grant. Costs are reduced by reviewing and integrating and standardizing best practices. Costs are minimized through continuous improvement activity. Additionally,</p>	<p>There is an opportunity to learn and continually improve approaches to the distributed sustainability model deployment to eliminate the expected gap in FLATE’s mission beyond the life of the FLATE organization.</p>

	<p>regular process improvements at Team meetings, IAC meetings and NVC meetings contribute to streamlining and making processes more efficient and more impactful.</p> <p>Avoiding rework is accomplished through review of processes based on feedback from stakeholders and standardization of procedures. Actions are planned for improvement based on the data and reviews of metrics in Team meetings, Leadership meetings and IAC and NVC meetings.</p>	
<p>4. How do you manage supplier performance?</p>	<p>Supplier and partner relationships are managed through consistent communication, involvement in teams and process management, and providing feedback information and metrics/data. A key FLATE intent is to establish mature partnerships with key suppliers. This conversion and enhancement of typical vendor/customer associations result in deeper relationships with more open two-way communications with partners. These communications includes face-to-face visits and meetings, and more open communication through email, phone, and mutual access to online information with partners.</p> <p>FLATE partners are key suppliers of Webmaster services, IT system and support, data, center evaluation, NVC oversight, HR management, budget services, and physical space. Supplier management is governed by NSF and HCC policies and regulations.</p>	<p>Opportunity exists to develop systematic means for evaluating and improving FLATE's approach to develop greater supplier buy-in and alignment with FLATE mission, vision, and values.</p>

<p>5. How do you provide a safe operating environment and ensure workplace preparedness for disasters and emergencies?</p>	<p>This is accomplished through following HCC host policies and required procedures. FLATE's main office is essentially dependent on the host college policies and procedures.</p> <p>The geographically dispersed nature of the activities by FLATE affords an opportunity for redundancy in activities around the state. Team members can conduct most work outside of the office space. In this way, continuity is assured even in the event of an emergent occurrence in any regional part of the state.</p>	
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## FLATE Sterling Assessment Scoring 2014

Category		Available Points	2008	2010	2012	2014
1	Leadership	140	42	56	63	84
2	Strategic Planning	100	40	50	45	55
3	Customer Focus	100	40	40	50	55
4	Measurement, Analysis, & Knowledge Management	100	25	30	40	45
5	Workforce Focus	100	30	30	30	45
6	Operations Focus	100	30	30	40	55
7	Results	360	126	126	144	162
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>501</b>