

2026

Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program

A program for personal renewal of Indiana educators

GRANTS FOR UP TO \$15,000 EACH

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 2026

Lilly Endowment is pleased to announce the 39th round of its Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program (TCFP). This program supports K-12 educators throughout Indiana by providing resources for them to take time for meaningful renewal. We believe that through new experiences, exploration and reflection educators can generate renewed energy in their careers, innovative approaches to teaching and educational leadership, and thoughtful ways to encourage students' creative thinking. TCFP renewal projects are not intended to be typical vacations, rather they are meant to be intentional experiences that restore educators' enthusiasm for their profession and stimulate their creativity, which should in turn enhance the educational experiences of their students.

The Endowment expects to award approximately 125 teacher creativity grants, each totaling up to \$15,000, in 2026. Fellowship grant periods will be for 18 months. Each proposal should include activities that are intellectually enriching and personally renewing and that provide opportunities for exploration and fulfillment that would otherwise not be possible.

To be competitive, each project proposal should:

- Be clearly written and well organized.
- Illustrate how the applicant will experience meaningful renewal through the completion of activities that include growth opportunities and are intellectually stimulating or personally challenging.
- Demonstrate sufficient planning and research to develop a realistic timeline and budget.

NOTE: Although there are no specific requirements as to the length of time dedicated to proposed activities, we emphasize the importance of spending sufficient time in those activities to achieve meaningful renewal. Proposals for projects that do not require several weeks' time (or more) must explain clearly how the plans will result in renewal despite the shorter time commitment.

Eligibility

The following full-time education professionals who have daily interaction with students in Indiana's traditional public schools, charter schools and private schools are eligible to apply:

- K-12 classroom teachers of any subject
- Principals and assistant principals

- Librarians and media specialists
- School counselors and psychologists
- School social workers
- Speech-language pathologists
- Instructional coaches

Additionally, each applicant must meet both of the following criteria:

1. Have held one or more of the above positions for at least three cumulative years (since at least fall 2022) in a school that is accredited by the Indiana State Board of Education or that is accredited by a third-party entity recognized by the Indiana State Board.
2. Currently hold a valid Indiana Professional Educator License or at least a four-year bachelor's degree that is appropriate for responsibilities of their educational position.

If the applicant is unsure whether a school meets the above accreditation criteria, the applicant should review the Indiana Department of Education website at [in.gov/doi](https://www.in.gov/doi) or contact Endowment staff at teachercreativity@lei.org prior to proposal completion and submission.

In addition to meeting the eligibility requirements outlined above, each applicant must affirm the intention to teach (or to hold another eligible position as a full-time education professional) in Indiana through school year 2027-28.

Past TCFP recipients who continue to meet these requirements and who received a grant in 2018 or earlier may also apply. Prior recipients who received awards after 2018 are not eligible for the 2026 program. Individuals may receive up to two (2) TCFP grants during their lifetimes.

NOTE: Applicants who are principals or assistant principals must include a signed and dated letter on letterhead from their district superintendent or other senior organizational leader who has supervisory authority over the applicant, such as an executive director or chair of the governing board, approving the applicant's participation in the proposed TCFP project (this is in addition to the two (2) letters of recommendation discussed later in this RFP). The position of "head of school" or school-level leader of another title is considered commensurate to the position of principal for purposes of this program.

NOTE: Certain relatives of the Endowment's officers, directors or founders are not eligible to receive TCFP grants. Applicants must disclose relationships to any of these individuals in their proposals.

Key Dates

September 8, 2025: Proposal Submission Deadline

All proposals must be completed and submitted online by 6 p.m. (ET) on Monday, September 8, 2025.

January 23, 2026: Recipient Notification

The Endowment expects to send notification of decisions to all applicants by email on or before Friday, January 23, 2026. Contingent upon the Endowment's receipt of a signed Fellowship Agreement, payments to recipients are tentatively scheduled to be made in late February 2026. The Endowment will award up

to \$15,000 directly to each recipient and will issue an IRS income reporting Form 1099 Misc. or other appropriate IRS report, typically at the beginning of 2027.

