



The Melton Foundation Grant Committee -Status Report 2009-

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On behalf of the Grant Committee
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1) HISTORY OF THE GRANT COMMITTEE

In the initial years, the Melton Foundation (MF) offered small-scale grants to its members. With the intention to review the granting process, the MF Granting Policy Committee was formed in June 2006. Upon their inception, this committee decided that the grants need to be aligned better with the MF's Guiding Principle as well as with the MF's Strategic Plan 2007-2010. Between June 2006 and January 2007, this multi-disciplinary team of Fellows and the Executive Office assessed the situation and worked towards a more coherent and organic granting structure for the MF. When the MF's Board of Directors approved their proposal of a new Granting Policy in March 2007, the Grant Committee (GC) was created as an independent body to host and administer all matters related to granting. Thus, it has become a fundamental pillar of Fellows and network capacity development within the MF and outside.

The GC not only dedicated itself to the granting work, i.e. to support Melton Fellows with the realization of promising projects, but also laid emphasis and worked towards improving the structure and quality of the Foundation's granting body. The idea was to work towards a more efficient and effective MF Granting System, which is and will be sufficiently equipped to sustain and strengthen the MF network.

Among the GC's members are Junior Fellows, Senior Fellows, Task Team Members – all of them working on a voluntary basis – and the MF Program Director in an advisory position.

2) STRUCTURE OF THE GRANT COMMITTEE

Adhering to common professional standards among granting foundations based in the USA, the GC is divided into three Program Areas (PAs). The division into three specialized areas - all being in line with the MF Guiding Principle as well as the current Strategic Plan - allows for more professionalism within the Grant Committee: Quality standards, especially regarding results from or deliverables of a grant, were one major issue. Furthermore, the aspect of increasing the flexibility of the structure to adapt internal processes and procedures to meet the specific criteria of each area influenced the decision to subdivide the GC into three PAs. Finally, the diversification of the GC must be considered as cornerstone to fostering a stronger impact of MF grants, as this structure is a specialist approach rather than a generalist one. By reducing the scope of each PA, specific knowledge of and relevant experience in the related field(s) could be given much more importance when recruiting PA members. Each PA can thus be considered a board of relatively specialized Fellows who are able to take well balanced decisions and who are capable to supervise or tutor the genesis of deliverables.

The three PAs are:

(1) *The Charitable Giving PA*, which is concerned about grants that aim at bringing positive social change to communities and societies.

- Chairperson: without chair since April 2009
- Grants hosted under this PA:
 - The Partnership for Positive Change Grant
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/P4PCG.html>
 - The Melton Innovator Grant
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/MeltonInnovator.html>

(2) *The Connectivity and Bonding PA*, which is dedicated to grants that aim at strengthening the MF network and increasing the Melton Fellows' bonding as well as their engagement with the MF.

- Chairperson: Jennifer Akpapuna (SF from DU)
- Grants hosted under this PA:
 - Connectivity and Network Strengthening Grant
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/CnNSG.html>
 - TravelTogether
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/TravelTogetherGrant.html>

(3) *The Education PA*, which manages grants with strong focus on cross-cultural training as well as those promoting the learning from and about other MF cultures and global issues.

- Chairperson: Lars Dietzel (SF from FSU)
- Grants hosted under this PA:
 - Mutual Capacity Development Grant (MCDG)
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/MCDG.html>
 - Educational Impact Grant (EIG)
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/EIG.html>
 - Campus-to-Campus Grant (C2C)
<http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/C2C.html>
 - Mentoring and supervision of Project Culture and Library (to be established)

For more information on structure and functioning of the GC, see http://meltonfoundation.org/grants/MF_Granting_Committees_Ground_Rules.pdf.

3) APPLICATION TO GRANTS

One of the basic tools used by the Grant Committee is the online application form tool offered by the Formdesk company. The expenses for the purchase of the license to use Formdesk are justified, as development and management of grant application forms is practicable and has become more efficient for the designated application form manager(s). It also provides an application format which is easy to process by the PA members, clearly structured and comfortable to use by applicants.

The initial license purchase in 2007 allowed not only for design and management but also for storage and archiving of GC application. As a result from the budget cuts following the financial crises however, this license was reduced to what is offered as standard medium pack plus additional features, resulting in the fact that it is now the responsibility of each PA chair to take the according steps to document and archive the applications to each of the grants.

For more information, please visit <https://www.formdesk.com> and take a look at <http://fd9.formdesk.com/mf1/Mock-form> to test this tool for better acquaintance.

4) STATUS REPORTS 2009 OF THE PROGRAM AREAS

According to the structural premises elaborated above, each of the three Program Areas (PAs) is fully responsible for their respective grants. It is thus under the responsibility of each PA to use its resources - the allocated budget as much as the competencies and capacities of the PA members - in a sensitive and impacting way.

