Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program

Frequently Asked Questions

This document summarizes and responds to commonly submitted questions about the Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program (TCFP), 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

Is an applicant who is a licensed educator teaching pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) in an elementary school eligible to apply?

In 2027, TCFP is open to K-12 educators; thus, pre-K educators are not eligible.

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, an applicant would 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 and psychologists, school social workers, speech-language pathologists 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 State Board of Education or that is accredited by a third-party entity recognized by the Indiana State Board 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.

If an administrator at a parochial or private school is applying, should someone from the school's central office write the letter approving their participation?

For those principals and assistant principals in a private school setting, the required letter providing approval of participation must be written by a senior organizational leader who has supervisory authority over the applicant, such as a president or chair of the governing body.

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 2019 or earlier may apply for the 2027 program.

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

No. The Endowment will only accept one proposal, and if two are submitted the most recent one that has been submitted on or before the submission deadline will be reviewed.

Where can an educator obtain a copy of their Indiana Professional Educator License?

To obtain and print a version of your valid license, visit https://license.doe.in.gov/.

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 2027 program, collaborative proposals will not be accepted. Instead, each interested eligible applicant should submit their own, fully independent proposal.

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 a project does involve travel, it is essential that it include goal-aligned activities that distinguish the travel from what might be viewed as a vacation.

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. Each applicant should submit a proposal according to their unique 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. An applicant should continue to follow the RFP closely and submit a proposal that is personally meaningful to them.

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 that aligns with an applicant's stated goal 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 destination(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 proposal? 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 proposals. 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 a proposal, 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 eliminating 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 - 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 or other activities. Fellows may complete their renewal projects at any time prior to the end of the grant period (July 31, 2028).

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. Letters of recommendation written by an applicant's family member will not be considered.

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.

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 or business letter. The recommender should also indicate their relationship to the applicant.

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 proposal 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 2027 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 proposal 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. Accordingly, 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. Budgets that include and describe a reasonable living stipend will not be viewed more or less favorably than those that do not.

May family members, other educators, or other nonfamily companions participate in and have expenses included in proposals and proposal budgets?

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 others or individually (and whether expenses of travel companions are included in a fellowship budget). It is allowable to budget for expenses related to family members or dependents, other educators, or other nonfamily companions 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. As stated in the RFP, if any companions will participate in an applicant's renewal project, the applicant is asked to share how this participation will enable or enhance the renewal that the applicant seeks to achieve.

Miscellaneous

Does the Endowment share examples of past successful TCFP proposals?

No. The Endowment does not release proposals from past Teacher Creativity fellows, but project summaries for previous recipients and example projects can be accessed on the Endowment's website in the resources section of the **TCFP 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 meaningfully 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 coordinating 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 proposal year?

Because of the volume of proposals 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 proposal 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 proposal year. In addition, applicants are encouraged to have a colleague review and offer feedback on a previously unsuccessful proposal before resubmission.

Should the proposal be double or single spaced?

Proposals 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.

Due to limited space, may the proposal include hyperlinks or URL addresses to provide additional information?

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

When is it appropriate or allowable for companions to participate in a renewal project?

The best proposals incorporate project work and activities that are personally meaningful to applicants and the applicant's renewal should be the focus of a strong proposal. Even so, there are multiple scenarios in which having companions (family members, other educators, etc.) participate in a project would enable or enhance the renewal the applicant seeks to achieve. For example:

- It may not be feasible for an educator to leave dependent children or family at home for an extended period.
- A spouse or colleague may share an interest in the focus of the project and, by participating in the proposed activities, enhance the experience for the applicant.
- An applicant's renewal project related to familial heritage may be strengthened through the participation of extended family members.
- An applicant may feel increased safety and security participating in proposed activities with the company of a trusted companion.
- An applicant may have physical limitations that require the support of a companion to complete proposed activities.