



2008-2009 Application Guide

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Before Completing an Application

In order to help applicants develop and enhance the ideas of their organization and program, Echoing Green has designed a new Applicant Coaching Guide. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of its components as they can serve as an outline for filling out the actual application.

The coaching toolkit includes the following pieces:

1. **Problem Definition:** What specific problems are you focused on and can you realistically solve it?
2. **Root Cause Analysis:** What is the underlying cause of the problem you're trying to solve?
3. **Goal Setting:** What will your community look like when you've solved the problem?
4. **Logic Test:** How will the activities that you undertake lead to the change that you envision?
5. **Innovation Matrix:** Are you adding new value to the world or duplicating the efforts of other?
6. **Opposing Viewpoints:** How does your idea stand up to criticism from those who know your field?
7. **Environmental Scan:** What factors in the world around you may influence your work?
8. **Financial Planning:** Do you understand the resource requirements of running your organization?
9. **Personal Reflection:** Why are you the right person to lead the change you seek?
10. **Making the Pitch:** Can you communicate your idea in a way that makes sense to others?

After completing each tool, you should put set the materials aside for at least a day. Then, look over your answers again to make sure they still make sense. Have a coach (or several coaches) look over your tools to give you a second opinion about your answers. The more feedback you receive from people, the better off your final application can be. If you have any questions, they can be sent to apply@echoinggreen.org.

Completing an Application

This section walks you through the application process. Once you've started an application, you can click *Save for Later* at the bottom of the screen to save your work and resume the process later. However, once your application is submitted, you may not revise your work.

Getting Started

1. Complete our online [Pre-Application Questionnaire](#) to check your eligibility.
2. Review the rest of this document to familiarize yourself with our process and policies.
3. Complete our online Applicant Coaching Guide to help strengthen your answers on the application.
4. When you're ready to begin an application, go to <https://apply.echoinggreen.org>.
5. Click *Register*.
6. Enter your registration information, record your username and password in a safe place, and then click *Submit*.
7. Click *OK* to login right away. Or click *Cancel* and then login later by selecting *Login* from the left column.
8. Click *Apply* on the left column.
9. Review the application instructions and select *Individual* (if you're applying by yourself) or *Partnership* (if your organization is led by you and other person).
10. Complete the Eligibility Checklist carefully and truthfully. You will only have one chance to answer these questions, so make sure your answers are correct and then click *Submit*.

Submitting an Application

1. Review the Background Check Consent Statement. If you consent, you may continue with the application. Otherwise, you will be logged out of the system.
2. The demographic information is optional and has no bearing on the selection process. However, by providing it, you'll help us ensure that future applicant pools are diverse and inclusive.
3. If you're applying as a Partnership, enter your partner's contact information, as well as a unique username and password. Next, if they consent to the Background Check Statement, complete the following screen and then enter their demographic information. Finally, you'll need to complete four essay questions about your partnership, with each answer limited to 1,000 characters

(including spaces). You can find helpful information about these questions in the next section of this guide.

4. Complete the next set of questions about your organization and how you found out about Echoing Green. The more specific you can be, the more effective our outreach efforts will be in the future.
5. Answer questions about your organization's programmatic focus. Choose the categories that best describe your organization, even if they're not a perfect match or more than one category applies.
6. Fill out ten essay questions about your idea, your organization, and yourself. You will have 1,200 characters for each answer, including spaces. We highly recommend that, as you complete each answer, you copy and paste it into a word processor document. This way, you won't lose your work in the event of technical difficulties. You can find more information about answering each question in the next section.
7. Upload a resume for each person applying. Select the radio button next to the applicant's name, click *Browse* to select your resume file (only .pdf formats are accepted), and then click *Upload*. There is a link you can click if you need to convert your resume to a PDF file. On the next page, you can review your resume to make sure it uploaded correctly. If you're applying as a Partnership, be sure to click *Back to Previous Step* to complete the process for your partner's resume. Submitting a resume is mandatory.
8. Review your application. If you'd like to make any changes, click *Back to Previous Step*. Otherwise, print or save your application by clicking the appropriate icons at the bottom. And then click *Submit Application* to complete the process.