4.1) Charitable Giving PA

--by Tanja Schulze--

a) Granting Procedure and Figures

The Charitable Giving PA did not receive any applications in 2009, just like in the previous year. The budget that was planned for was therefore not used.

b) Challenges, Innovations and future projects

The major challenge of the PA was to have a functioning group as well as getting applications in order to actually be an active group. Both situations were not achieved in 2009 but steps were taken to initiate a substantial change this for 2010.

Two new members were recruited to the PA and the actual members of the Charitable Giving PA are Carrie Radloff, Vermeen Kaur Kapoor, Suhrid Karthik as well as one Ex Oficio (Tanja Schulze). All will work together first to identify the reasons for no applications and then work on improving that situation and setting the path for those applications to come in. This may also include a total revamp and re-orientation of the grants and practices. Stay tuned.

4.2) Connectivity & Bonding (C&B) PA

--by Jennifer Akpapuna--

It was a real pleasure to work as part of the Connectivity & Bonding Program Area in 2009 and it's all thanks to the members of the committee. Each member dedicated time and effort to ensure that our process of evaluation was timely, fair, objective, and stayed true to the mission of the grants in the group. The members of the group in 2009 were Constanza Alonqueo Boudon, Jaikar Mohan, Malavika Datar, Patricia Ortiz, Prateek Ranganathan, and Tanja Schulze (ex-officio). This year (2010), we are excited to welcome Diana Conrad to the group and look forward to working with her. Diana will replace Malavika on the team.

a) 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 base 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 2009, we received

* 4 Connectivity grants – 3 of these were approved, 1 was rejected

* 1 TravelTogether grant – approved for 8 people

The total investment for C&B_PA was 5,113.21 USD (TravelTogether: 2,468.21 USD / Connectivity: 2,645 USD)

b) Challenges, Innovations and future projects

- In 2009, we received two connectivity grant applications with the same deliverables. This posed a challenge for our group even though the candidates had previously communicated their intent to us. It was important to evaluate the applications independently but we had to recognize that rejecting one of the applications may mean the other applicant would not be able to achieve the deliverables submitted. We ultimately decided to grant both applications since the candidates were strong and the amount of work proposed was enough for 2 people. Going forward, this is something the group may face again. Our strategy is to review the applications independently and then together to ensure we make the right decision for the foundation and the candidates.

- Also in 2009, we received applications which proposed deliverables that were already being considered by one of the Solutions groups in the MF. For this particular case, we were able to connect the applicants with the appropriate solutions group to ensure that there was no duplication of efforts. Going forward, we recognize the challenge of ensuring that we confirm that projects we approve are not already being undertaken by other groups within the MF.

- As mentioned last year, we review connectivity applications in two separate windows. As such, we run the risk of either over allocating (or under allocating) funds to applications in our first window given that we only have one budget for the entire year. We continue to be mindful of this situation but have yet to face any issues.

- To continue to best serve the connectivity needs of applicants, we have now introduced the option of purchasing “Netbooks” as an alternative to laptops. We recommend that applicants consider this option as they think about their ability to stay connected to the MF. These are generally cheaper and serve the same purpose, for the most part. However, we will continue to support the purchase of laptops.

4.3) Education (Edu) PA

--by Lars Dietzel--

First of all, it is much more my desire than my duty to thank the hard-working members of this PA. All members have dedicated several hours to assess applications, to discuss and analyze grant proposals or internal matters time as well as to follow up on granted projects and contributed in the most serious way to ensure and improve the quality of the work of the Edu PA.

Thanks to the PA members Lana Chambliss (DU's Campus Coordinator), Huilan Ying (TT Emeritus), Yuan Wa (SF from ZU), and Tanja Schulze (MF Program Director). Thanks also to the 2009 Symposium Organizers for their constructive collaboration during the EIG 2009 assessment period, to Hari Ravikumar for his endeavor in bringing documents and other publications into a good shape, to Hiweed Leng for his endless patience and IT support, and - last but not least - to Patricia Ortiz for her permanent concerns about the technical support structure and for her availability and tireless dedication to financial issuing and controlling.

a) Granting Procedure and Figures

In accordance with the Granting Policy, the Edu PA aims at ensuring the ambitious quality standards which are implicit in the MF's aspiration of higher institutional impact and more tangible results. Another fundamental concern of this PA is to encourage and foster high potentials and innovative projects dwelling within the Melton community. Therefore, the assessment mechanism established in 2008 has been revised and developed further to increase the objectivity of assessment on the one hand and - on the other hand - to cater for sufficient interaction between applicant and assessing body to negotiate important details of an application. The assessment for all grants provided by the Edu PA follows three steps:

