

Tips for Applicants



While it takes time to research and understand an issue, brainstorm a response to it, and propose a feasible project, the process is manageable when broken down into steps. The following brainstorming tips are meant to help you when developing your project idea.

ENGAGE

Creating a good project requires that you find a topic that really interests you and that you really care about. This fellowship will require your time and energy for 9 months so make sure that you find an issue you are truly passionate about.

TIP: Start observing the issues in your community, speaking with your friends, brainstorming with the people most affected by the issue or need.

LEARN

Research a bit on what has already been done to address the issue. How have people already tried to deal with these issues/needs? What are the underlying problems, and how could you address them? What does the group most impacted by the problem think is the best solution? Research the strengths of the community as well -- what's best about this group/community? Who are the leaders? What are the positives you can build on? Look at your own skill-set -- what are your talents, interests, and skills, and how could you use them in service of your cause?

TIP: You can use interviews, the internet, and your own experience as research. Ask members of the group/community most affected about what they want. Identify people or organizations that are willing to help you, and identify your own skills and talents.

LEAD

Develop a vision for your leadership. Your approach should be a social justice approach -- using activism, education, or organizing to address the issue. Once you have narrowed an issue and developed an idea for a proposal, make sure to narrow it down. Too broad a project will leave you frustrated and without a clear plan of action. Too narrow a focus will not challenge you and will not be suitable for a 9 month fellowship.

TIP: What is your vision for your community, or this group of people? Imagine the ideal vision for the future, and then propose a project that will help move the community towards that vision.

ACT

Develop a proposal and identify people and resources that can help you. Come to office hours to get help thinking through your project. Speak with community members who can support you. Complete the application and submit it.

TIP: Don't procrastinate! Get started early on this process so that you can think it through carefully and get any help you need. Even if you just have a vague idea, start talking to supporters and come to us for feedback.

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STUCK? HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

- Come to the office and read through prior ELLA fellowship proposals.
- Come to the Open Houses to learn more, and get some feedback on how to develop your ideas
- Speak with prior ELLA Fellows and learn about their projects (ask Shreya for contact info) or with a teacher or guidance counselor at your school!

Here are some sample projects which we hope inspire you to create your own:

- To address the issue of school violence, youth create a survey to poll students on their experiences. They poll 3/4 of the student body, and compile the survey results into a report. They then hold an assembly meeting to share results with students, and to brainstorm solutions to the issue. They also create a coalition to work with the principal and the administration of the school and ensure that changes are implemented in their school.
- To address the issue of health and higher incidences of disease among their peers, a young leader creates a curriculum around food justice and healthy eating and cooking. She recruits 10 participants from her community and through interactive workshops and cooking lessons, teaches them how to eat more nutritious food, and how to cook healthy at home.
- Facing huge obstacles in applying to and funding her own college application, an undocumented immigrant student creates a series of college awareness and financial aid workshops targeted specifically to immigrant youth. Creating a safe space for students to speak openly about their situations, she also shares the basics of college applications and the realities of financing a college education when one is undocumented.
- Feeling increasingly unsafe by incidents of street harassment, a young leader creates a series of street performances and workshops. Using street theatre, she organizes a group of young women to educate the community about the problem, why it makes women feel unsafe, and what women can do in response. Using workshops, she recruits both men and women to explore their ideas about gender roles, harassment, violence against women, and healthy relationships.
- Frustrated that women on campus lack knowledge about local reproductive health resources and that the college campus is not supportive to issues of reproductive justice, a student creates a Reproductive Health Advocates network. Recruiting from local colleges, she selects 10 peer advocates; and trains them in reproductive health, counseling skills, and local resources. As a group, they then create a blog to educate the campus community, distribute pregnancy tests to students who need them, provide counseling and support to students who need to access services, and compile information about campus health providers in order to advocate for better services.