PLATO PHILOSOPHY FUND APPLICATION

THANK YOU FOR APPLYING!

PROJECT TITLE: PHILOSOPHY IN THE COMMUNITY (III)
DATES FOR PROJECT: MARCH 2019 – MARCH 2020
AMOUNT OF FUNDING REQUESTED: $9,000 - $11,000

1. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PROJECT, INCLUDING ANY WORK THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE TO DEVELOP IT. (500 WORDS MAX)

We are seeking funding for our Philosophy in the Community Project (III) – a continued expansion of our tremendously successful 2018 Philosophy in the Community program implemented in Helena, MT. Our 2019-2020 Philosophy in the Community Project (III) will consist of a variety of philosophy activities for people of all backgrounds and all ages, including a continuation of the following programs:

- Philosophy Walks w/ guest speakers for adults and kids on Merlin Nature Preserve and trails in the Helena and surrounding areas;
- A special Three-Part Fall/Winter Philosophy Walk Series w/ guest speakers (to run in conjunction with our 3-Part Fall/Winter/Spring Philosophy Symposium series), scheduled for November 2019, March 2020, and April 2020, respectively;
- Monthly Philosophy Think & Drinks;
- A Halloween-Themed Philosophy Hayride-Walk for Kids w/ a guest storyteller on Merlin Nature Preserve scheduled for October 27th 2019;
- Philosophy Drive-In's for youth, adults, and elders;
- Philosophy Read-In's for Kids;
- A Three-Part Fall/Winter Philosophy Symposium Series on Bioethics w/ numerous guest panelists and facilitators targeted for December 2019, March 2020, and April 2020, respectively. *This entire symposium series will be filmed and broadcasted.*

And the addition of the following <u>new</u> programs:

- [Philosophy Workshops](#) w/ guest "philosophy as a way of life inspired" scholars and discussion leaders for kids, adults and elders;
- [Philosophy Mini-Drive-In's](#) for kids, adults and elders in Reeder's Alley, scheduled for January, March, and May 2019;
- ["Campfire Philosophy" Outings](#) w/ guest "philosophy as a way of life inspired" scholars and outing guides for young adults, adults and elders; targeted for Summer and Fall 2019;
- ["Big Ideas by Little Philosophers"](#) – A philosophy-inspired television-classroom series designed to help youth share their big ideas with the world, slated for Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter 2019.
- [Merlin Fellowships](#) – Opportunities for community and student scholars to research and write about topics important to them, as well as design and co-direct various philosophy in the community activities. Projects will contribute to and advance philosophical sensitivity, awareness, understanding, and engagement about a variety of issues.

Much work has already been done relative to the development of our 2019-2020 Philosophy in the Community Project (III).

Specifically: (a) dates and venues have been selected and secured for a good portion of our Spring 2019 events, some Fall events, as well as many of our new-on-the-scene in 2019 programs, like our "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" program. All scheduled events have been added to our [website calendar](#) and [FB page](#), accordingly; (b) correspondence with potential guest speakers and curriculum development for various activities has begun; and, (c) partnerships with numerous local establishments, including Cottonwood School, Yellowstone Forever Institute, the Lewis and Clark Library, and Access WILD have been (and are continuing to be) cultivated and secured. A 2019 Merlin Community Scholar has also been selected and several projects are underway.

Continued efforts to effectively promote each of our activities, streamline operational logistics, and build a larger core group of regular volunteers, is also in progress.

As a precaution, we have included URL's for each of the above underlined activities, as well as our [end-of-year 2018 newsletter](#) (which highlights the

aforementioned activities and more) at the close of this document in the instance that the hyperlinks do not function correctly.

2. What is the purpose of this project? (500 words max)

The purpose of our Philosophy in the Community Project (III) project is to enrich lives and strengthen community and the environment through philosophy.

We believe in the value and relevance of philosophy and its ability to improve our everyday lives. We also believe that it is (and should be) a resource for everyone — regardless of background or age — is a fun and rewarding activity in itself, and that it is not meant to be closed away in some book, but to be *lived*.

Our Philosophy in the Community Project (III) aims to honor these beliefs by providing unique opportunities for individuals of all ages to engage in critical, creative thought and reasonable discourse about a variety of topics. An additional objective includes a sincere desire for these discussions to motivate and encourage continued dialogue and action.

Further, and through these exchanges, our project (and organization) aspires to positively and directly impact the lives of individuals who participate in our activities, as well as positively and indirectly impact the lives of individuals who have not yet participated but might still benefit by virtue of living in a community of informed, engaged and caring thinkers.

