



APPLY TO BE PART OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN LEADERS!

How to Submit a Strong Mandela Washington Fellowship Application

When you apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship, you will submit a personal statement and other essays to introduce yourself to the selection panel. In this part of your application, you can highlight what you want reviewers to know about you. It is important to catch the reader's attention with an original, honest statement. When space is limited, it is important to compose a concise answer that highlights the work you are most proud of. Make sure you are responding directly to the question being asked and including specific examples or anecdotes, if relevant. Here are a few tips:

- ✓ **Do Not Procrastinate!** Start preparing your essays. It is easy to underestimate the time and difficulty involved in developing your answers.
- ✓ **Be Informative and Relevant:** Remember the written application is the only information the selection panel will have when deciding the candidates who will progress to the interview stage. Do not assume the reviewers know anything about you or the topics you are writing about.
- ✓ **Stand Out:** Reviewers will be reading a lot of applications. Stand out in the crowd by making your responses interesting! One way to do this is to begin your statement with an attention-grabber such as a quote or a story.
- ✓ **Prove It, Get Personal:** Provide concrete examples that pertain to your life, work, community service, goals and experiences. Don't be shy to highlight your personal accomplishments (not your organization/business) and most importantly, state the impact of those accomplishments.
- ✓ **Be Specific:** Don't just describe the "big-picture" problems in Zambia; describe exactly what you as an individual are doing to confront the specific challenges in your community.
- ✓ **Be Passionate and Flexible:** Don't be afraid to talk about your aspirations for the future, be passionate and remain flexible as opportunities in life may modify your future goals.
- ✓ **Get Comments from Peers:** Share your first drafts with peers to get feedback on the content, they can tell you if you talk enough/too much about yourself and if you have a catchy grabber.
- ✓ **Get To The POINT:** Be concise, do not use a lot of unnecessary words.
- ✓ **Spell Check:** Review your application for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes.
- ✓ **Check Formatting:** Make sure the formatting is consistent throughout your application, especially if you are copying and pasting information.
- ✓ **Dedicate Time:** Time spent on an application varies among applicants. Spend as much time as needed to make sure your essays give a good overview of your qualifications. If you don't take the time to prepare your application, the selection panel will notice, small details matter.
- ✓ **Make Sense:** Make sure your ideas are coherent throughout the essay. The person reading your essay needs to understand how your thoughts fit together.
- ✓ **Sympathy Alone is NOT Enough:** Many applicants have compelling stories about their families, but telling them alone to get sympathy from the selection panel is not enough. You should refrain from highlighting this unless you can explain the effect it has had on your character.

For more tips, visit [Applying to Be a Mandela Washington Fellow: Building Your Resume](https://yali.state.gov) at yali.state.gov.