

To: **All Heads of NAIS Schools**
From: **The Edward E. Ford Foundation**
John C. Gulla, Executive Director
Date: **September, 2016**

When I wrote to all NAIS school heads a year ago, I did not anticipate a second letter being sent to you so soon but there have been some important and exciting developments at the Edward E. Ford Foundation. This is the most effective means of announcing these changes to the world of 1,500+ independent schools throughout the country. These changes include:

- **For traditional grants (June and November) that had been capped at \$50,000, we now state a permitted range of \$25,000 to \$100,000 for these proposals.**
- **Leadership Grants (April) had been by invitation only and were to respond to a “framing question” established annually by the Board. Starting with the April, 2018 cycle, schools will be able to initiate consideration for these grants on their own.**
- **The restrictions on associations pursuing traditional grants have been modestly loosened.**
- **Minor changes were made to the rules regarding the frequency with which schools can make proposals.**

The letter I sent in September, 2015 was a lengthy description outlining the work of the Foundation and the processes we follow, processes that will remain largely unchanged save for what is mentioned above. Last year’s letter included a description of eligibility criteria, calendar deadlines and other practical information. I recommend that anyone unfamiliar with the Edward E. Ford Foundation, and all who are now considering making a proposal to the Foundation, access and read that letter and this one. The September, 2015 Memo to NAIS to School Heads can be found on our website at www.eeford.org in the “news” section or obtained by calling or writing to us at the number, email or street address on the bottom of this page. This letter is also posted on our website should you want an electronic version.

The mission of the Foundation continues to be “to strengthen and support independent secondary schools and to challenge and inspire them to leverage their unique talents, expertise and resources to advance teaching and learning throughout this country by supporting and disseminating best practice, by supporting efforts to develop and implement models of sustainability, and by encouraging collaboration with other institutions.”

TRADITIONAL GRANTS

The proposals for traditional grants had been capped for the last several years at \$50,000. Beginning with the June, 2017 Agenda, the E.E. Ford Foundation will consider requests for traditional grants from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Given this range, and until we have some experience that may allow us to better predict how schools will respond to this change, **schools seeking placement on a future June or November agenda will need to specify the anticipated dollar value of their proposal at the time they request placement on an Agenda.**

Throughout our 60 year history, the Foundation has considered proposals initiated by schools themselves. Last year I referred to these grants as “school-initiated” grants and, for reasons that I hope are now clear, we will henceforth use the term “**traditional grants**” to refer to grants made annually in June and November. What follows are the changes that the Board made at its most recent meeting and a brief description of the rationale for these changes. Anything not explicitly addressed in this letter concerning the traditional (formerly, school-initiated) grants remains as described in the September, 2015 letter.

1. While we do not require a fully-developed, final draft of a proposal at the time a school requests placement on an Agenda, the expectation that the dollar value be declared at this juncture will, we hope, result in all schools being more focused on the budgetary specifics and scope of their proposals early on in the process.
2. We would prefer to see requests where the proposal drives the budget rather than proposals that are driven more by a goal of maximizing dollar support from the Foundation. We want traditional grants to appeal to all schools; those with modest financial means as well as those with significant endowments. The Foundation continues to aspire to be relevant to all independent schools, to promote “generative” thinking and, as our mission indicates, “to challenge and inspire.”

For many schools, the funding we provide clearly makes possible projects the schools could not otherwise consider. Other schools leverage the imprimatur of the Foundation for ambitious matching funds or to convey an initiative’s independently determined appeal and legitimacy. We hope that this expanded range will acknowledge that, for some, the EE Ford Foundation’s minimum 1:1 matching requirement is a significant challenge while other schools who might otherwise hesitate to apply because of our thorough application process will be encouraged by the raised ceiling. Schools requesting a grant at less than the maximum allowed will not be penalized.

Though the Foundation does continue to be keenly interested in funding proposals that we believe will have a beneficial impact in the larger independent school world, the increased dollar maximum for these traditional grants is not intended to make them “mini-Leadership Grants.” (The expectation for Leadership Grants is much more explicit.) The Board is looking for a logical connection between the level of the request and the impact of the proposal. The dollar value of the request should fit the scope of the project. The Board seeks a balance between our desire to serve a large number of schools and our commitment to generate the strongest, most exciting and influential proposals possible.

3. Our expectations for the proposed budget are now more explicit. We don’t ask for detailed line item budgets and we recognize that some proposals will only take shape over the course of their implementation therefore requiring some flexibility concerning the budget. However, the Board wants to be sure that, after reading a proposal, there is a clear picture of how our grant and the matching funds would be spent if the proposal were approved.

LEADERSHIP GRANTS

Beginning with the April, 2018 Agenda, the Foundation will consider proposals for Leadership Grants (requests for up to \$250,000, matched at least 1:1) from eligible schools that initiate placement on an April Leadership Agenda themselves, hence the use now of “traditional grants” for the June and November cycles.