After You Submit

1. You will receive an email confirming the receipt of your application. Make sure to add apply@echoinggreen.org to your approved senders list.
2. While you will not be able to change your application at this point, you can review it by logging into the application system. You can also change your contact info by clicking *My Profile* on the left-hand column.
3. You will find out whether you've been invited to Phase 2 of the application process after 5 PM EST on January 9. If you are invited to continue, you will need three recommendation letters for each applicant: One from a person who knows you well and can write candidly about your skills, interests, commitment, and experience - such as a former employee, colleague, or teacher; and two from members of the community or constituency you intend to work in and serve. Thus, you may want to start identifying these potential recommenders prior to the announcement.

Application Questions and Help Text

These are the essay questions on our Phase 1 application. In addition, each question includes supporting information that will help you focus your answer. We highly recommend that you consult this help text before completing the application.

We also recommend that, as you complete each answer online, you copy and paste your answers into an offline file. This way, even if you run into technical difficulties, your work will not be lost.

General Questions

1,200 characters each – including spaces

1. What is your new, innovative idea to create lasting social change? Be clear, specific, and jargon-free in your answer.

Help Text: Pretend that a friend who knows little about your field asks you to explain your idea. How would you describe your idea to them? This is the approach you should take with this question.

2. What drew you to this issue? When and how did you come up with your idea?

Help Text: Echoing Green's book, [Be Bold](#), talks about having a "moment of obligation." This is the moment at which a person identifies the things that truly matter to them and then commit to carrying them out. Walk us through your moment of obligation and tell us where your idea came from (e.g., did it come from first-hand experience or hearing about the issue second-hand, did you develop it with others?) and how it has evolved, if applicable.

For inspiration, read about Echoing Green Fellow David Lewis's [moment of obligation](#) in *Be Bold*.

3. As specifically as possible, demonstrate the need for your organization. Use statistics and references.

Help Text: Identify the problem that you intend to address and explain why it's significant. Provide information substantiating that the need exists, when possible, through the use of statistics or quotes from experts or constituents. Tell us about the lives of the population your organization will serve. Because your response is limited in length, it is acceptable to identify your references without providing the full level of detail (e.g., publisher, volume number, page number) that you would provide in a footnote.

4. What's the root cause of this problem? How does your idea tackle this root cause?

Help Text: A root cause is the primary source of a problem and also the ultimate obstacle to fixing it. If you could neutralize the root cause, you could eliminate the problem. Be careful not to confuse the root cause with the symptoms of the root cause, however!

Think of a medical analogy: You go to the doctor with a big problem – you can barely speak. Your symptoms are clear – you have a sore, scratchy throat. Now, if the doctor bases her solution solely on the symptoms and gives you a cough drop, you may feel better for a little while, but your problem will soon come back. However, if your doctor thinks about the problem more carefully and goes beyond the symptoms, she will be able to diagnose the root cause of the symptoms – strep throat. And thus, by providing a solution that addresses the root cause – antibiotics – she can ultimately solve the problem.

Here's an example for the SEED School, an organization funded by Echoing Green:

- Problem: Students from low-income areas in Washington, DC aren't graduating from high school at the same rate as their peers from wealthier areas.
- Symptoms: Low attendance rates, poor student performance in school, homework is often not completed
- Root Cause: Students are not receiving proper nutrition, don't have a quiet place to study at home, and aren't getting reasonable amounts of sleep at night. These issues manifest themselves in the symptoms listed above and ultimately lead to the problem of high school dropouts.
- Solution: The SEED School addresses the root cause of poor educational outcomes by providing a comprehensive urban boarding school for its students. Students receive three quality meals a day, after-school support, and a structured environment for study and rest. As a result, they don't suffer from the same symptoms listed above and graduate at higher levels than their peers. The problem is addressed by starting with the root cause.

5. Help Echoing Green visualize what your organization will do. Describe the specific programs that your organization will engage in to deliver your long-term outcomes.

