

From: Dr. Russ Meier, IEEE Education Society VP Conferences
Dr. James Sluss, IEEE Education Society President

Subject: Funding Request : New Initiatives

To: Dr. Diane Rover, IEEE Education Society Finance Committee Chair
Dr. Leonard Bohmann, IEEE Education Society Treasurer

Date: 22 June 2015

Dear Drs. Rover and Bohmann,

I respectively submit a US\$4000 New Initiatives proposal to update the Frontiers in Education Conference clearinghouse website. I write this proposal letter with the co-support of IEEE Education Society President and FIE Education Society Steering Committee Representative Dr. Jim Sluss. This letter begins with some conference history and demographic information for your reference, and then proceeds to describe the project background, the project proposal, and the project impact. The letter ends with a final statement on sole funding.

1. Conference History

The Frontiers in Education conference (FIE) is the Society's premier conference event. The conference is a well-respected international conference on electrical engineering and computer science education. The IEEE Education Society founded the conference in 1971. The American Society for Engineering Education joined as a co-sponsor in 1973. For more than two decades, these two sponsoring societies held the conference in various locations around the United States and, occasionally, in international venues. In 1995, the IEEE Computer Society became a sponsor and together these three groups have continued to plan high quality events that provide engineering and computer science educators the opportunity to network and showcase peer-reviewed scholarly contributions in educational research and classroom practice. The 45th edition of this important annual conference will be held in El Paso, Texas this October.

2. Conference Demographics

As Vice President of Conferences, I maintain a state-of-health summary for all of our financial events. Part of that process is the collection and creation of demographic information, publication statistics, and attendance history. Here are the key facts:

- FIE attracts gender-diverse and multicultural registrants. Historically, most registrants have been from IEEE Regions 1 through 6. The recent trend, however, is an increasing internationalization with 20% to 25% international attendance common.
- The average FIE attendance over the past 15 years is 575.
- The average number of FIE papers published each year over the past 15 years is 400.
- Survey data shows that most people discover and interact with FIE through its internet portals. Our audience of authors and registrants interact with two types of FIE information portals. The first type is the yearly conference website (www.fie2014.org). The second type is the FIE conference clearinghouse (www.fie-conference.org).

3. Project Background

The FIE conference clearinghouse is an FIE conference information repository that contains the past twenty years of conference proceedings and other types of historical information including committee assignments, award winners, steering committee meeting minutes, links to the sponsoring organizational unit websites, etc. That is remarkable when you consider this in context of a 45 year old conference event. The clearinghouse website was designed by an FIE volunteer Publications Chair using the flat HTML format common in the 1990s. That volunteer maintained the website throughout his tenure with FIE.

In 2011, the FIE Steering Committee moved to an open request-for-proposals process that allowed competitive bids for conference logistical management and also for conference publications and website management. The committee justified moving from volunteers to contracted providers because FIE had grown to be a mid-size conference that needed responsiveness to requests from multiple constituents including the program committee, the authors, the exhibitors, the registrants, the Steering Committee, etc. Under contract, providers must respond in an appropriate time, must meet the requirements set forth in their contracts, and cannot exceed the costs budgeted by the RFP and contract process. These contracts are paid for as annual line-items from the annual conference budget.

The publications and website RFP process has been executed two times. In 2011, the Steering Committee awarded the first contract to Conference Catalysts, Inc. – a conference image and management group with a proven track record of working with IEEE conferences. The first contract covered the years 2012 and 2013. In 2013, the Steering Committee again awarded Conference Catalysts, Inc. the second contract after a competitive RFP process. The second contract covers the years 2013 through 2016.

The publications and website contract requires the creation of an annual conference website, management of the author submission and peer review system, and ***maintenance of the conference clearinghouse website***, including adding a link to the current annual website as well as regular purchase of the website domain name. The **current contract does not require a redesign** of the clearinghouse website.

