

WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

The goal of your research proposal is to convince your readers (who may be within your field or from very different fields) of four things:

1. That your research project is important and innovative
2. That you are the right person to carry out this research project
3. That your project will be better because it is funded by this institution
4. That the institution's goals will be served via your project.

Proposals can take different forms in different fields, and even in different funding opportunities within the same field. Closely follow guidelines in the call for applications and in any example applications you can find. Here, we guide you through key questions to ask yourself as you prepare the content of your research proposal.

Hone Your Research Question

The central research question

What are you trying to figure out? This might be practical (arising from trying to make something happen) or conceptual (arising from something we don't yet understand). It should also be specific enough to be fully addressed within the funding period, but with broader implications for the field.

Your progress so far

What have you already accomplished that supports the importance of your research question, the feasibility of your research plan, and/or the likelihood of the expected outcomes? Your answers can both bolster the importance of your project and demonstrate your ability to complete the project.

Situate Your Research in the Field

The academic conversation

What are the schools of thought relevant to your research question? How does this existing work support the importance of your research question? Don't get too hung up on individual scholars or studies, but also don't make this too wide-ranging—it is not a literature review.

Innovation

How does your approach to this research question set you apart from others in the field? Is it attention to a new topic, or an application of a new method or framework?

Stakes & impact

What is your expected outcome for this research project? How will answering your research question make a difference in your field or the world?

Align with the funding institution's mission

Your benefit from receiving this fellowship

Why do you *need* this fellowship? What will it allow you to do that you couldn't do otherwise?

The fellowship's benefit from funding you

How will the completion of your project help the funding institution achieve its goals?