Composer fees: $10,000 for each of three composers, to include all phases of composing, editing, publishing, and open-ended performance rights.

Librettist fees: $3,000 for two of the three librettists, to include all phases of the creative process and rights to use the libretto in conjunction with the curriculum guide. Dr. Sanders, the first librettist, is retired from Indiana University so not eligible to receive these monies; I will look for separate funding for his fee.

Curriculum guide design: $1500 for each of the three years. I will ask a music education graduate student to design and publish a curriculum guide, specific to each production, with activities that are age-appropriate for K-8 students.

Faculty administration: $1500 for each of the three upcoming years for the grant applicant, to partially offset personal expenses incurred while working through the creative process with the composers and librettists.

Administrative support: $500 for someone to assist in the grant administration, arranging for performances, setting up workshops to refine the works in process, facilitate communication, etc.

General supplies: $1500 for materials to make costumes, sets, and props for the first production.

Props/set specialist for first opera: $1000 to design, build, and maintain props and sets for the first of the commissioned works.

Costume specialist for first opera; $1500 to design, build, and maintain costumes for the first of the commissioned works.
Roundabout Opera for Kids (ROK) has been presenting child-friendly short operas and musicals to area educational institutions since 2007. Comprised of student performers from the Jacobs School of Music whom I lead as faculty coach, ROK’s goal is two-fold: to introduce area children to opera through an engaging and intimate first experience as audience members, and to give developing professional singers and pianists an opportunity to hone their performance skills through educational outreach. ROK brings opera directly to young students by presenting staged performances in their classrooms or at the public library. In these smaller venues, the performers are able to engage the children on a personal level, with up-close interaction and later opportunities for one-on-one conversation.

These performances have been received enthusiastically by the community. Every group that has hosted us has invited us to return, and every year the project has expanded. In this academic year alone, ROK will reach nearly 3,000 children through performances in schools, libraries, homeschool groups and hospitals. The musicians donate their preparation and performance time, and ROK provides schools with free curriculum guides to accompany the production.

A continual challenge, however, lies in finding opera repertoire that is appropriate for children in terms of storyline and accessibility of the musical language, interesting for the musicians, concise enough for a normal class session, and suitable for easily transportable set pieces, costumes, and props. We have worked around this difficulty by presenting abridged versions of existing operas, but I believe there is a more exciting solution. I propose to use the New Frontiers grant to commission a series of three operas tailor-made for our performance needs. ROK would use the commissioned works as a core repertoire to be performed in rotation in an ongoing three-year cycle. I am requesting funds for the commissioning of these operas as well as funds to support the ongoing production of these works, through the design and creation of sets, props, costumes and study guides. The funding I am requesting is, in a very real sense, seed money: over the lifetime of these productions, hundreds of developing professionals will present these new operas to thousands of young students.
This project is not only do-able, but is immediately do-able, with the support of grants like the New Frontiers grant. Scott Russell Sanders\(^1\), an acclaimed essayist and novelist, and Lauren Bernofsky, a composer known for her works for young audiences, have already agreed to collaborate on the first of these operas. Dr. Sanders will design the libretto to take into consideration the distribution of cast members, set design implications, and opportunities for children as audience members to participate in the storyline. The themes that Dr. Sanders will address in this original libretto based on his book *The Engineer of Beasts* are how humans treat other animals and the problem of man’s alienation from the natural world. These themes will allow teachers to incorporate the performance into the broader curriculum—not only in the music classroom but also in creative writing or the sciences, for example.

Dr. Bernofsky will compose a work that emerging professional musicians can present accessibly to a young audience. The score will be paced to fit into a typical 25-minute class period and will include some audience participation. Initially the work will be scored so that the musical accompaniment requires only a pianist, but an additional orchestration will include optional instrumental parts (flute, percussion, violin, etc.) so that other musicians could be involved in future performances. Both Dr. Bernofsky and Dr. Sanders have generously volunteered their time to speak with the school groups in “meet the composer/librettist” sessions when possible.

Several other writers and composers have expressed interest in creating new works for this project. With funding secured, I will continue at once with the other two commissions, so that our rotating repertoire is in place and we can focus on bringing the operas to production. We were awarded an Indiana Campus Compact Scholarship of Engagement grant for the present season’s production, and I am applying for other grants to cover production costs for the second and third operas in the commissioned series. Recently, Indianapolis Opera has expressed an interest in collaborating with ROK, and we are working on the potential details of such a collaboration.