Help Text: What will your work look like? Think about a member of the population served by your organization and tell us how they will experience your programs. And be specific enough that you're not just repeating your idea over again, but actually explaining how your idea will work.

For instance, Teach For America, which received seed funding from Echoing Green, has two main programs: First, they recruit the best and brightest college graduates to teach for two years in high-need school districts. They prepare them via an intensive

summer training institute, give them on-the-job support from master teachers, and consistently evaluate their students' performance to ensure high achievement. Secondly, after their corps members complete their two-year commitment, Teach For America runs an extensive alumni engagement program. They support corps members who stay in the education profession with resources and networking, communicate with those who have left the profession to keep them engaged with the organization, and build a movement of leaders within education and outside to advocate for greater educational opportunity for all of America's children.

6. Describe your long-term desired outcomes. How will you measure your progress toward these outcomes?

Help Text: How will the world be different because of your work? Be as specific as possible in describing the outcomes you will generate (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions will be cut by 25% in 10 years, all Nigerians will have access to clean drinking water by 2020, New Orleans will be ranked as having the best school system in the country).

Then, connect your outcomes to an evaluation system that will measure your performance. Identify the documented data you will use to establish a baseline at the outset of your work. If data sources do not exist, explain the methods that you will use to establish your own data source. Describe how you will collect and track this information over time. For instance, if you are trying to reduce greenhouse gasses, you would want to mention current levels, describe how you will measure them in the future, and also explain your plan to record secondary data that will ultimately generate your desired outcomes (e.g., the number of people who have pledged to reduce their carbon footprint).

7. Innovation is important to Echoing Green. Explain how your idea is truly innovative. Identify other organizations that are addressing this issue and how your approach is different and has the potential to be more effective.

Help Text: It is very likely that there is a wide variety of organizations and entities, from local community organizations to governmental agencies, that deliver services to the constituency/community that you have identified. It is also possible that one or more organizations are focused on the same area of need, either in your community or outside of your community. How is your idea for social change different from the ideas already at work? Why do you think your idea will be more successful than the others? Feel free to quote experts or publications that validate your assertion.

8. Building a new organization is challenging. How are you entrepreneurial? Describe your skills and experiences that demonstrate you can lead a start-up organization.

Help Text: To successfully start and run a new organization, you need to be a good entrepreneur, leader, and manager. Each of these roles requires different skills. Thus,

think about your experiences and describe a time when you were able to start something new, when you influenced others to join you in a challenging endeavor, and when you managed different people working toward a common goal.

9. Why are you uniquely qualified to lead your specific organization? Describe your experience working with this issue and population.

Help Text: Why you? Why now? What is driving you to take on this challenge and why is this the right moment?

Be sure to include any experiences you've had working in this field and geographic area, if applicable, as well as any experiences you've had with the population that you will serve. Please be specific about the duration of your experience and the capacity that you served in.

10. How much money have you fundraised to date? Who is your largest funder and what is the size of their grant? Provide an estimate of your total budget for each of the next two fiscal years.

Help Text: Please give us an honest assessment of your current financial situation and realistic estimates of your future budgets. However, if you have yet to raise any money or develop a sophisticated budget, don't worry. We fund entrepreneurs at all points within the start-up phase and just want to get a sense of where your organization currently stands.

Questions for Partnership Applicants

1,000 characters each – including spaces

1. Why is co-leadership a superior model for your organization, compared to a single leader model?

Help Text: A partnership can enhance an organization in many ways, but it can also present many additional challenges. Explain how, on balance, your proposed partnership will make your organization more successful than if you were running the organization by yourself. Make sure that you refer to specific benefits that this partnership can provide to this organization - not broad arguments for why partnerships are superior models, in general. And remember, if you need additional help to run your organization, you can always hire staff instead of bringing on a co-leader. So please don't argue that a partnership's primary benefit is that it will allow you to get more done.

2. How do you know each other? Describe the history of your relationship, including any shared work experiences and how you decided to create this organization together.

Help Text: Provide a context for your partnership, including how you met, how long and how well you have known each other, and any previous collaborations. Also, tell us who came up with the idea, who started the organization, and what prompted you to work together on it.

