The Melton Foundation

The MF Grant Committee
-Status Report 2008-

Edited by Lars Dietzel on behalf of the MF Grant Committee
-January 2009-

1) The MF Grant Committee: a bit of history and structure

As you may be well aware, the MF Grant Committee was officially founded in March 2007 with the Board of Directors' approval along with the MF Granting Policy. Since then, we have been working hard (mostly internally) to improve the quality and strength of the MF network by allowing individuals and/or groups to carry out projects, stay connected or reconnect, study at one of the MF campuses, etc. Among the Grant Committee's members we have JFs, SFs, TTs – all of them working on a voluntary basis – and our Directors.

The MF Grant Committee (GC) is structured into three (3) Program Areas (PAs), which -first of all- is a necessity to issue grants in a way that follows common professional standards among foundations, and -secondly- which allows us, the GC, to ensure a good quality of processes and procedures as well as working towards tangible results and deliverables.

The three PAs are:

* "Charitable Giving PA"
- Chaired by Steffen Bethmann (SF from FSU) <sbethmann@googlemail.com>
- Is concerned about grants which aim at bringing positive social change to communities and societies
- Hosts:
    - Partnerships for Positive Change Grant
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/P4PCG.html
    - The Melton Innovator Grant
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/MeltonInnovator.html

* "Connectivity & Bonding PA"
- Chaired by Jennifer Akpapuna (SF from DU) <jennie_ak@yahoo.com >
- Deals with grants, which increase bonding among fellows, strengthen the network and increase engagement of fellows
- Hosts:
    - Connectivity and Network Strengthening Grant
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/CnNSG.html
    - TravelTogether
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/TravelTogetherGrant.html

"Education PA"
- Chaired by Lars Dietzel (SF from FSU) <larsd.mf@googlemail.com>
- Manages grants with focus on cross-cultural training and the promotion of learning about other MF cultures and global issues
- Hosts:
    - Mutual Capacity Development Grant (MCDG)
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/MCDG.html
    - Educational Impact Grant (EIG)
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/EIG.html
    - Campus-2-Campus Grant (C-2-C)
      http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/C2C.html
    - Mentoring and supervision of Project Campus, Project Culture, Library (to be established)

2) CHARITABLE GIVING PA (Charity PA) Status Report 2008

--By Steffen Bethmann--

The Partnerships for Positive Change Grant enables groups of MF members to implement, in partnership with an appropriate and relevant outside organization, a project or activity, which is, aligned with the MF's core Guiding Principle criteria. The goal of this grant is threefold:

1. Help fulfill the MF's mandate to, through its network of fellows: "bring positive change to the world;"
2. Create opportunities to expand activities beyond the institutional confines of the MF by working with non-MF organizations;
3. Leverage the MF's resources for greater internal and external impact.

Typically, the Partnerships for Positive Change grants will comprise the larger of MF grants and is designed to support inter-cultural teams or groups of MF members.

The members of the Charity Pa, Carrie Radloff, Li Zhen, Winthrop Carty and Steffen Bethmann, are working towards a wider appreciation not only of those grants but also of the possibilities they imply for JF, SF as well as TTs. We are open for collaborative projects and also provide guidance in the application process and the implementation of the project. We actively seek to consult and assist interested applicants to help them follow-through with their ideas

As co-host of the innovator grant we also want to emphasize that we are especially keen on supporting innovative initiatives. If you ever had an idea about a social or educational venture you thought should exist, please contact us. We are eager to help you!

In case you have any question or are interested to join us please write to any of us!

3) CONNECTIVITY & BONDING PA (C&B PA) Status Report 2008

--By Jennifer Akpapuna--

Many thanks to every member of the C&B_PA! They have been a fantastic group to work with – dedicated to ensuring we are fair, objective, and stay true to the ideals of our mission as a group. They have also been very devoted to ensuring a thorough evaluation and a timely response to applicants. The members of the C&B_PA group are Constanza Alonqueo Boudon, Jaikar Mohan, Malavika Datar, Patricia Ortiz, Prateek Ranganathan, and Tanja Schulze (ex-officio).

3.1) Granting Procedure and Figures

The applications we review can be grouped into small grants and large grants. Connectivity grants are typically small grants. With these, we based our decisions strictly on the strength of the application submitted. In reviewing these applications, we evaluate the past performance of the applicant, the need for a computer, the strength of the deliverables proposed, and the impact to the MF. For larger grants, i.e. the TravelTogether applications, we also contact the applicants to clarify any areas of confusion or to seek additional information. With the TravelTogether applications, we focus more on the multi-campus nature of the group formed, the projects and itinerary of the trip, and the opportunities available for intercultural development.

In the first round of our decision process, each C&B_PA member sends in their thoughts on the application as well as a decision on whether to approve or reject the application. If the decision is not unanimous, each member gets another opportunity to change her or his decision.

In the second round of our decision process, we determine how much to award each applicant. This decision is based on several factors including:
- The available budget
- Current market prices (for standard materials)
- Current interest rates
- The relative strengths of the applications submitted
- The amount requested from the MF vs. personal contribution

For the decision on the amount to award, we require a consensus from the entire group. Depending on the complexity of the applications being reviewed, our decisions are either made over email or we may schedule a conference call to iron out details.

