



## 2010 Coaching Guide for Coaches

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### **What is Echoing Green?**

Echoing Green is a global social venture fund that identifies, funds, and supports visionary leaders with bold new ideas for social change. Our Fellows create groundbreaking public service organizations that are innovative, replicable, sustainable, and committed to catalyzing positive social change. Over the past 20 years, we have invested over \$26 million to help over 450 social change agents in 30 countries.

Echoing Green believes in thinking without boundaries. We support organizations domestically and internationally. Our Fellows work in all public service areas including but not limited to education, youth development, health, housing, environmental justice, civil and human rights, economic development, social justice, the arts, and immigration. Furthermore, Echoing Green has funded some of the most successful new organizations across these areas – from Teach For America to City Year, from Earth Rights International to the Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

### **What is the Echoing Green Fellowship?**

Through our two-year Echoing Green Fellowship program, we provide start-up capital and technical assistance to help new leaders launch their organizations and build capacity. We offer:

- A grant of up to \$90,000, paid in four equal installments over two years
- A health insurance stipend
- Conferences led by organizational development experts
- Access to technical support and pro bono partnerships to help grow your organization
- A community of like-minded social entrepreneurs and public service leaders

### **What is an Echoing Green applicant coach?**

An Echoing Green applicant coach is an advisor to a potential fellowship applicant. If you agree to serve in this role, you would review your candidate's application prior to submission and provide advice to help the candidate make their application as competitive as possible.

### **Why would a candidate need a coach?**

For the 2009 fellowship, Echoing Green received nearly 1,000 applications for just 14 fellowships. In such a competitive pool, the top candidates stood out not just by demonstrating a good idea or a passion for their work, but by sharpening their applications through an intense vetting process. And thus, this year, we recommend that all candidates serious about competing for a fellowship go through a similar review process *prior to submitting an application*. To this end, a coach is the single most valuable applicant resource in that he/she will allow a candidate to develop and fine-tune their application, just as past fellows have.

### **Would I be a good coach?**

To determine whether you could be a good coach, consider these two questions:

- Do you have 10-20 hours to spend on coaching over the next two weeks?
- Can you provide honest, critical feedback to the candidate?

Truly, these are the most important indicators of good coaching potential. Indeed, the two leading reasons that coaching relationships fail are lack of time (good coaching takes time!) and an inability to criticize (a common issue when you know the candidate well). You need not be an expert in the candidate's field (an outsider's opinion is often more valuable, given that some of the evaluators reading the application may be laymen as well), nor are you required to have deep coaching experience.

## How do I get started?

If you feel that you can serve effectively as a coach, you'll want to follow these steps:

- 1) Ask the candidate for the date on which you can expect to receive their draft application (make sure that this date is well ahead of the application deadline – December 1, 2008). Schedule several hours in the following week to read through their work, as well as a two-hour meeting afterwards to discuss your feedback.
- 2) In the meantime, learn more about Echoing Green by visiting [www.echoinggreen.org](http://www.echoinggreen.org) and looking through the Fellowship section. In particular, we recommend that you review examples of past fellows at <http://www.echoinggreen.org/fellows>.
- 3) For additional insight, you may review the applicant's preliminary application planning. There are several tools available in the Applicant Coaching Guide that helps them develop their idea in anticipation of completing the application. Look through these for thinking that is clear and logical and let them know if any of their work doesn't make sense.
- 4) Once you receive the application draft, review it in light of the Application Critique Guide for Coaches. As described in this tool, you'll want to make sure that the application is clear, specific, and compelling. Take detailed notes so you can share these with the candidate.
- 5) At your meeting with the candidate, please be brutally honest. Chances are that, if you couldn't understand the application, neither will Echoing Green. Thus, it's in the candidate's best interest for you to tell them the truth now – before they have to hear it from us. But also be constructive; if the application is illogical, help them figure out how to fix it. Depending on the amount of time you can devote to coaching, it would be useful to go through several feedback/revision cycles. At the very least, you should review the application twice – once for content and once for style:
  - 1) Review for Content
    - a. Logic – “I don't understand how this specific environmental education program will lead to a reduction in global warming.”
    - b. Clarity – “I can't figure out what your environmental classes will actually teach.”
    - c. Persuasion – “I don't see the need to open a new environmental organization.”
  - 2) Review for Style
    - a. Jargon – “What does ‘value-added post-assessment score’ mean?”
    - b. Mechanics – “There's too much passive voice in your application.”
    - c. Spelling – “‘Polution’ is spelled incorrectly.”

We know that this is asking a lot. However, starting an effective social change organization is both one of the most important and one of the most challenging things an emerging leader can take on. And thus, this opportunity and responsibility should not be taken lightly!

That said, if you decide to fulfill this critical role, you have our deepest gratitude for helping to guide the development of a new enterprise that can potentially improve the lives of those most in need. Should you require any support in this role, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at [apply@echoinggreen.org](mailto:apply@echoinggreen.org).

