

FELLOWSHIPS

- Writing a Successful Fellowship Application

Writing a Successful Fellowship Application

Over the course of your academic career, you will write many applications for funding. In evaluating a fellowship application, reviewers emphasize four criteria:

- *The project's intellectual value;*
- *The quality of the proposal;*
- *The likelihood that the project will be completed within the grant's timeframe; and*
- *The project's likely impact.*

Of these, the most important is the first. Applicants must demonstrate that they have identified a significant scholarly problem and that their project will make an important contribution to scholarly understanding. This contribution may be substantive, methodological, or theoretical and conceptual.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate that they:

- *Are familiar with previous scholarship on the topic;*
- *Have either discovered a gap in the scholarship; new evidence that bears on the topic; or developed a new methodological or theoretical approach;*
- *Are well-qualified to undertake the project;*
- *Have secured the permissions necessary to undertake the project; and*
- *Have a realistic plan of work, budget, and track record that will assure the reviewers that the project will be completed within the grant's time frame.*

Questions reviewers ask:

- *Has the applicant identified a significant scholarly or social problem?*
- *Is the applicant conversant with the scholarly conversation surrounding the problem?*
- *Is the applicant's approach to the problem – methodological, theoretical, and conceptual -- fresh and compelling?*
- *Does the applicant have the qualifications and permissions to successfully complete the project?*
- *Are the applicant's plan of action and budget sufficiently detailed and realistic?*
- *Does the applicant's record suggest that she or he will complete the project in the allotted time frame?*

Questions you need to ask yourself:

STYLE:

Is my application written in a clear, compelling, and jargon-free style?

Does my narrative contain sufficient detail and examples to demonstrate my command of my topic?

OPENING

Will my opening paragraph grab the reviewers' attention?

Do I make a compelling case for the scholarly importance of my project?

Do the opening two paragraphs effectively:

- identify a significant need, problem, or gap in the scholarly literature that needs to be addressed?
- spell out the proposal's objectives?
- suggest that my approach is innovative and represents a genuine contribution to scholarship?

BODY

In the body of the proposal, do I adequately:

- spell out the themes, guiding questions, and sources that constitute my project's intellectual core?
- describe my project's relationship to the existing research efforts of other scholars?
- explain the methods that I will use to complete my project?
- lay out the contributions that my project will make substantively, methodologically, and conceptually or theoretically?

QUALIFICATIONS

Do I demonstrate that I have the qualifications and permissions necessary to carry out the project?

Have I included references to fellowships I have received and papers I have published or presented?

PLAN OF WORK AND BUDGET

Is my plan of work sufficiently detailed?

Are my timetable and budget realistic?