For 2008, we received
- 5 Connectivity grants – 4 of these were approved, 1 was rejected
  (Please note that the award for one of these grants has not been claimed)
- 3 TravelTogether grants – 2 were approved, 1 was rejected
  (Please note that the nature of the travel for one of these grants changed, thus the award was revoked);

2 applicants were singled out and rejected out of the 2 approved grants; both appealed and 1 was later granted

The total investment for C&B_PA was 9,690.49 USD (TravelTogether: 5461.49 USD / Connectivity: 4229 USD)

3.2) Challenges, Innovations and future projects

a) In 2008, we experienced dramatic price changes over the year. As a result, the amounts we awarded in April, for instance, were very different from the amounts we awarded in November. This was driven largely by the financial crisis that has gripped the world and has led to some sort of global recession. In addition, interest rates changed dramatically and continue to do so. This made it very difficult to compare grants across windows in the same year and raised questions about the fairness of grants awarded.

b) We review connectivity applications in two separate windows. Given that we only have one budget for the entire year, we run the risk of either over allocating (or under allocating) funds to applications in our first window. So far, we do not have a solid strategy for addressing this issue. To date, we've simply focused on approving grants first and then determining how much of our budget to allocate based on the number of applications and the strength of those applications. We have yet to encounter a budget shortfall, as our funds have been sufficient to cover all of our applications. However, this is something we continue to think about and look for more effective ways to manage.

c) We received an appeal on the amount we awarded one of our grants. When we chose to uphold the award, the appeal was forwarded to the MF Grant Committee Board, who reviewed our decision process. In the end, the amount we awarded was upheld. But this process provided some insight into areas that may not be very clear to Senior Fellows. One major area is the maximum price that is listed on our website, which is sometimes believed to be the amount we would be willing to award an applicant. To address this issue, the C&B_PA has held meetings to review our web content to validate the information provided and update where necessary to ensure that we eliminate any areas of confusion and maintain transparency in our granting process. We will also review our current practices and make changes as necessary.

4) EDUCATION PA (Edu_PA) Status Report 2008

<div align="right">--By Lars Dietzel--</div>

As chair of the Edu_PA, I shall first give my most sincere "Thank You" to everyone, who has dedicated a lot of time and effort into the work:
Thanks to the incredible Edu_PA team formed by Lana Chambliss, Prof. Ying, Wa Yuan and, last but not least, our directors Tanja Schulze and Winthrop Carty. I would also like to thank Dr. Madhu Chand, who was part of this team in the first half of 2008 and could not continue with his work in the Edu_PA due to increasing time constraints.

4.1) Granting Procedure and Figures

To ensure the quality and high impact of the projects/activities supported by our grants, and a fair and objective evaluation on the other hand, the Edu_PA set up a rather strict assessment: In the first round, each application is ranked by every PA member anonymously, focusing on the different core-aspects of each grant. In order for an application to be successful in the first round, a minimal score must be achieved (this score is different from grant to grant according to the grant's criteria). The second round, then, consists of a conference meeting to discuss all applications, which have passed the first round. At the end of this meeting(s), there is a final decision, which is based on:
- The budget available
- The strength of the application
- The potential impact of the project
- The current market prices (benchmarks for travel for the EIG)
- The amount requested from the MF vs. personal contribution.

Throughout the year 2008, we have received
  * a total of 29 applications (MCDG: 5 / EIG: 22 / C-2-C: 2),
of which
  * 23 applications were successful (MCDG: 5 / EIG: 16 / C-2-C: 1).

Thus, the total investment on Edu_PA grants in 2008 is:
22.617,07 USD (MCDG: 5.217,90 USD / EIG: 15.899,17 USD / C-2-C: 1.500 USD)

4.2) Challenges, Innovations and future projects

a) The year 2008 has been a very busy year for us and the number of applications has never been as high before. Therefore, one of our first challenges was to establish a system, which allows for a quality grant assessment, which is efficient and time saving. Therefore, we put in place the two-step-assessment (c.f. 4.1), which turned out to be quite an efficient way of dealing with a greater number of applications. However, experience will teach us how and where we can be more efficient with our energy.

b) The initiation of the Campus-2-Campus (C-2-C) Grant has been another issue, which came up based on an individual case. We needed to cater for a need, which has always been a strong intention of the MF yet never been considered in any grant: a study abroad at a MF partner university. In joint efforts with André Reichel, former chair of the Project Campus group, we managed to revive the group, which is at present defining its mission. Meanwhile Project Campus is working on their basic documents (guidelines, mission statement, etc.), the Campus-2-Campus Grant – formerly organized by the group itself – is temporarily hosted by the Edu_PA. As soon as Project Campus has shaped its mission statement and implemented the follow through guidelines, we will work towards a cooperation of Project Campus and the Edu_PA and will discuss the group's administration of the Campus-2-Campus Grant.

c) One of the challenges for the future will be the continuation of our work on the cooperation not only between Project Campus and the Edu_PA, but also the cooperation

between the other project groups managing (small) funds and the Edu_PA, i.e. Project Culture, Library, to ensure high quality projects and initiatives and a sustainable way of investing MF funds.

5) Final remarks

As objectiveness and transparency is one of the Grant Committee's main priorities, this report aims at providing core information about the Grant Committee and the status of its PAs. We therefore invite you to be critical (in a constructive way) and get in touch with us whenever you feel a need for information and improvement.

The Granting Committee is strongly committed to the Melton Foundation, and the Melton Foundation is everybody - Senior Fellows, Junior Fellows, TT or other members - yet we can only be at our best, when we receive your feedback and input.