3. In a co-leadership model, titles help people understand what each partner does. What will your titles be? What will each of you do within your organization?

Help Text: Like any relationship, a successful partnership requires compatibility in many areas – including delineation of responsibilities. Explain how you chose your respective titles – or how you will choose them in the future. When describing your responsibilities, please be extremely precise - i.e., Which specific tasks will you be responsible for within the organization?

4. What is the decision-making process for your organization? When the co-leaders have opposing views, how do you resolve the issue?

Help Text: Walk us through the process by which you will make decisions as co-leaders, step-by-step. Use an example from your shared experience if you have one, preferably where there was initial disagreement between the partners.

Submission Policies

- Echoing Green will only accept applications submitted through our website. You may not mail, fax, or email your application.
- The deadline for initial applications is December 1, 2008 at 5 PM EST. **No late applications will be accepted.**
- Applications **cannot** be revised once they have been submitted to Echoing Green.
- Echoing Green will accept only one application submission per applicant per year. Any applicant who submits multiple applications for the same project or single applications for multiple different projects will be disqualified from consideration.
- Partnerships (organizations led by two individuals) must submit a joint application for their project. Partners who submit separate applications for the same project will be disqualified from consideration.
- Do not send supplemental materials via email or postal mail to be matched to your initial application. Echoing Green will not accept attachments or supporting documents as part of the initial application. Any extraneous documentation sent to Echoing Green as part of an initial application will not be reviewed in the evaluation and cannot be returned.
- If you have questions about the application process, please consult our [Frequently Asked Questions section](#). Questions not addressed there can be sent to apply@echoinggreen.org.

Application Tips

1. Review the instructions. Many otherwise strong applicants have disqualified themselves by failing to read our support materials prior to applying. Thus, please be sure to read review this document and our online [Fellowship section](#), as well as skim our [past fellows' profiles](#). This information will prove immensely helpful in ensuring that your application receives maximum consideration.
2. Take advantage of our Applicant Coaching Toolkit. It will only help your application improve!
3. Research your project's context. Talk to potential constituents and to other organizations in your sector to get a sense of whether your idea is innovative, realistic, and desirable. Ask for their input and find out whether they've considered or tried your idea before. If they have, find out why they rejected it or why it didn't work previously. If they disagree with your approach, try to gain a better understanding of their objections. To assist in this process, we encourage you to complete our [Innovation Matrix](#) and review a [sample sector analysis](#).
4. Don't wait until the last second to [start an application](#). We suggest starting the application by November 1st at the latest. The best applications are the products of much critical thought and consideration. Furthermore, if you experience any technical issues while completing your application online, this will give you time to resolve them without the pressure of the deadline.
5. Be specific in your application. The number one reason that applications are rejected is their lack of clarity. Don't just tell us that you're going to save the world - show us how you're going to do it. Your answers have character limits, so don't waste your time with vague generalities. Instead, provide concrete examples and a clear connection between your work and your goals.
6. Make sure that you explain the "why" in your application. While Echoing Green seeks to know the "what" and "how" about your idea, we also want to know why you are the right person for the job. Thus, be sure to detail your connection to the community you will serve. Also, provide a resume that makes clear your qualifications to be the executive director of the organization – not just the innovator.
7. Have three people proof-read your application! Have a good editor read for mechanics, have a content area expert read for feasibility, and have someone who knows nothing about your idea read for coherence. Ask each to pitch your idea back to you to see if your application is conveying your idea accurately.

Common Mistakes

The application process for the Echoing Green Fellowship program is highly competitive. In 2007, we received almost 1500 applications for twenty fellowships. We employ a rigorous evaluation process and carefully review every application we receive. Applicants are evaluated against our funding criteria as well as against their peers. The following are the most commonly cited reasons for designating an application as “non-competitive.”

Mission of the project is outside our mission and funding guidelines: Echoing Green seeks out proposals that are for more than simply creating great programs. We are looking for innovative ideas for changing systems and developing new approaches to old problems. We are interested in proposals for high impact, sustainable organizations with the potential to create lasting social change beyond their immediate communities.