Our philosophy in the community activities are geared to:

- spark and encourage the exchange of ideas and the fun of doing philosophy
- promote critical, creative thought and reflection
- cultivate the faculty and virtue of "philosophical sensitivity"
- nurture and contribute to a sense of imagination and wonder
- reconnect people with nature by way of doing philosophy in inspiring places
- facilitate the application of philosophy to matters of everyday living
- inspire leadership and meaningful action, and
- build, foster and strengthen the community and environment

Our project goals and objectives include (but are not limited to):

(1) Sparking Curiosity and Wonder – Socrates said that "philosophy begins and ends in wonder." We hold this sentiment close to our heart and design all of our activities to honor the significance of curiosity, wonder, and imagination to the art of critical, creative thinking.

(2) Applied Philosophy, Civic engagement, and community action – It is our belief that philosophy is not just a thinking endeavor but also an endeavor that requires us to "walk the walk." Putting ideas to the test in theory and practice is important. Our program emphasizes the activity and application of philosophy and is geared to inspire reflection, civic engagement, and community action.

(3) Expanding and connecting communities – Facilitating opportunities that help to expand and create new networks of engaged individuals is a goal of ours. Why? Because we feel that community matters. Our program is structured to engender these sorts of connections.

(4) Education and Access – Access to resources is a critical part of the learning process. Highlights from all of our program activities will be available on our website as a resource to all.

3. Who will benefit from the project, and how? (500 words max)

Our philosophy gatherings are home to a wide-range of individuals from a variety of backgrounds (academic and otherwise), viewpoints and life experiences. While some of the individuals that participate in our activities have been formally trained in philosophy, the majority has not. Our gatherings continue to be a place for people from all walks of life and of all ages (from young to old) to critically do and discuss philosophy and matters of everyday living.

Direct beneficiaries of the project include participants in our various activities ranging in age from youth to elderly. *Indirect* beneficiaries of the project include individuals who did not themselves participate but are directly related to participants and, likewise, those of no relation except in terms of community.

Additional indirect beneficiaries of the project include the environment; many of our philosophical discussions concern ways to reconnect with nature in ways that might improve the environment (e.g., what role does compassion and awareness play in our relationship to/with our surroundings? What is meant by stewardship and how do our conceptions of rights and responsibilities come in to play?)

With the expansion of our philosophy in the community activities for kids in 2019 – most notably our new BiLP program – we *also* feel that the following beneficiaries should be added to the list: the "inner philosophers" that reside in all of us and humanity at large.

Our youth philosophy activities and BiLP program are premised on the assumption that philosophy is such a fundamental human activity that even young children, regardless of age, naturally engage in it. From an early stage, children begin exploring concepts like knowledge, truth, beauty, and justice. We believe that philosophical education and engagement can make a positive difference in our lives and the world, and that our youth have much to contribute to the dialogue. Our intent is to foster this natural faculty in a way that provides time and space for children to indulge their inner philosopher, inspires and encourages the "inner philosopher in all of us," and emphasizes our common humanity.

4. What is the plan for developing and implementing the project? Include a timeline.

2018 was a BIG year for us. In addition to our normal offerings, we were also able to develop five new programs for 2019. Our development plans for 2019-2020 involve continued marketing and implementation efforts based on our successful approaches in 2017 and 2018, with a large focus on implementation.

Continuing to build awareness, forge community partnerships, and offer compelling opportunities that incorporate philosophy in direct and indirect means, are (and will continue to be) part of our daily operations and organizational goals.

A continued effort to "demystify" and make evident the value of philosophy as a discipline and way of life will also remain a constant. Much of the work behind this involves physically "hitting the streets" and talking with people about

philosophy and why it matters. Thanks to efforts and partnerships forged in 2017 and 2018, we have been able to expand various of our discussions (and activities within our Philosophy in the Community project) to accessible media platforms (in particular, Helena Civic Television) so that individuals who have a more challenging time accessing "the streets" for said conversations (e.g., disabled individuals, elders, others) have an opportunity to participate and engage in the larger discussion. We plan to continue these collaborative efforts in 2019, as well.

In a similar vein, our development and implementation process also involves providing philosophy resources (including those derived from our various activities) via accessible platforms and coming up with opportunities that are compelling and relevant enough to draw people in that might otherwise not attend and/or might attend, but require some encouragement to do so.

