



Sample Outline for Reference Letters

For Fellowship Applications

The following is an outline for a reference letter that provides a compelling case for an applicant's fellowship candidacy. This outline is designed to ensure the letter focuses on the applicant's suitability for the specific fellowship, emphasizing how their qualifications, achievements, and project align with the fellowship's goals and review criteria.

Introduction: Begin by introducing yourself, including your position, affiliation, and relationship to the applicant. Clearly state the purpose of the letter and express your strong support for the applicant's specific fellowship application. Emphasize your familiarity with both the applicant's project and the fellowship's goals, and briefly mention how long you have known the applicant and in what capacity (e.g., as a colleague, mentor, or collaborator). Highlight your ability to speak directly to the relevance of the applicant's project to the funder's review criteria, beyond just the applicant's overall qualifications.

Overview of the Applicant's Qualifications: Provide a concise overview of the applicant's academic background, research interests, and relevant professional experience that directly supports the proposed project. Highlight specific skills, qualities, or attributes that make the applicant an exceptional candidate for this fellowship (e.g., intellectual rigor, creativity, leadership, or collaboration skills). Connect the applicant's qualifications and experiences to the specific requirements and objectives of the fellowship, demonstrating how they are well-suited for this opportunity.

Specific Examples of Relevant Achievements: Describe specific accomplishments that showcase the applicant's expertise in areas relevant to the proposed project, such as impactful research, publications, grants, teaching effectiveness, or leadership roles. Use concrete examples to illustrate how the applicant has made significant contributions to their field and how their unique approach or methodologies directly relate to the fellowship's goals. Focus on how these achievements are pertinent to the fellowship, rather than providing a general overview of the applicant's career.

Alignment with the Fellowship Goals: Explain how the applicant's proposed project aligns with the fellowship's specific objectives and priorities. Highlight the potential impact of the applicant's work during the fellowship period, including how it addresses key questions or challenges that are central to the fellowship's mission. Discuss how the fellowship will benefit the applicant's research development and how their work, in turn, will benefit the academic community or society, aligning with the funder's review criteria.

Focus on Specialized Skills and Relevant Experience: Address any specialized skills the applicant possesses that are critical for the proposed project, such as language proficiency, technical expertise, or specific methodological approaches, and how these skills are relevant to the fellowship. Mention any interdisciplinary experience or relevant training that enhances the applicant's fit for the fellowship, especially if the project involves crossing traditional boundaries or disciplines.

Conclusion: Reiterate your strong support for the applicant and summarize the key reasons why they are an ideal candidate for this specific fellowship. Offer to provide further information or clarification if needed and express your confidence in the applicant's ability to make significant contributions through the fellowship. Close with a formal sign-off, including your willingness to discuss the applicant further if required.

Contact Information and Signature: Include your title, affiliation, and contact information. Provide a signature (digital or handwritten) to authenticate the letter.