

Shell Urban Science Educators Development Award - Tips for Applicants

1. Center your narrative on impact in an urban classroom

This award is specifically about urban science education. Reviewers want to clearly see:

- Who your students are (without stereotyping)
- What unique opportunities and challenges exist in your context
- How your teaching responds to those realities

Avoid writing a general teaching story that could apply anywhere. Make your urban context visible through concrete examples.

2. Show student learning, not just teaching effort

A common weakness is describing what the teacher does rather than what students achieve.

Stronger applications emphasize:

- How students think, argue, and investigate science
 - Evidence of growth in engagement or achievement
 - Student-created models, explanations, or solutions
 - Real examples of student success in your classroom
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3. Make standards alignment intentional and specific

You are not required to use only Next Generation Science Standards, but you must clearly align to a recognized framework.

You may use:

- State science standards
- District curriculum frameworks
- National frameworks such as science literacy or engineering standards

Strong writing:

- Names the standard or concept clearly

- Shows how students engage with it
- Connects it to an actual task or investigation

Weak writing:

- “My instruction aligns to standards”
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4. Use one or two strong examples instead of many weak ones

Depth matters more than coverage. Choose:

- One well-described unit or investigation
- One strong student experience or project

Then fully explain:

- The phenomenon or problem
 - Student thinking and investigation process
 - How learning evolved
 - What students produced or demonstrated
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5. Make your conference plan concrete and actionable

Avoid vague goals like “learn new strategies.”

Stronger plans include:

- Specific topics or strands you want to attend
- Skills you plan to develop (assessment, inquiry, equity, etc.)
- How you will immediately apply learning
- How you will share learning with colleagues afterward

Reviewers want to see a clear return on investment for students.

6. Emphasize equity as part of instruction—not an add-on

In urban education, equity should be embedded throughout your narrative.

Show how you:

- Support multilingual learners in science discourse
- Scaffold rigorous tasks without lowering expectations
- Provide multiple ways for students to show understanding
- Connect science learning to student identity and lived experience

Avoid treating equity as a separate paragraph.

7. Letters of support should provide evidence, not praise

Strong letters:

- Describe specific classroom examples or outcomes
- Confirm your impact on students or colleagues
- Come from different perspectives (administrator, colleague, partner)
- Show your leadership in urban science education

Weak letters:

- Only use general praise (“great teacher,” “hardworking,” etc.)
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8. Keep your CV clean, factual, and tightly organized

Your curriculum vitae should:

- Stay within two pages
 - Focus on roles, credentials, and accomplishments
 - Avoid narrative explanations (save that for the essay)
 - Highlight leadership, awards, and professional learning
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9. Connect science to students’ real lives

Strong applications consistently show relevance:

- Local environmental or community issues

- Real-world problem solving
- Engineering design challenges
- Student voice in choosing or shaping investigations

Science should feel meaningful, not abstract.

10. Write so someone outside your school can visualize your classroom

Ask yourself:

- Could a reviewer picture what students are doing?
- Is it clear what a lesson actually looks like?
- Is the evidence specific enough to be believable?

If not, add detail and replace general statements with concrete examples.

11. Maintain consistency across all sections

Your application should “agree with itself”:

- Narrative matches CV
- Conference goals match instructional needs
- Instructional approach matches student outcomes
- Letters reinforce your main claims

Inconsistencies weaken credibility quickly.

12. Keep tone confident, reflective, and grounded

Strong applications are:

- Clear and evidence-based
- Reflective without being overly emotional
- Confident without exaggeration

Focus on what you *do and observe*, not what you hope sounds impressive.