These efforts have been in effect since we opened our doors in Fall of 2015, have gained steam over the past three years, and will continue throughout the year on a weekly basis.

Implementing the specific activities involved in our Philosophy in the Community Project (III) involves numerous moving parts, ranging from reserving space, permits (when applicable), guest speakers, and volunteers to creating lesson plans, discussion topics, arranging transportation, set-up and performing other general logistics tasks. We have already made significant progress relative to these moving parts for our 2019-2020 program, most specifically as it concerns venue reservation, guest speaker correspondence, community partnerships, and initial curriculum planning.

Lastly, continuing to grow our community volunteer base to help with various important tasks for our project will also remain a priority. Thanks to the success of our 2017 and 2018 programs, we have increased our event-specific volunteer base, secured a handful of regular volunteers and a core volunteer for general operations and resource management, as well as a volunteer strategy/advisory team for organization, project planning, and assessment needs. Our next strategy/advisory team meeting take place on January 12th 2019. Future meetings will be scheduled throughout the year according to volunteer availability.

5. WHAT OTHER FUNDING SOURCES HAVE YOU EXPLORED FOR THIS PROJECT?

We have explored a variety of funding sources for our project including:

- Solicitation of direct donations (ongoing) – We have established a sustaining donor option for individuals interested in donating to our organization and its activities on a monthly basis, as well as donor tier options (i.e., levels of giving).
  - NOTE: In 2017, we received a record number of donations to our organization (in large part, we feel, due to our 2017 PLATO grant which helped us expand our reach, build awareness, and offer community members so many wonderful ways to "live philosophy.") 2018 has proven to be just as successful (and with several new donors), again in large part due to our 2018 PLATO grant and the sorts of community and cross-generational program development opportunities it has helped to facilitate.
- Community fundraising opportunities – We will be securing a date for a "Toga Soak" community night at Broadwater Hot Springs in Winter of 2019. This gathering will serve both as a community appreciation night and a fundraiser. We will be also be participating in *Give Local Helena* (a fundraising day for all non-profits in the Helena area in May of 2019).
- Local & State Grants – In addition to our PLATO grant application, to help supplement costs related to our Philosophy in the Community Project (III), we will be applying for three local grants, one state grant, and one federal grant this year; *due dates for two are rotating, due dates for the other two are in Spring*. Three of these five grants are earmarked to help supplement costs related to our Halloween Philosophy Hayride-Walk for Kids, Philosophy Read-In's, Philosophy Drive-In's & Mini-Drive-In's, Philosophy Think & Drinks, our "Campfire Philosophy" Outings, our "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" program, our Philosophy Fellowships, and general Philosophy in the Community Project (III) expenses. The remaining two grants, one state and one federal, will help supplement costs related to our Fall/Winter symposium-forum and walk series and our "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" program. *The federal and state grant requires matching funds (cash and in-kind) from other organizations, should we be selected as award recipients.*
- Annual fundraisers - Proceeds from our annual fundraisers will go toward

funding activities in our Philosophy in the Community Project (III) and general operational costs. These fundraisers are currently scheduled for June 2019 and August 2019, respectively.

6. Please list your budget, including any amounts from other sources.

Our budget for our 2019-2020 Philosophy in the Community Project (III) is $30,000 (ideal)/$25,000(base). We hope to generate the majority of funding for this project from the abovementioned sources and are seeking the remaining funding necessary to facilitate our projected program plans for 2019-2020 from PLATO, *ideally*, in the amount of $11,000 or, *alternatively*, in the partial amount(s) of either $10,000 or $9,000, respectively. A projected overview of what each endowment scenario would help fund based on numbers from our 2018 Philosophy in the Community program, added reinforcement from volunteers and community collaborators already secured for 2019, and initial work already completed and/or underway, is provided below:

- **$11,000 (Ideal)** – 32 Unique philosophy activities over the course of 2019 (into 2020):
    - 1 "Campfire Philosophy" Outing
    - 4 "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" shows (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter)
    - 2 Merlin Fellowship Projects
    - 3 Philosophy Symposiums/Forums (open to all ages, but predominantly targeting high school/college, adults, and elders)
    - 6 philosophy walks (open to all ages) w/ guest speakers
    - 1 Halloween-Themed Philosophy Hayride-Walk for Kids w/ guest story teller
    - 6 Think & Drinks (for 21 years and up)
    - 2 Philosophy Read-Ins (for kids)
    - 3 Philosophy Mini-Drive-In's (for youth, adults, and elders)
    - 2 Philosophy Drive-Ins (for youth, adults, and elders)
    - 1 Philosophy Workshop
    - 1 Philosophy as a Way of Life Community Endeavor (in collaboration with a local business)

