



YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE 

Writing Effective Personal Statements

2014 Washington Fellowship

Welcome to the U.S. Embassy

- While you're here...Join the **Information Resource Center!**



Washington Fellowship: The Basics

- New flagship program of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)
- 500 fellows from across Africa, 30 fellows from Uganda
- Three focus areas: business and entrepreneurship, public management, and civic leadership
- 6-week academic and leadership institutes at U.S. universities
- Summit in Washington, D.C., with President Obama
- Competitive 8-week internships in the U.S. for approximately 100 fellows
- Opportunities for continued networking, professional development and other activities in their home country



The Questions*:

1. Please explain how you have helped to introduce a new idea, initiative, or product and how you attracted support for it.
2. Please describe a specific challenge in your community, organization, industry, or country. Include what you believe to be the key barriers to resolving this challenge.
3. Taking the challenge you described above, please describe the steps you would like to take to address this challenge. Please explain the skills and resources you possess as well as those that you would need to acquire in order to effectively address this challenge.

***250 word limit for each**



Purpose

To market or “sell” oneself for admission into a competitive study/educational/work program



DO:

- **Consider your audience** and aim to readily engage it from the first sentence.
- **Focus on what makes you unique!** Your statement is your single opportunity to make yourself stand out from the rest of the candidates
- **Choose a focus and be specific.** Avoid trying to cover many topics at once.
- **Follow directions** and answer the questions given.
- **Use stories** to make your essay coherent and interesting.
- Develop a thesis about yourself early in the essay and argue it throughout. **Find an angle.**
- **Choose your words carefully** – you have very limited space!
- **Research** if necessary.
- **Edit, edit, edit!** Then ask someone else to do the same.



DON'T:

- **Submit a narrative of your resume.** Lists of accomplishments are not engaging!
- **Write what you think the selection committee wants to hear.** Sincerity is important and recognizable.
- **Overwrite or belabor minor points** about yourself.
- **Repeat information** directly from the application form itself unless you use it to illustrate a point or want to develop it further.
- **Write in clichés.** Avoid stock expressions and statements that could have been written by anyone.



Suggested Steps:

- 1) Analyze the questions, breaking them down.
- 2) Develop an outline.
- 3) Write your draft (not in the application).
- 4) Refine your draft. (Many times if necessary!)
- 5) Ask a friend to review.
- 6) When finished, cut and paste into application and check formatting.



Group Activity

- Read the example personal statements aloud at your table. As a table, discuss and critique the statements (both good and bad) using what you learned about personal statements.



Questions?



To apply, visit: youngafricanleaders.state.gov

YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE

Enter Search Term(s)

[WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP](#) [ABOUT YALI](#) [U.S. COMMITMENT TO AFRICA](#) [BECOME A PARTNER](#) [RECEIVE UPDATES](#)

We are now accepting applications for the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders program.
APPLY NOW!

Application will close January 27, 2014, at MIDNIGHT!