1. Beginning in 2008, the Foundation dedicated one of its 3 annual grant-making cycles to the Leadership Grant program -- larger grants to fewer schools. The goals of this program remain unchanged. For these grants we seek proposals that:
 - ***promise a significant impact on the practice and thinking in the independent school community throughout the country***
 - ***are innovative and replicable***
 - ***have a "ripple" effect where the benefits of the successful pursuit of an idea will not be limited to a single school***
 - ***encourage bold, new ideas that address challenges faced by independent schools***
 - ***represent original thinking and can conceivably catalyze change***
 - ***inspire creative problem-solving and incubate novel approaches***

2. The Board feels that the Leadership Grant program has been a great success and the \$8.5 million of grants made through this program, and the well over \$10 million in matching funds thus raised, have helped catalyze many significant and lasting improvements in the independent school world.
3. Over each of the past nine years, the Board determined a “framing question” and the Executive Director would then be responsible for inviting schools to apply for Leadership Grants that were expected to address some element of this question. Bob Hallett, my predecessor as Executive Director, and I tried each year to identify independent schools with great promise in the area of focus. With the program now reasonably well-established, it is time to shift the initiation of these proposals away from the Foundation to schools, thereby creating a process that parallels what we do with traditional grants. There was always a bit of awkwardness in having the Foundation invite a school to apply when not all who accepted the invitation were ultimately successful.
4. Schools interested in Leadership Grants will initiate the process with a conversation between the school head and the Executive Director. If, after that conversation, it makes sense to proceed and if there is still space, a school will be placed on a future April (Leadership Grant) Agenda. Only experience will allow us to know how far in advance these Agendas might fill. There will be a reasonable limit on how far in advance the Foundation will permit scheduling. There will continue to be a two-stage process for Leadership Grants. Schools placed on a Leadership Agenda will be asked to submit a preliminary proposal by June 1 of the preceding year [as of November 2016, the deadline was moved to **October 1**]. A sub-committee of the Foundation Board will consider these preliminary proposals and select finalists at its meeting in November. The rest of the process will mirror what it has been (a full description of which can be found in the September, 2015 letter).
5. To qualify for consideration for a Leadership Grant, the Head of School must have been in that role for at least three years at the time the Board will consider the proposal (it is a two year requirement for school heads seeking traditional grants). This is not a change but it is important to note.
6. Finally, careful readers of last year’s letter may be interested to know that the EE Ford Foundation is well along in its consideration of the proposals we received in response to our invitation of a year ago concerning the **Collaborative Innovation Grant** which will be made in **April, 2017**. We received hundreds of inquiries and dozens of strong, exciting, preliminary proposals. We are now working with a group of finalists. You can expect to hear news of this grant (**\$2 million, matched at least 1:1**, to a partnership of schools) in late spring, 2017.

ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOOLS - Frequency of proposal submissions

In addition to the general eligibility criteria in place at the Foundation which remain unchanged, the Board in its June meeting adopted the following policy:

- ***Schools can only apply once in any four year period for a traditional grant and only once in any four year period for a Leadership Grant. A school receiving a Leadership Grant from the Foundation will be ineligible for any additional grants for the following four year period.***
1. There was a strong interest in continuing to encourage a school with an especially successful traditional grant project to expand upon the idea (to “scale it,” perhaps) by returning to us within a four year period for a Leadership Grant.
 2. When the Foundation receives a proposal from a single school on behalf of a partnership of schools, it is only the school actually making the proposal whose eligibility is affected.
 3. In terms of schools seeking Leadership Grants, only finalist schools will be ineligible to reapply for the following four-year period.
 4. Those following these details closely will understand that schools that have previously received Leadership Grants are eligible to reapply if they are outside of the four-year window.

ASSOCIATIONS

In June, the Board approved a modest expansion in the eligibility of associations to submit proposals for consideration. The following policy was adopted:

- ***National, Regional, State and Local Independent School Associations located in the United States and other member Associations where a majority of the member schools are otherwise eligible to make proposals to the Foundation, are eligible to apply for a traditional grant as a part of either the June or November Agenda. Other domestic associations or organizations pursuing significant work in the independent school world can be considered upon the recommendation of the Executive Director to the Board.***

I recognize that this letter is being sent to school heads, not to Executive Directors of potentially eligible associations, but this network of colleagues will help me get this word out. I will also undertake additional communication efforts with those involved with associations who may be interested.

WEBSITE REDESIGN

We'd hoped to have launched the newly redesigned EE Ford website in June but it has been delayed by a few months. We do plan to go live with the new website in the fall.

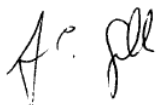
1. The website will include a much more interactive, helpful and user-friendly online application for schools seeking grants.
2. We have great expectations for the redesign of the archive of past grant recipients which will have an organizational structure, including keyword search capability, that will make it a much more valuable resource for all independent schools. Given that our mission explicitly serves the broad community of independent schools, we see this as a means of expanding our influence. We would like schools considering initiatives in certain areas (e.g., robotics, global competency, public/private partnerships) to see the EE Ford site as a resource where colleagues who have pursued similar efforts could be easily identified.
3. We also hope that the redesigned site will allow for submission of more information electronically, easier stewardship tracking, etc.

This is only the fourth letter from EE Ford to all NAIS schools since December, 2011. It is our intention to stay with this new arrangement in our guidelines for an extended period as the world of NAIS schools adjusts to the changes we have made.

I urge any schools heads with any questions to call or write. I wish you all a healthy, happy and successful 2016-17 school year.

With kind regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,



John C. Gulla
Executive Director