Thank you,

Heather McGrew  
Vice President, Fellow and Alumni Programs

## **Application Critique Guide for Coaches**

Echoing Green strongly encourages all applicants to have their applications reviewed multiple times before submitting it online. This ensures that their ideas are clearly stated, realistic and compelling. Applications cannot be revised once they are submitted. As a Coach, it is imperative for you to give the applicant honest feedback so they can improve their chances of receiving our Fellowship. The questions on pages three and four are designed to help you provide more comprehensive feedback on the application and the organization being proposed.

### *Common Mistakes*

Because Echoing Green receives such a high volume of applications for a comparatively small number of fellowships, our application process is very competitive and each applicant is carefully considered. We understand that most applicants work hard on their application; however mistakes are still made by a large number of applicants. Below is a list of the most common mistakes that will greatly decrease an applicant's chance of being considered for future rounds:

- **Fails to submit a résumé/CV or submits an inappropriate résumé/CV:**  
Because there is a limited amount of space in the application to explain qualifications, we ask for a resume so we can see an applicant's entire professional and academic history. Without a resume, we are incapable of properly evaluating the applicant's leadership and entrepreneurial experience. Resumes and CVs should include information relevant to their proposal; it should be presented as if the applicant is applying for position of Executive Director. Examples of inappropriate resumes include:
  - Resumes that are too long
  - Resumes that don't focus on relevant skills or experience
  - Resumes with objectives that are not in line the proposed organization
- **The project's mission is difficult to understand:**  
Often, we read applications for projects that are either too broad or too focused or have vague mission statements. If an organization cannot design a clear mission, it is unlikely it will achieve the goals it was created to accomplish.
- **The need for the project is not clearly stated:**  
Simply saying the organization is necessary because "an organization of this type does not already exist" is a weak and insufficient answer. By conducting research and stating relevant statistics and facts, applicants do a better job at explaining the problem at hand and why their organization is necessary to address it.
- **The organization does not seem innovative:**  
As one of the most important parts of the application, innovation is a concept many applicants struggle with. There is a tendency for applicants to solely state the objectives of their program, rather than describe what sets their organization apart from others within the same field. Again, with more research, applicants should be able to illustrate what makes their organization and their methods innovative and an improvement to current practices. This makes for a much stronger application.
- **The proposed plan is not realistic or feasible:**  
Although we encourage applicants to "think outside of the box" with their programs and ideas, it is not a good idea to propose a program that is completely unfeasible. When the proposed size of the organization doesn't match up with its potential impact, it is a sign that perhaps the applicant is taking on too much with their available resources.

- **Applicant has no clear plan to identify and measure impact:**  
 Without a way to measure changes, there is no way to determine if the program is achieving its goals. It is important for applicants to devise a mechanism they will use to evaluate outcomes based on the impact of their organization.
- **Applicant does not have sufficient relevant experience:**  
 It is great when individuals or groups of people have the desire to develop a program aimed at creating sustainable social change; however if those people do not have the experience necessary to run an organization, donors are less likely to invest in their project. With more experience, especially with the population or problem being affected, applicants' chances of success are greater.
- **Applicant 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 properly.
- **Applicant doesn't seem passionate about their program:**  
 If an applicant doesn't seem passionate about their organization or program through their answers, we have less reason to believe that 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.

### Reader Critique Tool

**Scale:**

0 = Major Difficulty, Incomprehensible/Poor  
 1 = Needs Improvement

2 = Satisfactory  
 3 = Very Good  
 4 = Excellent

Does the applicant write in a professional tone? (We define a "professional" tone as one that is sincere, writes at a suitable level of difficulty, uses unbiased language, and uses appropriate emphases on words)
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Are the elements of the applicant's proposal easy to explain to others?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Do you feel that each answer provides you with new information or insight?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Did you have to read any of the answers multiple times in order to understand the meaning?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Does each answer, from the beginning to the end of the application, follow a logical flow?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Does the applicant overuse clichés or jargon?
Circle one: Yes No Not Sure Comments
While reading the application, did you feel like you got to know the applicant?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
If the applicant used statistics to illustrate the need of their organization, were the statistics relevant and compelling? Often times, if applicants are unsure of which statistics are significant to the problem, they tend to use statistics that are loosely connected to their work.
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Does it appear that the applicant has done research on this subject?
Circle one: Yes No Not Sure Comments

Does the applicant acknowledge other organizations in their field and give logical comparisons?
Circle one: Yes No Not Sure Comments
Is it clear that the applicant understands the difference between the root cause and symptoms of the issue?
Circle one: Yes No Comments
Is the applicant specific about who and how many will be served through his/her organization?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
If personal or client stories are used, do they enhance the application?
Circle one: Yes No Not Applicable Comments
Does the applicant have a realistic way to measure the impact of his/her organization?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Based on the application and résumé, does the applicant have sufficient leadership and entrepreneurial experience to run this organization?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Are the applicant's short and long-term goals feasible?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments
Does the applicant provide a realistic two-year budget estimate that makes sense given both the goals for the organization and the number of people they plan to serve?
Circle one: Yes No Not Sure Comments
Has the applicant presented a new and creative approach to the issue they are addressing and do you believe this organization could influence how others work in similar fields?
Circle one: Yes No Not Sure Comments
Does the proposed size of the organization match its desired impact?
Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 Comments