July 31, 2027: Project Completion

Applicants must propose a timeline that permits them to complete their renewal activities by July 31, 2027.

August 31, 2027: Reporting

Fellowship Agreements and reporting requirements (narrative and financial) will be sent to all grant recipients following the announcement of grant awards. Final reports from grant recipients, including financial information, are due by Tuesday, August 31, 2027.

How to Apply

All required documents (listed below) must be combined into a single PDF and submitted online upon completing the Proposal Cover Form. Applicants can access the Proposal Cover Form on the [TCFP page](#) of the Endowment's website. Please note that the form does not allow for applicants to save their information and return at a later time, so the Endowment recommends previewing the form before submitting the proposal.

Proposal Submission Steps:

1. Prepare information for the online Proposal Cover Form.
2. Prepare proposal narrative, timeline and budget documents according to the instructions on the following pages.
3. Obtain two (2) personal letters of recommendation.
4. Obtain a copy of your current Indiana Professional Educator License or documentation of successful completion of at least a four-year bachelor's degree that is appropriate for the responsibilities of the educational position that you currently hold (i.e., degree conferred transcripts or diploma).
5. **Applicants who are principals or assistant principals** must also include a letter providing approval of participation from their district superintendent or other senior organizational leader who has supervisory authority over the applicant, such as an executive director or chair of the governing board.
6. Create a single PDF of all required proposal documents.
7. Complete your online Proposal Cover Form and upload your PDF.

TIP: Applicants are encouraged to have a colleague review their completed proposal before submission.

Proposal Instructions

1. Proposal Narrative

TIP: Successful proposals convey enthusiasm, imagination and evidence of personal stretch. They show evidence that applicants have devoted considerable thought to the types of renewal experiences they are seeking within the context of the project's rationale and goals.

Organize your proposal using the headings in the order listed below. Please note that 12 pt. font and one-inch margins are required. Proposals may be single- or double-spaced but must not exceed five (5) pages, including budget and timeline (excluding letters of recommendation or letters providing approval of participation).

Name: What is your legal name as reported to the IRS?

Project Title and 50-Word Summary: In brief, what is your project about? (This description should match the one provided on your Cover Form.)

Project Goals and Activities: What are your project goals? What specific activities will you engage in to accomplish your goals? These activities should be well-planned and based on current research about relevant opportunities, requirements and costs, and information, if necessary, offered from contacts with relevant individuals and organizations. For example, if you propose to engage in a learning experience led by an expert in a specific field, include a description of the communication that you have had with that expert. If your project involves travel, included activities should be aligned with stated project goals and should be of a creative or intellectual nature that sets the travel apart from what might be viewed as a typical vacation.

Need and Vision for Renewal: Describe your role and accomplishments as an educator. Why is renewal needed and important to you, personally and professionally? Why is now an opportune time for your proposed renewal project? How do you envision renewed energy, enthusiasm and creativity will result from your project? How will this renewal affect your career as an educator and your students? How will it be intellectually stimulating and broaden your horizons? How will you make time for reflection and nurture growth before, during and after your renewal project? Will companions (family members, other educators, etc.) join you in the completion of your renewal project and, if so, how will their participation enable or enhance the renewal you seek to achieve?

Timeline: Provide a detailed timeline of your schedule of renewal activities, any projected follow-up activities and, if applicable, any school-based activities. The timeline should reflect a series of activities during a substantial period of time that are clearly focused and tightly connected to the project's goals. If your project includes travel, it is important that sufficient time is spent at the proposed destination(s) to accomplish your goals. Although there is no required format for proposal timelines, sample formats are provided on the TCFP page of the Endowment's website.

Budget: What costs will you have? Each grant will be made for up to \$15,000. Your detailed, itemized budget should include expenses, such as transportation, lodging, fees, supplies, etc. Although there is no required format for proposal budgets, sample formats are provided on the TCFP page of the Endowment's website. Please use whole U.S. dollar amounts in creating the budget.

