



Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

Lilly Endowment (Endowment) is pleased to be accepting proposals for the 36th round of its Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program (TCFP). This program supports educators throughout Indiana by providing resources for them to take time for meaningful renewal. Applications for the 2023 program must be submitted online by 11:59 p.m. (EDT) on Monday, October 3. Interested educators should carefully review the [Request for Proposal](#) (RFP) to fully review the eligibility requirements and application process.

In August 2022, Endowment staff hosted information sessions regarding TCFP. During these sessions, attendees were invited to submit questions regarding TCFP. This document summarizes and responds to those questions, along with other commonly submitted questions. We invite interested educators to submit questions that are not answered here to Lilly Endowment staff at teachercreativity@lei.org.

Eligibility

Should applicants report whether they have previously received a Teacher Creativity Fellowship?

One of the questions on the Application Cover Form asks whether the applicant is a prior recipient. Applicants should indicate YES if they have successfully received an award in the past and then indicate the year in the space provided.

I am a licensed teacher in an elementary school. However, I teach pre-Kindergarten (pre-K). Does that mean I am not eligible to apply?

TCFP is open to K-12 educators; thus, pre-K educators would not be eligible. From time to time, the eligibility criteria are reviewed and updated. We suggest that applicants check back in the future to see if the eligibility criteria have been modified to include pre-K teachers.

What if I have been a classroom teacher for more than 10 years and am now a full time instructional coach? Do I need to begin counting five years again?

No, you do not begin counting again in this circumstance. Applicants who have served as a K-12 classroom teacher may use five years of full-time teaching various subjects (either consecutive or non-consecutive) to satisfy the time teaching requirement. "Instructional coach" is another teaching position under the TCFP eligibility guidelines. K-12 classroom teachers and instructional coaches may combine time in their positions. Whether in one position type or two which are closely-related, the applicant must have accrued five years of teaching (either consecutive or non-consecutive) prior to being eligible to apply. For example, an applicant might have served as an assistant principal for the last four years, before that they were a classroom teacher for three years, and previous to that served in an assistant principal role for four years, all working back in time. They would be eligible to apply because their cumulative total years in their current position type (assistant principal) is eight years.

Are educators at Indiana virtual schools eligible to apply for the Teacher Creativity Fellowship?

No. TCFP is intended for educators who have positions in schools where they have daily face-to-face contact with students. During these exceptional times related to COVID-19 pandemic safety measures, many schools have elected to provide classes virtually. In these circumstances, where virtual education is a temporary measure to address public health concerns, educators working at schools that typically have in-person instruction are eligible to apply for the fellowship. However, if an educator is employed at a school where students are learning in a virtual setting daily and the online mode of education is routine, then teachers in these circumstances are not eligible to apply.

Are administrators eligible for this opportunity or is it just for teachers?

Yes. Two administrative positions are listed in the TCFP RFP - principals and assistant principals. If an applicant's position is akin to either of these positions, such as head of school, then they may apply for the program under the category for principals and assistant principals. Schools and school districts sometimes apply different titles to various roles. Principals and assistant principals may also combine time in their administrative positions. For instance, if an applicant has been a principal for three years (through 2021-22) and served as an assistant principal for the two years prior, they have satisfied the five years.

As an administrator at a parochial school, should someone from my central office for the Archdiocese write the letter?

For those principals and assistant principals in a private school setting, the required letter of affirmation from district leadership or the school governing board must be written by an individual representing a governing body that is authorized to approve the applicant's participation in a special program, such as TCFP.

How many hours in each week are considered full-time?

A schedule of 30 or more hours is considered full time for the purposes of TCFP.

Is there a limit as to how many Teacher Creativity Fellowship awards an educator can receive during their career?

Yes. Currently, educators are eligible to receive up to two (2) Teacher Creativity Fellowship awards during their lifetime. Past recipients who continue to meet all other eligibility requirements and who received their first award in 2015 or earlier may apply for the 2023 program.

Goals and Activities/Timeline

I teach in a year-round setting and do not have long breaks/vacations. My project would be limited to only a few weeks since I would otherwise have to use accumulated vacation time (PTO). Would the short time framework disadvantage me in the selection process? What can I do to improve my chance of being selected?

No, there is no disadvantage to working at a school that follows a year-round school calendar. Since the beginning of TCFP, the Endowment has attempted to be flexible related to different circumstances. Please submit your proposal according to your unique circumstances, explaining, in this case, the year-round school environment. The most compelling proposals clearly identify why the selected project will be renewing and why the sequence of activities and timing was chosen. You should continue to follow the RFP closely and submit a proposal that is personally meaningful to you.

If a project includes several locations for travel, may the trips be separated in time, or should the trips be back-to-back?

Yes. The Endowment encourages recipients to engage in meaningful travel and that may include multiple locations. When a project includes travel, it is important that sufficient time is spent at the proposed destinations(s). There is no set timing requirement, and it is acceptable for travel to occur over multiple segments within the grant period (fall break, winter break, summer break, etc.). The project and travel timing suggested should credibly lead to renewal.