- 1) Critical review of the application (Each application is reviewed by all PA members to identify strengths and weaknesses and to provide the applicant with another opportunity to present missing information or to clarify doubts and/or misunderstandings)
- 2) Objective assessment - accordance with grant criteria - (All applications are assessed by all PA member using a survey to measure its strength, relevance and impact according to grant specific catalogues of criteria. In order to move on to the next assessment round, each application must be achieve a minimal assessment score, which may vary according to the specific grant criteria and number of PA members participating)
- 3) Qualitative analysis - (All remaining applications are discussed in a web-conference and final decisions are taken based on
 - The relative strength of the application
 - The potential impact of the project
 - Current market prices (benchmarks for travel for the EIG)
 - The amount requested from the MF vs. personal contribution.
 - The available budget

In 2009, the Edu PA

- received a total of 31 applications (MCDG: 10 / EIG: 21 / C2C: 0),
- resulted in 21 successful applications (MCDG: 8 / EIG: 13 / C2C: 0).

4 out of those 21 grants were not issued because the grantees

- withdrew their application (MCDG: 2) or
- faced organizational issues which impeded them to live up to the terms and conditions of their grant (EIG: 2)

The overall expenses on Edu PA grants in 2009 are 19.548,48 USD (MCDG: 4.070,24 USD / EIG: 15.478,24 USD / C2C: 0 USD).

b) Challenges, Innovations and Future Projects

- The Edu PA members have decided to look into the possibilities to use a suitable platform to cooperatively work on documents, review application materials to bundle and to increase the impact of members' inputs and reduce ambiguity in feedback to applicants. The members of the PA are looking forward to any suggestions regarding open-access platforms (e.g. buzzword).
- One of the major challenges in the PA's granting efforts is to promote content activities and at the same time support network strengthening. Both aspects ought to be considered equally to maintain a healthy and constructive balance between these two components which are vital to the MF - a powerful social network built on mutual respect, open communication as well as trust *and* a strong pool of competency and experts able to bringing positive change to the world.
- The withdrawal of two applications after they were processed and approved presents the Edu PA with a new challenge. As a matter of fact, it is the grantees' right to withdraw their applications if the contract (Grant Award Letter) signed in mutual agreement cannot be kept for unexpected reasons. However, it is important to provide the organizational protocol (what reasons are legitimate, when to inform the according PA, rights and duties, etc.) for similar situations in the future to ensure transparency in and consistency of the MF's granting structure.
- This year, the Edu PA received an appeal against one of the decisions taken. The independent review body (GC-Board and Executive Office) came to the conclusion that - in this particular case - the PA did not consider all relevant factors that determine the decision making likewise (see further 3.3.a, section 'Qualitative analysis'). Therefore, one of the concerns for the future is to ensure 100% coherence when assessing and analyzing grant applications to ensure equal treatment for all applicants.
- Though the key person concept, which was introduced in 2008 to improve the quality of mentoring and to ensure a certain rigor regarding output, deadlines etc., has proved to be an efficient tool to improve the PA-grantee interaction, the follow-up on deliverables has been an on-going concern of the Edu PA and will be one of the focus areas in 2010, too.
- On various occasions, members of the Edu PA received input that the presentation of the PA's grants and procedural issues are not fully in line with the expectations of the wider Melton community. Thus, the web-contents and the relevance of its information shall be reviewed more critically and adapted where necessary. However, two general issues should be high lightened here: As long as the endeavors of the Portal Solution Group have not come to an tangible end, the development of the GC website 2.0 will be reduced website and content maintenance only. Furthermore, the Edu PA depends on constructive feedback from the wider MF community in order to be able to identify and erase weaknesses.
- As the GC aspires to normalize the granting structure by integrating all project groups attributed with an operational budget into the according PAs, the integration of Proj.Culture and Library into the granting structure of the Edu PA will - again - be an issue in 2010. The attempt to create an integral granting structure are due to the efforts to normalize the MF's organizational and administrative efficiency. Even though the budget management and responsibility will be transferred to the GC, the incorporation of MF Project groups into the GC must not be misunderstood as interference on structural level; project groups shall and will not be affected in their processes, procedures and actions.

5) FINAL REMARKS

In 2009, crucial steps towards sustainable quality standards of the Grant Committee's activities were taken and the Committee is committed to continue with its efforts to irrevocably incorporate values such as transparency, traceability, and participation into its program. One initiative that had long been an aspiration but never came into being is the GC's Good Practice Centre. At present, a team of 5 people is working together to realize that ambitious project by summer 2010.

The Grant Committee asserted its position as integral part of the Melton Foundation's structure and is looking forward to keep up and increase the high standards also for 2010, esp. in the light of the new strategic planning.

At any time, all Fellows of the MF should feel cordially invited or strongly urged to not only be critical (in a constructive way) but also to communicate critique to us. 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.