- **$10,000 (Partial A)** – <u>26</u> Unique philosophy activities over the course of 2019 (into 2020):
    - 1 "Campfire Philosophy" Outing
    - 2 "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" shows (Spring & Summer)
    - 1 Merlin Fellowship project
    - 3 Philosophy Symposiums/Forums (open to all ages, but predominantly targeting high school/college, adults, and elders)
    - 6 philosophy walks (open to all ages) w/ guest speakers
    - 1 Halloween-Themed Philosophy Hayride-Walk for Kids w/ guest story teller
    - 6 Think & Drinks (for 21 years and up)
    - 2 Philosophy Read-Ins (for kids)
    - 2 Philosophy Mini-Drive-Ins (for youth, adults, and elders)
    - 1 Philosophy Drive-In (for youth, adults, and elders)
    - 1 Philosophy Workshop

- **$9,000 (Partial B)** – <u>23</u> Unique philosophy activities over the course of 2019 (into 2020):
    - 1 "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" show (Spring)
    - 3 Philosophy Symposiums/Forums (open to all ages, but predominantly targeting high school/college, adults, and elders)
    - 6 philosophy walks (open to all ages) w/ guest speakers
    - 1 Halloween-Themed Philosophy Hayride-Walk for Kids w/ guest story teller
    - 6 Think & Drinks (for 21 years and up)
    - 2 Philosophy Read-Ins (for kids)
    - 2 Philosophy Mini-Drive-Ins (for youth, adults, and elders)
    - 1 Philosophy Drive-In (for youth, adults, and elders)
    - 1 Philosophy Workshop

Grant monies received from PLATO would *not* be utilized for fringe benefits or grant administration.

*URL'S
- Our 2018 Year in Review Newsletter: https://merlinccc.org/merlin-mailer-newsletters/2018-merlin-mailer-newsletter-a-year-in-review/ *and*

https://mailchi.mp/81f9798b8b3e/ye-2018-merlin-mailer-annual-newsletter

- Testimonials from Community Members who have participated in our Philosophy in the Community activities in 2017 and 2018: https://merlinccc.org/merlin-testimonials/
- Philosophy Symposium Series: https://merlinccc.org/category/merlin-forums-roundtables-archive/
- Philosophy Walks (including our special Three-part Fall/Winter Philosophy Walk Series and Kid's Halloween Hayride-Walk): https://merlinccc.org/category/merlin-philosophy-walks-archive/
- Kid's Halloween Philosophy Hayride Walk (2018): https://merlinccc.org/merlin-philosophy-walks-archive/october-2018-halloween-themed-little-philosophers-walk-what-is-it-like-to-be-a-bat/
- Philosophy Think & Drinks and Think & Drink (squared's): https://merlinccc.org/philosophy-think-and-drinks/
    - *NOTE: Our Think & Drink (squared's) will not be continued in 2019 as the community ended up preferring our normal monthly Think & Drink format. Special topic Think & Drink (squared's) might still be provided if the community requests it.*
- Philosophy Drive-In's, Mini-Drive-In's (*NEW*) & Read-In's: https://merlinccc.org/philosophy-drive-in-movie-and-read-in-nights
    - Read-In Archive Page: https://merlinccc.org/category/merlin-read-in-archive/
    - Drive-In Archive Page: https://merlinccc.org/category/merlin-drive-in-archive/
    - *NOTE: We will also be collaborating with Cottonwood School in 2019 to broaden the reach of our philosophy read-in & drive-in activities; both will be offered as "field trip" type activities for children in their school, as well as to kids from the local and surrounding communities*
- *NEW* Philosophy Workshops: https://merlinccc.org/philosophy-retreats/
- *NEW* "Campfire Philosophy" Outings: https://merlinccc.org/philosophy-retreats/
- *NEW* "Big Ideas by Little Philosophers" Program: https://merlinccc.org/conferences-and-events/helena-community-endeavors/

- *NEW* Merlin Fellowships: https://merlinccc.org/philosophy-fellowships-community-student/
- Annual Fundraiser Events: https://merlinccc.org/category/merlin-fundraisers-archive/
- Philosophy Resources: https://merlinccc.org/resource-center/