



Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program

Frequently Asked Questions

This document summarizes and responds to commonly submitted questions about the Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program, including those that have been asked at past information sessions. 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 question 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.

If an applicant is a licensed teacher teaching pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) in an elementary school eligible to apply?

In 2024, 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 an applicant has been a classroom teacher for more than 10 years and is now a full-time instructional coach? Do they need to begin counting their three years again for eligibility?

No, you do not begin counting again in this circumstance. Applicants who have served as K-12 educators for at least three cumulative years in one or more of the roles included in the TCFP RFP (K-12 classroom teachers, principals and assistant principals, librarians and media specialists, school counselors, school social workers, and instructional coaches) are eligible to apply for the program. Years of experience in various roles can be combined in order to meet the minimum of three years of experience. For example, an educator may have served as a classroom teacher for one year and a media specialist for two years. This would be sufficient cumulative experience to apply for TCFP.

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

Yes. Educators who are employed by a virtual school are eligible for TCFP, provided that they meet all other eligibility requirements (the requirements include having held one or more of the roles included in the RFP for at least three years in a school that is accredited by the Indiana Department of Education or that is accredited by a third-party entity recognized by the Indiana Department of Education).

Are administrators eligible for this opportunity?

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 or dean, 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.

As an administrator at a parochial school, should someone from the central office write the letter of affirmation?

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 fellowships educators can receive during their careers?

Yes. Currently, educators are eligible to receive up to two (2) Teacher Creativity fellowships during their careers. Past recipients who continue to meet all other eligibility requirements and who received their first award in 2016 or earlier may apply for the 2024 program.

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 that has been submitted on or before the submission deadline will be reviewed.

Are two or more educators able to submit a collaborative proposal?

In the past, the Endowment invited groups of eligible educators to submit collaborative proposals if they wished. For the 2024 program, collaborative proposals will not be accepted. Instead, each interested eligible applicant should submit their own, fully independent proposal. Applicants who hope to complete their renewal project with another educator who is applying for the program should be prepared for the possibility that both educators might not be awarded a fellowship.

Goals and Activities/Timeline

Most TCFP projects seem to include or center around travel. Is travel a necessary component of a successful proposal?

No. Although many applicants propose renewal projects that involve travel as a key component, this is not a requirement for a successful project. Whether or not travel is included, proposed renewal projects should be intellectually revitalizing and personally renewing.

If an applicant works in a year-round setting and proposes a project limited to only a few weeks, would the shortened time framework disadvantage the applicant in the selection process? What can the applicant do to improve the chance of being selected?

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 regarding different circumstances. Please submit your proposal according to your circumstances, explaining, in this case, the year-round school environment. The most compelling proposals clearly identify why and how 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, do the trips have to occur back-to-back?

No. The Endowment encourages recipients to engage in meaningful travel and that could include multiple locations and extended or disparate scheduling. 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 during multiple segments within the grant period (fall break, winter break, summer break, etc.). The project and travel timing suggested should credibly lead to meaningful renewal.

How specific should travel accommodation details be in the application? For example, should applicants know the exact hotels in which they plan to stay?

Applicants are encouraged to complete appropriate preliminary 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. Applicants can view sample timelines and budgets on the [TCFP page](#) of the Endowment's website.

If a proposed renewal project requires an advance reservation, how should an applicant proceed prior to final decisions about fellowships 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 requiring reservations to inquire about the possibility of holding a space until award notifications are made and any related cancellation penalties. Alternatively, if reservations cannot be secured in advance and the arrangements become unavailable after a Fellowship is awarded, the Endowment may consider modifications to the proposal or award that would enable the recipient to successfully complete their renewal project.

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 need not include specific dates and times, but it should reflect a series of activities during 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, several weeks are needed to achieve meaningful renewal. There is no required format for proposal timelines, but applicants can view sample timelines and budgets on the [TCFP page](#) of the Endowment's website.

How strictly must a grant recipient follow the proposed timeline? In other words, if something happens and the exact dates must be changed, is that acceptable (if it still happens within the proposed time period for the project)?

The Endowment seeks to be flexible related to extenuating personal circumstances that may affect planned travel. Fellows may complete their renewal projects at any time prior to the end of the grant period (July 31, 2025).

Letters of Recommendation

Who is the best person to compose a letter of recommendation for an applicant?

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's administration be considered a colleague for a letter of recommendation? Or does it need to be a fellow teacher or peer?

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.

Is there a page limit for letters of recommendation?

No. There is no 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.

If a recommender 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.

Budgets and Taxes

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

In many (if not most) cases, Teacher Creativity fellowships 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 advisor to ensure they are adequately prepared for any tax liabilities that could result from receiving a Teacher Creativity fellowship.

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. In some circumstances this may include mileage expenses for driving a vehicle. Applicants may find the assistance of a tax advisor helpful when preparing project budgets in order to understand best practices for calculating and documenting expenses to ensure that any tax-related issues are addressed. When considering budgets for mileage, applicants may find the mileage reimbursement rates referenced by the Internal Revenue Service helpful. (Visit irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates.)

Is it best to propose a budget for the entire amount of funding available under this program (\$15,000), or is it better to keep budgets under \$15,000 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 \$15,000, it is appropriate to submit a smaller request. Budgets for less than the full \$15,000 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 \$15,000?

Although the maximum award amount for a 2024 Teacher Creativity Fellowship award is \$15,000, applicants are encouraged to show the full cost of their proposed renewal project when preparing a proposal budget, even if they intend to supplement grant funds with 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 budgets. The Endowment recognizes that educators sometimes forego seasonal employment opportunities in order to complete their renewal projects and a living stipend is meant to serve as compensation for the time spent in renewal. 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.

May family member expenses be included in proposals?

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 or enable personal renewal. It is allowable to budget for expenses related to family members or dependents participating in renewal projects, but a strong proposal will demonstrate that the applicant’s renewal is the primary focus of the proposal, and the budget should reflect that.

Miscellaneous

Does the Endowment share examples of past successful TCFP applications?

No. The Endowment does not release applications from past Teacher Creativity fellows, but project summaries for previous recipients can be accessed on the Endowment's website in the resources section of the Teacher Creativity page.

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.

How closely related does the project have to be to the subject that the applicant teaches?

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 recharge. The hope 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?

There is no preference given to traveling with organized tour groups or individually coordinated travel. Applicants are encouraged to choose the approach that best equips them to meet their personal renewal goals.

Does the Endowment provide feedback to previously unsuccessful applicants so they can improve upon their proposals in the future? 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 could 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 application 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 detailed in the RFP are followed.

How can an applicant verify if their school is accredited by a third party?

Third-Party Accreditation for Nonpublic Schools can be found at in.gov/doe/it/school-accreditation. 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.