How detailed does the project timeline need to be? Can it be a general timeline - like Day 1, Day 2, etc. - or does it need to include specific dates and times? Also, is there a minimum amount of time for an experience? For example, if travel is involved, is there an itinerary that is too short?

The timeline should reflect a series of activities over a substantial period of time that are clearly focused and tightly connected to the project's goals. Although there are no specific requirements as to how long the project should take or when activities should occur, the Endowment has observed that in most cases, at least two weeks of time is needed to restore energy.

How strict should the timeline be that I propose? In other words, if something happens and the exact dates must be pushed back, is that acceptable (if it still happens within the proposed time period for my project)?

The Endowment seeks to be flexible related to extenuating personal circumstances and to the ongoing impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel.

May an applicant submit two different proposals in the same year?

The Endowment will only accept one application, and if two are submitted the most recent one will be used.

Collaborations

My wife and I are both teachers. Is there a benefit to submitting individual applications, or should both of us applying jointly?

There is no benefit, nor detriment, to applying jointly or collaboratively in the TCFP process.

May two teachers from different schools and different school districts complete a joint application for one project?

Yes. Educators from different schools or districts may collaborate on a joint application.

Is it possible to have one person's activities in a joint application approved and not those of another joint applicant?

Yes. During adjudication, each application and project proposal is judged on its own merits; therefore, there have been instances where one joint applicant did not receive an award, yet other joint applicants received fellowships.

If my husband, a fellow educator, and I apply jointly, will we receive double the amount of grant money if we are selected?

Whether in a single application or joint application, each applicant who is successful will receive the amount requested in their budget, up to the \$12,000 maximum. For instance, if each spouse requests \$12,000 and their proposed project is selected, the total project award would be \$24,000. Each would enter into a fellowship agreement for a \$12,000 fellowship.

May family members be included in a joint proposal?

The best proposals incorporate project work and activities that are personally meaningful to applicants. In these proposals, the applicant's personal renewal is the focus, whether experienced with family or individually (and whether family expenses are included in a fellowship budget). If family members will be participating in an applicant's renewal project, the applicant is encouraged to share how this participation will contribute to personal renewal. There is no strict guideline about budgets including family expenses, but a stronger proposal will allow the applicant to be the primary focus of the proposal and the budget should reflect that.

Letters of Recommendation

Who can compose a letter of recommendation?

Each person who writes a letter of recommendation should know the professional abilities of the applicant. Ideally, the letter should detail the relationship of the author to the applicant and reference the proposed Teacher Creativity Fellowship project. A general letter of support without reference to the relationship or project is not recommended.

Would a member of an applicant's school administration be considered a colleague for a letter of recommendation? Or does it need to be a co-teacher?

All applicants must include at least one letter of support from a colleague within their school or district, which can include peers, department chairs, administrators, or others employed by the same school district or school.

My husband and I are submitting a joint application for a Fellowship award. Our mutual friend, and former grant winner, knows us both quite well. Could she write one letter of reference? Or should we ask her for two?

All applicants must present individual letters of recommendation. Those selected to write a recommendation should know the professional ability of the applicant, and it is preferable that the letter include the relationship of the author to the applicant and reference the project and the educator, rather than be a general letter of support. In this case, more important than the author being a past Teacher Creativity Fellow is the ability of the author to convey what sort of fit the project is for the applicant and the expected benefits for the applicant in undergoing renewal in this manner.

Is there a page limit for letters of recommendation?

No. There is no specific page limit for letters of recommendation. Those selected to write a recommendation should know the professional ability of the applicant, and it is preferable that the letter include the relationship of the author to the applicant and reference the project and the educator, rather than be a general letter of support.

One of my recommenders is a retired educator without letterhead. How should they format their letter of recommendation?

Letters from individuals who are not affiliated with a school or organization that provides letterhead should include their personal information in the absence of letterhead. This should include their full name, address, and phone number in the format of a standard personal letter.

Travel

How specifically do travel accommodations need to be referenced in applications? Need applicants know the exact hotels in which they plan to stay?

Applicants are encouraged to complete meaningful research in planning the proposal activities, timeline and budgets included in their applications. It is not necessary that specific hotels be identified for lodging needs, but costs and locations should be based upon recent research.

If the renewal project that an applicant is considering requires an advance reservation, how does the applicant proceed prior to the Fellowship determinations to pay for the reservation?

If the completion of a proposed renewal project requires a reservation prior to notification of the success of an application, the Endowment recommends reaching out to the organization accepting reservations to inquire about the possibility of holding a space until award notification is received and checking on any related cancellation penalties. Alternatively, if reservations cannot be secured in advance and ends up being unavailable after a Fellowship is awarded, the Endowment will seek to be as flexible as possible to ensure the award recipient is able to successfully complete their renewal project.

