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November 21, 2019

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Members, ATLAS Subject-Area Review Panels

FROM: Carrie S. Robison, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs

RE: Review Process, FY 2019-20

Thank you for agreeing to assist us in this year's review of proposals submitted for funding consideration in the Awards to Louisiana Artists and Scholars (ATLAS) Program of the Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund. We consider ourselves extremely fortunate that a person of your expertise and credibility is willing to assist us in what we consider a critically important endeavor.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In the fall of 1986, Louisiana's constitution was amended to establish in the State treasury two funds: the Louisiana Educational Quality Trust Fund (hereinafter referred to as the Trust Fund) and the Louisiana Educational Quality Support Fund (renamed the Board of Regents Support Fund and hereinafter referred to as the Support Fund). The Trust Fund was established with approximately \$550 million received in settlement of the State's offshore drilling dispute with the Federal government, and the Support Fund was established with 75% of the interest earned from the investment of monies in the Trust Fund and 75% of recurring revenues. The remaining interest earned on the Trust Fund, as well as the remaining 25% of recurring revenues, will be returned to the Trust Fund until it reaches \$2 billion. Only monies in the Support Fund are available for annual appropriation by the Legislature.

On an annual basis the interest earnings in the Support Fund are divided equally between the Board of Regents to enhance higher education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to enhance vocational-technical, secondary, middle and elementary education. According to the constitutional amendment, the funds available to higher education from the Support Fund are to be utilized to enhance economic development and may be used to support four types of activities: (1) endowment of chairs for eminent scholars; (2) enhancement of academic departments and units at universities (primarily through the purchase of research and instructional equipment); (3) recruitment of superior graduate students; and (4) research and development efforts in all disciplines and at all levels.

ATLAS GOALS AND PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS:

The Board of Regents ATLAS Program has been designed to provide an opportunity for faculty in arts, humanities, and social sciences disciplines to complete major academic and creative projects with the potential to have a broad impact on a regional and/or national level. Please consult the request for proposals (RFP), included on the review webpage, to understand the eligibility requirements, for faculty and for project activities, of the program. Determinations of eligibility for ATLAS funds are made by reviewers and, in the event that a project is deemed ineligible, the reasons for such a determination should be clearly stated within the review materials.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSALS SUBMITTED IN THIS FUNDING CYCLE:

On page 2 of the RFP, you will note that proposals were solicited in all social sciences, humanities, and arts disciplines. Posted on the review webpage are lists of proposals submitted for funding consideration. The summaries, including both all proposals submitted and separate summaries by discipline, list the proposals by project title, institution, principal investigator(s), and funds requested. The subject-area category and discipline into which each applicant submitted his or her proposal is indicated by the abbreviation located underneath the proposal number on these summary pages. We anticipate being able to fund between eight and ten of these proposals with the approximately \$350,000 available to ATLAS in this fiscal year.

THE REVIEW PROCESS:

To conduct as thorough and objective a review as possible on this number of applications within our monetary constraints and timeframe (all new research contracts must be executed prior to June 30, 2020), a two-phase review process has been adopted. Reviewers at both stages will be provided with the same review criteria for the program, and the Board emphasizes that these factors should form the basis for funding recommendations.

A. Phase I: In-Depth Review by Subject-Area Panel

In Phase I of the review process the proposals are assigned to one of three subject-area panels. These panels are comprised of broadly knowledgeable experts able to judge the proposals submitted in their general fields of expertise. The chair of each subject-area panel will serve on the final panel as the representative of the subject area, and work with other panel chairs to determine a final ranking of and funding recommendations for all proposals.

In this phase of the review process, each subject-area panel is charged with providing in-depth evaluations of the merits of those proposals submitted in that subject area. Subject-area reviewer responsibilities are as follows:

1. The panel chair, in discussion with the panel members, assigns each member a portion of the proposals for which he/she acts as “primary discussant.”
2. This primary reviewer reads each assigned proposal, completes a detailed written critique for each proposal, and prepares to discuss its merits/shortcomings with the other panel members.

3. Through a telephone or video conference, the subject-area panel members jointly rank the proposals in the order in which they believe the proposals should be funded. In-depth critiques must reflect this ranking.
4. The subject-area panels also examine the budgets of proposals ranked in the top 20% and develop recommendations for reductions where appropriate. When cuts are made, reviewers should briefly explain the rationale. The program has very limited resources, and reviewers are encouraged to consider the needs of the project seriously in analyzing budget requests.

B. Phase II: Final Panel Review

In Phase II of the review process, a final panel of three out-of-state experts will convene via telephone conference to discuss and compare the various groups of proposals and, ultimately, to determine the rankings of proposals across subject areas and develop funding recommendations.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT AND PAYMENT OF HONORARIUM:

A contract, invoice and W-9 will be sent under separate cover. If you have any questions about your contract, please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate adjustments can be made. If you have no problems with the contract we would appreciate your signing the contract, invoice, and W-9, writing your social security number in the appropriate places, and returning all three documents to us as soon as possible. It is not necessary to have the contract notarized. We must also have a copy of your current curriculum vitae for our contract files. We cannot pay you for professional services rendered until we receive these documents.

REQUEST FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM:

Although we do not want to add to the work load you have so kindly agreed to assume by participating in this review process, any written suggestions which you could give us for improving the administration of the program and/or the review process would be appreciated. All comments will be seriously considered as we prepare for next year's competition.

Thank you again for your invaluable assistance to us in what we consider a very important endeavor. We are seriously committed to enhancing the quality of higher education in Louisiana and to making this opportunity for Louisiana faculty a success. Additionally, we are aware that the success of this and all Board of Regents initiatives is due, in large part, to the professional and technical expertise of the highly qualified and dedicated individuals who participate in the review process. It was for this reason that you were asked to assist us in this matter. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact me at (225) 219-7169 or by e-mail at carrie.robison@laregents.edu.