Applicant fails to submit a resume or submits a resume that is inappropriate: In order to evaluate your leadership potential, executive director skills and knowledge of the field that you intend to work in, it is important that we get a sense of who you are. Your resume is your opportunity to highlight work or volunteer experience that makes you uniquely qualified to take on the challenge that you have presented in your application. In the past, many of our applicants have failed to submit a resume or have submitted a resume that was inappropriate. Inappropriate resumes list an objective for a position other than what the applicant proposed in their application or resumes that put the primary emphasis on skills and experience that are only remotely related to the work they propose to do while downplaying experiences that will likely be highly valuable. We suggest that you view the resume requirement the same way as you would for any other position you were applying for. If you were to apply to be Executive Director of the organization that you have proposed, what experience and skills would you emphasize on your resume to make you the ideal candidate? **Note:** No resume or CV should exceed 3 pages.

Mission of the project is vague: Based on the application, it is difficult to determine the specific objectives of the organization or services the applicant intends to deliver. The mission of the proposed organization is either too broad, lacking specificity, or too inclusive, lacking focus. It is critical for start up organizations to have a very clear mission and goals. Addressing an issue on too many fronts or without clearly defined objectives often results in resources stretched too thin and a failure to make significant progress in any one area.

Need for the project is not clearly demonstrated: Applicant stated the need without sufficient statistics, sources or examples to support the claim or the applicant presents a need that is a market opportunity but not a true social challenge. A common approach among applicants is to state that the need for the organization is that it does not currently exist, which is insufficient to support a funding request. Our evaluators are often able to gain insight into how well the applicant understands the issues through their presentation of the need they plan to address.

Program does not appear to be unique or innovative: The Echoing Green “innovation test” is by far the hardest test to pass. Our readers have extensive experience across a range of program areas and a broad understanding of existing approaches and programs for attacking social challenges. When applicants propose projects that are similar to programs that already exist, we read carefully to identify how the applicant is seeking to improve upon existing models in significant ways. Applicants often fail to sufficiently present the innovative aspects of their program. Or the applicant may not have done the research that would have revealed that the program they are proposing is already in existence. We suggest all applicants spend time doing research.

Project plan is not realistic: While Echoing Green seeks out individuals who “dream big”, our fellows must also be realistic. We evaluate applicants’ project plans considering the objectives set forth in the plan and their relevant experience to determine if the plan is realistic. We also look at applicants’ connections to the communities they plan to serve since community support is an invaluable asset.

Project does not appear sustainable: There are a number of indicators that programs are not sustainable. Examples include proposals for discrete projects with defined beginning and end points, proposals so ambitious that they would clearly require vast resources to support the mission, and proposals where there doesn’t appear to be a viable, long-term funding stream.

There is no clear plan for identifying or measuring impact: The applicant has identified data gathering techniques but has not clearly established a link between the data they plan to collect and the impact of their program. While the applicant has a plan for tracking activity, they do not have a plan for evaluating their effectiveness.

Applicant(s) have not demonstrated sufficient relevant experience: Echoing Green does not expect the applicant to have started an organization previously and we don’t require that they have formal education in their program area. However, we do seek applicants who have demonstrated their interest, passion and leadership abilities through their previous work, academic and volunteer experience.

Applicant(s) uses clichés, like “teach a man to fish, feed him for life”: The overuse of clichés is strongly discouraged. They do not enhance the application and they have a

tendency to confuse readers. Applications are less competitive when too many clichés are used.

Applicant does not give a budget estimate for organizational costs: "I don't know" is not an acceptable answer for this question, and applicants who do not give a well thought out answer will not be considered for future rounds. The purpose of this question is to force applicants to seriously consider their organizational costs so they know approximately how much money will be needed for their program to function.

Applicant does not seem passionate about their program: If we cannot sense an applicant's passion for their organization or program through their application answers, we have less reason to believe they are likely to maintain the program when faced with difficult challenges. Applicants who can display their enthusiasm have a competitive edge over those who do not seem eager or passionate about their new endeavor.