

# Tips for Writing Successful Proposals

## Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program 2008

### **\$8,000 award**

Over the years, we have received many questions about what constitutes a good Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program proposal. The program brochure states that proposals are reviewed based on their substance, clarity, originality and feasibility. Beyond that, though, reviewers have identified several hallmarks of proposals that have been accepted for funding. We hope these comments help you as you consider preparing a proposal for the Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program.

### **Preparation**

Reviewers are impressed by proposals that show evidence that the project has been well planned. Beyond simply writing a coherent application, reviewers look for evidence that research has been conducted about the opportunities available to pursue the project, contacts with relevant individuals and organizations have been made, and thought has been given to the kinds of experiences that applicants present for their projects.

### **Passion**

One of the components of a successful proposal is the passion for the project that the applicant conveys in the application. Among reviewers, it is often referred to as being able to hear applicants' voices speaking from their hearts directly to the reviewers. This may be evidenced by having someone propose a project or talent that has languished due to everyday demands and stresses. A proposal writer may discuss an issue they have been thinking about exploring for years, but have not had the time or resources to devote to it. When a teacher or other educator constructs a proposal that conveys enthusiasm, reviewers are drawn to it.

### **Educator as Learner**

Reviewers have found themselves drawn to proposals that place the educator in the role of learner and risk-taker. Proposals that take applicants out of their comfort zones and acknowledge this departure as useful in helping them understand their students' frustrations are enticing to reviewers.

## **Timeline**

A successful proposal includes a timeline that reflects a full six weeks of time devoted to the project. Reviewers have noted that, especially for projects that include travel, a proposal is more compelling if sufficient time will be spent at the location(s) identified. If significant resources will be invested in traveling to a location, reviewers are drawn to proposals that reflect a stay of several weeks, rather than only a few days.

Additionally, reviewers suggest that proposals that devote most of the six weeks to project activities are stronger than those that engage in project activities for two or three weeks, then specify the rest of the six weeks as documentation (e.g., preparing PowerPoint presentations, sorting photographs, editing video, collating scrapbooks, and so forth). While documentation is important, it should not consume the majority of the summer project.

The timeline should be separated from the project narrative, not included within the description of the proposed project.

## **Attention to Detail**

A successful proposal is grammatically correct and carefully proofread. Just as teachers demand careful work, reviewers of proposals are favorably inclined toward proposals that are easy to read and follow. The case for the proposed project should be stated concisely, and activities, timeline and budget should be compatible. Budgets should add correctly, and all necessary components should be included. **Three** sets of the complete proposal, including three copies of your license and one original and two copies of letter(s) of recommendation, stapled or secured with paperclips, are required.

Please do not submit additional attachments unless specifically requested by the Endowment.

## **\$25,000 award**

After two years of experience with the \$25,000 award level, reviewers have made several suggestions.

The information listed above for the \$8,000 grants applies, but considerably more is expected from applicants for the \$25,000 program.

Proposals for this program must be significantly more involved and researched than an \$8,000 project. It has been observed that many proposals that were submitted to the \$25,000 program could just as easily have been \$8,000 projects. Please take some time to consider whether the project you are proposing is truly a bigger, more time-consuming project that will *lead directly to higher levels of student achievement and improved*

*personal interactions with students*, or just a more costly project that will renew you but not transfer into classroom improvement.

If you propose a project that requires you to have specific skills in order to begin, please include samples to prove your ability to undertake the project (e.g., writing samples, artwork, and so forth).

Please note that the Endowment requires three to five letters of recommendation from 1) superintendent; 2) principal; and 3) at least one letter from a fellow teacher, parent or student. Make sure that these letters are on official letterhead (when appropriate) and signed by the recommender. *Please do not submit more than five letters of recommendation.*

If your school is requesting replacement-teacher funding from the Endowment, a letter from the school district that details that request must be included with your proposal.

Budgets should add correctly, and all necessary components should be included. **Three** sets of the complete proposal, including three copies of your license and one original and two copies of each letter of recommendation, stapled or secured with paperclips, are required.

August 2007  
Lilly Endowment Inc.