\(^1\) Because of the terms of Prof. Sanders’ retirement from Indiana University, he will not be eligible to be included in this grant; I will seek out other funding sources for his commission.
ROK’s commissioning project will continue to advance my own professional development and scholarship by allowing me to participate in the creative process as a consultant to the composer and librettist. This project will allow me to move beyond merely rearranging and producing existing works, to managing a series of productions from inception through completion; this will give me a broader perspective on the production process in general and will enrich what I can offer to the students in my specific work as a vocal coach with the Indiana University Opera Theater.

This project will impact Indiana University students by providing them with instruction and practice on how to prepare for a type of performance that is rarely, if ever, addressed in core coursework, yet will likely make up a significant part of their early professional activities: outreach and work with young audiences. They will also learn how to work effectively with the public school system, how to hold the attention of and communicate directly with elementary-age students, and how to prepare a concise and workable study guide for young students—all useful skills for when they set up their own private studios for young musicians.

More broadly, ROK will expose these emerging professionals to the fulfilling experience of engaging actively and positively in community spheres outside the opera house or recital hall. Every group of university musicians that I have worked with on similar projects has commented, without exception, on two realizations: first, how surprised they were to enjoy sharing the experience with the kids; and second, how much they came to admire the teachers who were working with the children every day. The vast majority have also said that they had a new desire to continue doing similar work after leaving the Jacobs School of Music, and several graduates have gone into fields related to outreach programming.

One of the large-scale goals of arts education is that the children will grow to become participants in music-making, whether from the stage or as active audience members. Evaluating the long-term success of that broad goal is well beyond the scope of this project, but we will instead evaluate the more immediate goal—that the children will get "turned on" to opera. Through monthly meetings of the performers, talk-back sessions with the music teachers (to see what they perceive worked in the study guides and in the performances and what needs to be improved), and through noting the level of
engagement of the children during the performances and question-and-answer sessions, we will fine-tune the experience for the students. We will also record several performances early in the process to critique and improve future performances. The final and most telling evaluation tool is the percentage of schools that invite ROK to return in subsequent years. We hope to maintain our 100% re-invitation rate and continue our expansion into new schools and educational settings. Depending on how interest evolves with our community partners and the Jacobs School of Music, an exciting future outgrowth of ROK could include coordinating with other departments to include a chamber music series, art song mini-recitals, and other programs that would involve more of the faculty and student population.

Attached to this application you will find, besides the required letters of support, letters from teachers who have invited ROK to perform at their schools, and thank-you notes from students who have seen the performances. At the end of the day, this kind of feedback from the teachers and students is what motivates me to keep working on bringing these experiences to the schools, and to fill out application after application for these grants. I know it is a way that I can contribute to our community (and to the larger musical community). Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the New Frontiers grant, and for giving Roundabout Opera for Kids serious consideration for your support.
Reviewer: 1  
Rating: 3 (of 5)  

**Strengths:** Well organized, already involved in project, can hit the ground running, outreach project to elementary students who may not have this detailed contact with musical experience, involves students in service learning activities.  

**Weaknesses:** May not have enough faculty/students to carry out this large a project.  

**Comments:** A win-win situation for elementary students to get in-depth exposure to music in a time when K-12 are cut to the bone.  

Reviewer: 2  
Rating: 5 (of 5)  

**Strengths:** The funding will bring together the necessary artists needed to create short operas specifically designed for children in school settings. This seems to create opportunities for different individuals, composer, librettists and performers to work on something unique that has potential to move well beyond Bloomington. The project brings music to schools, engages the teachers at the schools because the contemporary subjects can be tied into teaching, and the operas themselves are presented in an intimate and participatory way.  

**Weaknesses:**  

**Comments:** I'm a little unclear about the timeline. A three year rotation of the operas is mentioned but are all the operas going to be created within the timeline of the grant?  

Reviewer: 3  
Rating: 5 (of 5)  

**Strengths:** 1. Ground work has been laid; the project can go immediately. 2. ROK has been going on and is a success with school kids. 3. It has a ripple effect that spreads out wide and long (Ref. to Dean's and chair’s letters). 3. Yet still it's breaking new ground by creating three operas.  

**Weaknesses:**  

**Comments:**  

**OUTCOME:** Committee discussion noted that the three-year time frame of some budget items was unusual, as was the large amount directed to external composers. After discussion, the recommended budget was reduced to reflect these concerns. Final award amount: $30,000.