



**change your future
change your city**

**2010 Application
Handbook**

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Introduction

In order to help applicants develop the most competitive possible application, City Hall Fellows has designed a new Applicant Handbook. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of its components, as they serve as an outline for filling out the actual application and help you draft more straightforward answers that will best showcase your skills, fit and potential to our evaluators.

Submission Policies

- The deadline for applications is **March 10, 2010 at 11:59pm PST. No late applications will be accepted.** Early submission is HIGHLY recommended. We are not responsible for any late submissions due to high website traffic.
- City Hall Fellows will ONLY accept applications submitted through our website. You may not mail, fax or email your application.
- Do not send supplemental materials via email or postal mail to be matched to your initial application. Any extraneous documentation sent to City Hall Fellows as part of an application will not be reviewed in the evaluation and cannot be returned.
- Applications CANNOT be saved in progress in our online application system. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to prepare your application offline and to enter our online application system only after you have a complete application ready to submit. The tools in this Handbook will help you do that.
- Applications CANNOT be revised once they have been submitted to City Hall Fellows.
- If you have questions about the application process or our program that are not answered in this Handbook, please consult the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section of our website. Questions not addressed there can be sent to apply@cityhallfellows.org.

Completing Your Application

This section walks you through the application process. Once you've started an application in our system, you CANNOT "save for later" online. **MOREOVER, ONCE YOUR APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED, YOU MAY NOT REVISE YOUR WORK.** Therefore, we strongly encourage you to prepare your application offline and enter our online application system only after you have a complete application ready to submit.

Getting Started

1. Review our website to familiarize yourself with our program.
2. Review the rest of this document and our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to familiarize yourself with our application process and policies. We also strongly encourage applicants to attend one of our informational webinars or visit with our staff and Fellows at a campus near you. Check our [Recruiting Schedule](#) for webinar and on-campus dates.
3. Download our one-page [Application Checklist](#). It lists every item required for our application, including the text of and word limits for the four application questions.

Preparing Your Application

1. Locate a recommender. You will need to submit one recommendation letter with your application. The recommendation letter may be from anyone, but it should be from someone who can write candidly about your skills, interests, commitment and experience – such as an employer, colleague, professor or mentor. A recommendation written by a high-level city official or famous academic that does not know you well is less impressive and will carry less weight than one written by a mentor or supervisor that you've worked closely with. The deadline for the recommendation letter is the SAME as the application deadline: **March 10, 2010 at 11:59pm PST.**
2. Write your responses to the four application questions. Pay attention to the word limits in your responses. NOTE: Our online application system strictly enforces the word limits.
3. Obtain an electronic copy of your transcript from every post-secondary institution at which you have studied. If you are scanning the transcript yourself, view the file to make sure it is legible. Unofficial copies are acceptable. However, if you are invited to interview, you will need to bring an official transcript with you to the interview.

4. Prepare a ONE-PAGE résumé that highlights skills and experiences relevant to this Fellowship. Applicants will be penalized for submitting a résumé longer than one page.

Submitting Your Application

1. Set aside at least 15-20 minutes to complete the submission.
2. Make sure that JavaScript is enabled and that any script-blocking add-ons to your browser are disabled. Otherwise, the application may not properly load and your application may not be processed.
3. Enter our [online application system](#).
4. Review and acknowledge the Affirmation certifying that all of the material in your application is accurate and your own original work. Misrepresentation on any portion of this application may be cause for expulsion from or denial of admission to the City Hall Fellows program and/or cause for expulsion from employment or denial of employment by any City Hall Fellows host city. If you acknowledge the Affirmation, you may continue with the application. Otherwise, you will be logged out of the system.
5. Complete the Applicant Information Section.
6. Complete the responses to the set of application questions. Remember: our online application system strictly enforces word limits.
7. Upload your résumé and transcript(s).
 - a. PDF files are preferred. There are several free programs that you can download, such as FoxIt and CutePDF, that allow you to “print” any document to an electronic PDF file.
 - b. Filenames MUST be in the following format or our system will not recognize them:

Resumé: LastName_FirstName_Resume.pdf

Transcript: LastName_FirstName_Transcript.pdf

If you have more than one transcript, use the following naming convention:
LastName_FirstName_Transcript1.pdf,
LastName_FirstName_Transcript2.pdf, etc...

