

## 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

<p>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)</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Are the elements of the applicant’s proposal easy to explain to others?</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Do you feel that each answer provides you with new information or insight?</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Did you have to read any of the answers multiple times in order to understand the meaning?</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Does each answer, from the beginning to the end of the application, follow a logical flow?</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Does the applicant overuse clichés or jargon?</p> <p>Circle one: Yes No Not Sure</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>While reading the application, did you feel like you got to know the applicant?</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Does it appear that the applicant has done research on this subject?</p> <p>Circle one: Yes No Not Sure</p> <p>Comments</p>

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