- A reasonable living stipend (compensation for your time or to account for lost income while conducting the proposed project, not to exceed 20 percent of your total project budget) is an allowable expense.
- It is allowable to budget for other costs that are necessary to enable completion of your renewal project, such as the cost for dependents to join you for travel associated with your project or care expenses for dependents or pets while engaged in project activities. If a budget includes expenses for companions to engage in elements of your renewal project with you, this should

be clearly noted in your budget and addressed in the “Need and Vision for Renewal” section as described above. Although it is allowable to include companions, renewal projects are not intended to be typical family vacations and the strongest proposals and budgets will focus on the renewal of the applicant.

- In most cases, this grant will be subject to federal income tax, therefore, applicants are encouraged to include a line item to cover tax liability as needed.

2. Letters of recommendation

The Endowment requires two (2) letters of recommendation from individuals who can address your ability to complete the proposed project. Such individuals can be colleagues or supervisors familiar with your proposed project and your personal capacity to achieve your project goals, or experts relevant to the area that you are exploring through your proposed project (e.g., glass blowing, biking, climate change).

It is your responsibility to ensure that the letters you submit meet **all of** the following requirements:

- Letters must be on letterhead (when applicable), dated in 2025, and include the author’s (1) title or position, (2) contact information and (3) typed or digital signature. Letters from individuals who are not affiliated with a school or organization that provides letterhead should include their personal contact information in the absence of letterhead. In these cases, a standard personal or business letter format is recommended.
- At least one of the two letters must be written by a colleague within the applicant’s current school or district.
- Letters of recommendation written by an applicant’s family member will not be considered.
- Applicants should not submit more than two (2) recommendation letters (letters providing approval of participation for applicants who are principals or assistant principals are separate). Extra letters will not be reviewed.

Applicants who do not provide letters of recommendation that meet the requirements above may be disqualified or unfavorably reviewed.

TIP: Letters are given serious consideration and are viewed most favorably when they reflect firsthand knowledge of the applicant and the proposed project.

3. Indiana license or documentation of at least a four-year bachelor’s degree

You must submit a valid Indiana Professional Educator License or documentation of degree earned as described above (transcript or diploma). To obtain a printed version of your license, go to www.in.gov/doi/educators/educator-licensing/lvis/.

NOTE: Hyperlinks and URLs may not be used to provide information necessary to proposal review. All proposal elements must be included as part of the applicant’s single PDF submission.

Proposal Checklist

The following items must be combined into a single PDF and submitted upon completing the online Proposal Cover Form located on the [TCFP page](#) of the Endowment’s website.

- Proposal Narrative: Five (5)-page limit, including timeline and budget (excluding letters of recommendation or letters providing approval of participation), 12 pt. font, one-inch margins, single- or double-spaced.
- Two (2) letters of recommendation.
- Indiana Professional Educator License or documentation of degree earned (transcript or diploma).
- **Applicants who are principals or assistant principals:** Signed and dated letter providing approval of participation from their district superintendent or other senior organizational leader who has supervisory authority over the applicant, such as an executive director or chair of the governing board.

The deadline for submitting proposals is 6 p.m. (ET) on Monday, September 8, 2025.

Interested in learning more about TCFP?

Endowment staff will host four virtual informational sessions in 2025 (April 17, April 24, August 7 and August 19) to review the RFP and answer questions from interested educators. Learn more and register for one of the sessions on the [TCFP page](#) of the Endowment’s website.

Interested in responses to frequently asked questions?

Review responses to frequently asked questions on the [TCFP page](#) of the Endowment’s website. This document may be updated to include additional questions and responses following the information sessions.

Want to learn about last year’s TCFP projects?

Review a news release about recent fellowship recipients and their projects [here](#).

Still have questions about TCFP?

Email questions to teachercreativity@lei.org.