

TIPS ON APPLYING FOR WARA FELLOWSHIPS

Every year, the WARA fellowship committee received dozens of amazing applications for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral travel and research grants, residences, and internships. The selection of the awardees is a challenging process because we can only recommend a small number of these applications. Understandably, unsuccessful applicants usually ask for tips on how they could have made their applications successful. Well, here are some tips, and they are by no means, exhaustive.

GENERAL

- Ensure your application is complete and all of the requested materials are submitted by the due date. Your proposed research project, internship or residency may be compelling, the fellowship committee cannot fully assess an incomplete file. The secretariat always does its best to ensure the application files are complete, but applicants have the primary responsibility to ensure that their referees and universities send in materials on time.
- Make sure that your proposal is well written: misspellings and poor grammar create a bad impression. Be sure to spell check your document and have a colleague review it for grammar and style.

QUALITY OF RESEARCH STATEMENT

- Describe clearly the nature of the project or residency that you will be undertaking. For residencies, how will these enhance the African pedagogy/scholarship in your institutional curriculum and the scholarly development of career of the resident scholar. For post-doctoral applications, explain whether the research project will led to the completion of an article, book chapter, artistic or creative performance or a discrete part of a larger project. For pre-doctoral applicants, avoid sending proposals that are at the very early stages of conception, especially ones that do not convey a concrete sense of the direction that the dissertation is heading.
- Make sure that you *communicate very clearly the larger significance and relevance* of your proposed project. Think about: Why should the committee or anyone care about this project? The committee usually wants to see how the project speaks to ongoing concerns and debates in the applicant's discipline and in broader multidisciplinary terrain of West African studies. The applicant should be able to convey clearly and concisely to reviewers from an array of disciplinary backgrounds how his or her research will nuance standing debates or help us rethink them altogether.
 - Show evidence that you have done the legwork necessary in terms of contacts. Name specific places, institutions, and point people with whom you will be working or who will help guide you in the field.
 - Projects should be *feasible in its scope, proposed research locations, and its activities*. Are the regions and countries that are you proposing to conduct your research reasonably

accessible, stable, and secure? Can the research activities that you have outlined be conducted successfully in the places that you have specified?

- *Be explicit about the relevance and your knowledge of the different languages necessary for the successful conduct of your project. The committee always looks favorable on candidates who have or are making effort to acquire the requisite language skills. If you do not have the language skills, discuss the nature and cost of the arrangements you have made or will be making for language services.*

BUDGETS AND TIMELINES

- Make your budget is carefully outlined, reasonable, can support the field, archival or artistic/creative project(s) that you have being planned. Note that the upper limit of the grant support to pre-doctoral and post-doctoral grants is \$6,000, with airfare set around \$2,500, and the rest for board, lodge, and other research costs. Excessively high or low budgets will signal that your project is not feasible within the guidelines established by WARA. If you have applied, are applying, or plan to apply for additional sources of support for your research, let WARA know. It would not adversely affect the competitiveness of your proposals.
- Develop a realistic timeline. The grants are not being given for very short trips or long-term field research. Plan to spend two to three months in the region.
- Use the West African Research Center as a resource to help you with establishing contacts and helping you with other information regarding research in West Africa.