8. Complete the information about your recommender. If your recommender is submitting their recommendation letter separately, check the box indicating that. Otherwise, upload the recommendation letter. The filename **MUST** be in the following format or our system will not recognize it:

LastName_FirstName_Recommendation.pdf

9. Pay the \$25 application fee. Our online application system uses PayPal to process application fees. PayPal accepts all major credit cards and bank transfers.

After You Submit

1. You will receive an email confirming the receipt of your application. If you do not receive this email, your application has NOT been submitted. To ensure you receive the email, Make sure to add apply@cityhallfellows.org and service@paypal.com to your approved senders list.
2. The application confirmation email contains a link to an anonymous demographic survey. Please fill it out promptly. While your responses to this survey are optional and will have no bearing on your application or the selection process, they will help us ensure that future applicant pools are diverse and inclusive and help us continue to improve our future outreach efforts.

IMPORTANT

You will find out whether you've been invited to continue to the next phase of the application process – the in-person interviews – no later than **Friday, April 2, 2010**. All applicants will find out their status **at the exact same time**. If you are invited to interview, you will need to bring an official transcript with you to the interview. You will not need to prepare other written materials for the interview.

Application Questions and Help Text

These are the essay questions on our application. In addition, each question includes supporting information that will help you focus your answer. We highly recommend that you consult this Help Text before completing the application.

We also recommend that you complete your answers offline and then copy and past your answer into the online file. This way, even if you run into technical difficulties, your work will not be lost.

1. What do you hope to get out of being a City Hall Fellow, and how do you expect to put the experience to use later in your career? (Word limit: 300 words)

HELP TEXT: Why do you want to be a Fellow? What impact will being a Fellow have on your personal and professional development? What impact will spending a year immersed in local government have on you and your career?

2. Tell us why you feel connected to the city you want to work for. Why do you want to work there? (Word limit: 250 words)

HELP TEXT: Each of the three cities City Hall Fellows partners with is dynamic, with its own cultural heritage and promise, but also unique challenges. We know that already. That's why we have a program there. So, please do not provide us a travelogue or generic brochure-language about the wonderful things that your city offers. We are not asking why this city itself is important, special, interesting or a great place to live, work or visit. What we want to know from you is why you PERSONALLY feel connected to this particular city – the role this city has played in your life so far and the role you envision it playing in your future.

3. Imagine you are the Mayor of that city. Tell us one policy or initiative that would be a priority for you and how you would go about implementing it. (Word limit: 600 words)

HELP TEXT: We are not asking you to provide us an academic research paper. Rather, we want you to demonstrate your critical thinking skills, creativity and understanding of the complexity of local policy decisions. Identify the issue clearly, briefly explain why the issue you chose is important, and then spend the bulk of your answer describing your implementation plan. When thinking about your implementation plan, you should consider: your intended outcome, how you will work with other people who might have a position on the issue to achieve the outcome; the financial cost of implementing your new initiative and who will pay for it; what has prevented your idea from being implemented (or proposed) before and how you are going to get past that obstacle; and how you will overcome critics' objections. It's okay if you're writing about something outside of your field of study, or even something that your city is not actively

working on right now. Just write about an issue you care about. Feel free to use bullet points in your response.

