



# Write a Winning Fulbright Essay

*May 30, 2018*

# Purposes of the Essays

- **Statement of Grant Purpose** – What you want to do and why; what you will contribute and what you will gain
- **Personal Statement** – Tells reviewers who you are and offers additional insights into what a Fulbright would mean for you

# Overarching Advice

- Be authentic
- Tell your story
- Take the time to clarify your reasons for wanting to do a Fulbright

# Exercise 1: Identify what the fellowship is looking for

Pull up the materials about your program:

<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/regions>

Identify the nouns related to the ideal candidate. These may be teacher, leader, expert, scholar, cultural ambassador, etc. Put these in list #1.

Next, identify the adjectives that describe the ideal candidate, words such as motivated, knowledgeable, connected, passionate, and committed. Put these in list #2.

Finally, reflect on your relationship with these words. Fill in the sentences below using one word from your lists at a time. Don't worry about being perfect – just write! This is just a creative exercise to get your thoughts flowing.

I am a (#1) because I \_\_\_\_\_.

I am (#2) because I \_\_\_\_\_.

# Exercise 3: Uncover your stories

Brainstorm experiences from various times in your life that have influenced your current worldview, including your values, passions, and priorities. Create at **least 3 bullet points** of experiences (a couple of sentences) under the three headings below.

This is a brainstorming exercise so don't mull over these too much. Write down whatever important or surprising memories come to mind.

1: Write down experiences/observations from childhood (8<sup>th</sup> grade and younger)

2: Write down experiences/observations from high school

3: Write down experiences/observations from college and later

# Exercise 2: Clarify your motivations

Prepare a brief, one-sentence summary of what you would do during the fellowship if you were to win, and be as specific as possible. This might be something like: *help native Spanish speakers learn English and immerse myself in Spanish culture*. Or: *spend one year in Germany researching how German government agencies process and settle Lebanese refugees*.

Next fill in the sentence – not once – but **10 times**, with a different ending each time:

I want to (summary) because I \_\_\_\_\_.

This exercise can be more challenging than you might think. Why exactly do you want to do this fellowship? What will you gain from it, personally and professionally? Consider the skills and experience you would gain, people you would meet, and goals you would achieve.

The exercise requires you to do this 10 times so that you are forced to come up with 10 specific, unique reasons for pursuing the fellowship. Reason 10 will be a lot harder to generate than reason 1, but reason 10 might reveal something you hadn't considered about your fellowship motivations.

# Exercise 4: Write some vignettes

Pick a few of your experiences from Exercise 3 that are most relevant to the reasons for applying that you identified in Exercise 2. (If you feel you missed an important story, add it to your bullets!)

For each experience that you selected, write a one paragraph vignette (i.e., a brief description, account, or episode). Pretend you are telling this story to a friend over the phone or starting a chapter in a novel. Describe what happened and how it made you feel in a few sentences.

**Pair up with another person.** Read your vignettes to each other and provide feedback on which are the most interesting and memorable.

# Exercise 5: Prepare an outline

Based on the tips from Fulbright (see handout), prepare an outline for your essay(s).

## **Sample Personal Statement Outline**

- Opening paragraph – a defining story to catch the reader’s attention
- How your experiences and world view have inspired you to apply for the fellowship
- Your future career and/or education goals (be specific)
- Why you are a strong candidate
- How the fellowship is uniquely positioned to help you achieve your goals

## **Sample Statement of Grant Purpose Outline**

- What you are applying for
- Why you are applying
- Your qualifications
- What you will contribute
- What you will gain
- Relevance to future plans