However, it has become imperative that the conference clearinghouse be redesigned and updated with accurate historical information. I do not believe as Vice President of Conferences that the flat HTML website of the 1990s reflects the image that the Society wants to project for its oldest and most respected flagship event. The clearinghouse website is the most commonly used access point to FIE information because it has an easy to find and well-published internet link

(<http://www.fie-conference.org>)

as well as a history of being used by the authorship and registrant communities for the past 20 years. Yet, it presents itself in a stale format, includes significant errors in its historical data content, and has other types of missing information that could be updated by the Steering Committee. during a website redesign.

4. Project Description

I propose to hire Conference Catalysts, Inc. – the current FIE contracted publications service provider – to redesign the Frontiers in Education Conference clearinghouse website so that it is an up-to-date and modern website that promotes FIE using modern marketing tools and techniques. This work will be monitored by me as IEEE Education Society Vice President of Conferences, as well as the FIE Steering Committee under the leadership of the current chair, Dr. Beth Eschenbach, Humbolt University.

Conference Catalysts, Inc. will be contracted under the requirement that they work closely with the Steering Committee, meet any requirements set by the Steering Committee, and produce an appropriate product within a guaranteed timeframe.

Conference Catalysts, Inc. has submitted a tentative fee of US\$4000 for the described service.

5. Project Impact

The impact of FIE on the engineering and computer science educational community cannot be denied. This project will continue to increase the reputation and impact factor of our Society's most important conference event by providing a modern marketing and content experience for our past, present, and future authors and attendees. In today's academic environment, the impact factor of a

conference determines if the conference publication “counts” in promotion and tenure reviews. Here are some key facts about how strong the FIE impact factor already is.

- The educational research and the educational practice literature generated by FIE is regularly cited in scholarly work and inspired a well-regarded textbook in engineering education written by John Heywood and published by IEEE Press in 2001. Dr. Heywood is currently working on a textbook revision that will update the text to include the most recent FIE reference citations from the years between 2001 and 2014.
- FIE received the highest rating (A-rating) in the 2010 Australian Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA2010) rankings of conferences.
- FIE received a mid-rating (B-rating) in the 2014 Australian Computing Research and Education (CORE2014) rankings of conferences.
- FIE has a Google Metrics h5-index of 14. This measure reports that over the past five years (h5), 14 FIE articles on average have at least 14 citations in later work.
- FIE has a SCImago Journal h-index of 12. This measure reports that over the lifetime of FIE in the SCImago index, 12 articles on average have at least 12 citations in later work.

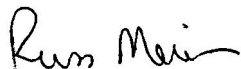
But, I believe we can still do better. A conference certainly achieves reputation and status based on the technical program content. However, researchers and practitioners that see a poor marketing message, out-of-date data, a lack of transparency, or mis-information can also overlook a conference or decide that it is not of appropriate status for submission of their work. Also, the ranking organizations do not only look at technical content. These organizations also look at transparency of historical data, publication of peer review rubrics, the record of conference management provided by Steering Committees, state-of-health information, citation index, etc.

Thus, by increasing the quality of the FIE marketing and content experience our Society improves FIE, enhances FIE for authors and attendees, and potentially increases FIE surpluses if FIE attracts more people and higher-quality, revenue-generating publications. As the founding Society, we must take action to ensure that FIE continues to thrive and grow.

6. Sole Funding

I am proposing that the Society allocate US\$4000 for this project as sole funder. While it is true that FIE operates as a co-sponsored event with two other organizational units, IEEE-CS and ASEE ERM, I believe that this project is substantially important to our Society to justify sole funder status. It is true that this project could be taxed from multi-year conference budgets. Any such tax simply reduces surpluses returned to our Society and our co-sponsor partners. And, while the other sponsoring organizational units do indeed also have a financial interest in FIE, our Society has more than that – we have historical interest as the original Founding Society. By allowing this project to move forward without the constraint of co-sponsor memorandums of understanding, of multi-year conference budget lines, and of the politics of multi-meeting debates, the Society once again leads as the premier organizational unit supporting electrical engineering and computer science education.

Sincerely,



Dr. Russ Meier
IEEE Education Society Vice President of Conferences