4. *Optional*: What would you like us to know that you haven't already shared in another part of this application? (Word limit: 500 words)

HELP TEXT: What haven't we asked you on this application that you think we should know about? Believe that your answers to the above questions don't give us enough insight into you and why you'd be a good fit for this Fellowship? Want to either call our attention to or offer an explanation for something on your transcript or résumé? Think that providing information about a specific experience you've had would demonstrate why you are the best candidate for this Fellowship? This question gives you the chance to tell us anything you think we ought to know that will help us make that decision. However, do not use this question to get around the word count limit on the other essays or the one-page limit for your résumé.

Application Tips

- Review City Hall Fellows' online resources. Many otherwise strong applicants have disqualified themselves by failing to read our support materials prior to applying. Thus, please be sure to carefully review both this document and our [Frequently Asked Questions](#), as well as skim our [current Fellows'](#) and [past Fellows'](#) profiles. This information will prove immensely helpful in ensuring that your application receives maximum consideration.
- Don't wait until the last second to start an application. The best applications are the products of much critical thought and consideration. Furthermore, if you experience any technical issues while completing your application online, this will give you time to resolve them without the pressure of the deadline.
- Be specific in your application. Don't just tell us that you're a good fit for the Fellowship - show us. Your answers have word limits, so don't waste your time with vague generalities. Instead, provide concrete examples and a clear connection between your experiences so far, this Fellowship and your goals.
- Have at least one person proof-read your application!

Common Mistakes

The application process for City Hall Fellows is extremely competitive. In 2008, we received 400 applications for 21 spots. In 2009, we received 500 for 16 spots. We employ a rigorous evaluation process and carefully review every application we receive. Applicants are evaluated against fit with our mission and programs as well as against their peers. The following are some of the most common reasons applications end up being designated as "non-competitive."

- *Applicant Fails To Follow Basic Application Instructions:* The application rules and procedures are created and applied equally to all applicants to ensure every applicant receives fair consideration and to enable our staff to process a large number of applications. Thus, please follow them precisely. Applicants may be penalized for failing to do so, such as by submitting a multi-page resumé or not using filenames in the requested format.
- *Applicant Communicates Primarily In Generalities:* Be specific. Your answers have word limits, so don't waste your time with vague generalities. Instead, provide concrete details about you that showcase a clear connection between your experiences, this Fellowship and your goals. Don't just tell us that you're a good fit for this program - show us.

- *Applicant Relies On Inspirational Quotes Or Clichés Instead Of Examples About themselves.* We share Margaret Mead's conviction that "a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." But we don't need you to repeat that conviction to us. Your answers have word limits, so don't waste your time quoting other people. Quotes and clichés do not enhance the application. Instead, they have a tendency to confuse readers, who want to know more about YOU. As a result, applications are less competitive when quotes or clichés are used in lieu of your own words. Instead, provide concrete details about you that show a clear connection between your experiences, this Fellowship and your goals.
- *Applicant Does Not Seem Passionate About This Opportunity Or Their Chosen City.* If we cannot sense an applicant's passion through his answers, we question whether they are likely to succeed in this Fellowship when faced with the inevitable challenges of working within a local government environment and working closely with their cohort of peers. Applicants who clearly display enthusiasm have a competitive edge over those who do not seem eager or passionate about this opportunity.
- *Applicant's Résumé Fails to Highlight Relevant Skills & Experience.* We don't ask for your résumé to complete a generic application check list. We carefully read your résumé to get a better sense of who you are and how well you are prepared to take on the responsibility of being a Fellow and working inside city government. Applicants should understand that you are, in a sense, applying for both a job in your City and a position as a member of an elite leadership development program. Weaker applicants include generic résumés that often list job titles, tasks, and, occasionally, career objectives, that aren't relevant to the role they wish to take on. Oftentimes the issue isn't that the applicants aren't qualified. Rather, it is that they haven't taken the time to determine how their past work and volunteer experiences have prepared them for this Fellowship and then how to demonstrate that on their résumé. The résumé is limited to ONE PAGE, so don't waste space on career objectives, lists of coursework (we will be looking carefully at your transcript, too) or irrelevant experiences.