

Tips for Applying for Grants

Develop a List of Grants, and a Calendar of Timelines

Generate some ideas for appropriate grants for yourself, paying careful attention to the qualifications. Make sure you are eligible before you invest too much of your time.

Pay attention to when grants are due. Successful applications for competitive grants take months to develop. You should start writing the application several months before the due date.

Consider speaking with faculty who know you as soon as you have determined that you are eligible for a particular grant, letting them know of your plans, and getting their advice. If the College has a representative for that particular grant, let them know too. Identify trusted friends and relatives who can read early drafts of your essay. Ask your mentors if they will be willing to critique drafts of your essay, and get their advice as you start the drafting project.

Start Writing Early

Consult The Lewis & Clark Writing Center web page, the hand-out "[Essays for Post-Baccalaureate Study](#)" under the button "Applying to law school, medical school, professional school. This is a useful blow-by-blow set of suggestions for how to develop a winning essay. As you write, you will need to keep two things in mind:

1. Who you are, what makes you unique, and how you will convey that in a limited number of words. In particular, you will need to look for telling details and vivid examples that will help you to tell your story. Do not count words at the beginning. It generally works better to write freely, cutting later as needed.
2. What the grantor is looking for, and how your experience perfectly fits you for their needs.

A good application essay requires time and many drafts. Try to write simply, clearly and directly. Do not reach for overly-formal, stiff language. (The Writing Center handout urges you to demonstrate "goodness of fit," but its advice to seek a professional voice should not encourage you to write in a convoluted or overly-abstract manner.) Use good detail, specific examples. Your goal is to persuade the committee by your eloquence, your commitment and your directness. You can distinguish your application by the uniqueness of your experience and your background.

Find critics. Make sure that you give them the criteria for the fellowship and the directions as well as your essay. Ask them for serious, demanding criticism on the substance, the organization, and the correctness

Give Yourself Plenty of Time for the Submission of the Application

Many fellowships ask for many additional items --references, CV's, transcripts, project descriptions, intellectual biographies, etc. Do not delay in amassing these materials.; you will leave things out if you do so and make mistakes. Make sure you do just what they ask you to do. Do not hesitate to get advice from mentors, the Lewis & Clark representative or from the scholarship representatives in the national or international office. The people who staff the national fellowship offices are rarely the same people that will evaluate your fellowship. Their job is to answer your questions.

Make sure that your final copy is error-free. Plan to give yourself a week (optimally) or at least a day or two after you are done to read your submissions over. Errors will creep in whatever you do, and when you are especially familiar with your text, you will often be unable to detect them. The only way you can prevent errors is by planning to have enough time at the end to hand off the application to friends to proofread.