Budgets and Taxes

Is there guidance regarding how much should be allocated to cover any tax liabilities that might result from receiving a fellowship?

In many (if not most) cases, Teacher Creativity Fellowship awards will be subject to federal income tax, therefore, applicants are encouraged to include a line item in their budget to cover tax liability as needed. Every educator's circumstance is different, and the Endowment will not offer specific advice regarding budgeting for tax liability within the application budget. Instead, we recommend that applicants consult with a tax adviser to ensure they are adequately prepared for any tax liabilities that might result from receiving a Teacher Creativity Fellowship award.

If an applicant's experience involves driving, is it appropriate to add mileage to the budget? If so, is there a specific amount per mile?

Yes. It is appropriate to budget for any expenses related to the completion of the renewal project, including mileage expenses for driving a vehicle. While applicants should use their own judgment when budgeting for all expenses associated with their project, it may be helpful to reference the mileage rates released periodically by the Internal Revenue Service. (<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-increases-mileage-rate-for-remainder-of-2022>).

Is it best to plan for a proposal budget for the entire amount of funding applicants are eligible for under this program (\$12,000), or is it better to keep budgets under \$12,000 if possible?

Applicants are encouraged to budget for all expenses associated with accomplishing the proposed renewal project. If accomplishing the goals of a project costs less than \$12,000, it is appropriate for a smaller request

to be submitted. Budgets for less than the full \$12,000 amount will not be viewed more or less favorably than those that request the full amount.

Should applicants include the full cost of their proposed renewal project, even if costs exceed \$12,000?

Although the maximum award amount for a 2023 Teacher Creativity Fellowship grant is \$12,000, applicants are encouraged to show the full cost of their proposed renewal project when preparing a proposal budget, even if they intend to supplement the grant funds with their own or other resources.

How should applicants account for potential increases in travel or other project costs when completing their proposal budget?

Applicants are encouraged to conduct thorough research to estimate the expected costs associated with completing their renewal projects. If research suggests that costs associated with the proposed project may increase between the time of application submission and project completion, it is appropriate to account for this projected increase in the proposal budget.

What is a “living stipend” and how should this amount be determined?

Applicants may request a reasonable living stipend as part of their project budget. The Endowment recognizes that educators sometimes forego seasonal employment opportunities in order to complete their renewal project and a living stipend is meant to serve as compensation for your time in conducting the proposed project. As such, when determining whether to include a living stipend, applicants are encouraged to consider whether and how much compensation they might not be receiving as a result of engaging in their renewal project. The stipend should not exceed 20 percent of your total project budget and will be considered within the context, timeframe and goals of the project.

Miscellaneous

Does the Endowment share examples of past successful TCFP applications?

The Endowment does not release applications from past Teacher Creativity Fellowship recipients, but project summaries for previous recipients can be accessed in the resources section of the Teacher Creativity website ([2022-tcfp-recipients.pdf](#)).

May a school or other organization apply on behalf of its teachers and then distribute TCFP awards to them once Fellowships are awarded?

No. Only individual educators are eligible to apply for TCFP awards. Schools or other organizations may not apply on behalf of educators.

How closely related does the project have to be to the subject that you teach?

TCFP focuses on personal renewal and is not aimed at professional development, academic research or school-related projects. It is not required that the proposed renewal project relate to the applicant's role as an educator. Instead, TCFP is intended to provide educators with an opportunity to pursue passions and interests and to personally re-charge. The hope then is that educators return to their schools with renewed energy and commitment to work on behalf of Indiana students.

Is it recommended that applicants join an organized tour group for overseas travel or can applicants coordinate their own travel?

No preference is given to traveling with organized tour groups over individually coordinated travel. Applicants are encouraged to choose the approach that best equips them to meet their personal renewals goals.

Does the Endowment provide feedback to previous unsuccessful applicants so they can improve upon their proposals? Can an applicant resubmit a grant proposal that was not accepted in a previous application year?

Because of the volume of applications received, the Endowment does not provide feedback to applicants whose projects are not funded. Applicants may resubmit a previously submitted project proposal but are encouraged to carefully review their application and make updates that might be necessary based upon new costs for projects or other aspects of the proposal that may have changed. Additionally, new letters of recommendation must be secured and dated for the current applicant year. In addition, applicants are encouraged to have a colleague review and offer feedback on a previously unsuccessful application before resubmission.

Should the proposal be double or single spaced?

Applications may be either single- or double-spaced, as long as other page-limit and formatting requirements are followed.

How can I verify if my school is accredited by a Third-Party?

Third-Party Accreditation for Nonpublic Schools can be found at: ([DOE: School Accreditation \(in.gov\)](#)). If an applicant is not able to verify their school's accreditation status through this link, they are encouraged to reach out to their school administration or connect with Endowment staff at teachercreativity@lei.org prior to proposal completion and submission.