



Application Tips

Page 7: Focus Questions



This page of the online application consists of *focus questions*, your responses to which help provide Ignited Hosts with a better sense of who you are as an individual and why they should consider hosting you in an Ignited Summer Fellowship.

Potential Mentors view multiple resumes for each position and this page of the application, along with your Current Employment and Employment History, provides you with the opportunity to distinguish yourself as an applicant. Well-written responses can have a powerful effect on a mentor's impression of you...as can a poorly written one. Don't underestimate the power of a clear and thoughtful response!

Below are some things to consider when providing answers to each of these questions along with some general "best practices" to keep in mind.

General Best Practices:

Carefully review your responses to ensure that they are an accurate representation of you and your writing abilities.

- **Spelling and grammar check:** If your internet browser does not have a spell check feature, consider first typing your responses in a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, to use the spelling and grammar check features. Then copy and paste your responses into the online application. Use the "Paste from Word" or "Paste as Plain Text" options from the formatting tool bar above the textbox within the application (3rd and 4th from the right respectively) to prevent the introduction of formatting inconsistencies. Focus question boxes also have a built-in spell check that you may want to use (the ABC icon on the far right).
- **Complete sentences:** As a general rule of thumb, respond to each of the focus questions using complete sentences and proper punctuation. This demonstrates your writing and communication skills to Hosts.
- **Acronyms and education specific terminology:** Be careful about using acronyms and terminology such as IEP, Title I, FOSS, TOP, WASC etc. with which a person outside the education field might not be familiar. Spell out all acronyms followed by the acronym in parentheses the first time they are used in your application and briefly explain any education specific terminology or programs.
- **View your Ignited Resume:** Review how your application is formatted into your Ignited resume (how it will be viewed by Ignited Hosts), by selecting "Save Draft" at the bottom of the page on which you're working; then select the "Resume" tab on the top right.
- **You can edit your application at any time:** You can make changes to this (or any) page of the application at any time by logging into <http://www.ignitededucation.org/> unless your application is under review by Ignited staff. Once you have made the desired updates, be sure to hit the "Save Draft" button at the bottom of the page to **save** your changes.

Focus/Personal Statement Questions Suggestions:

1. What academic, personal, and professional strengths do you believe you will bring to a Fellowship?

Do not undersell yourself. Highlight skills you've gained through teaching, volunteer experience, other careers, special projects, reform initiatives, partnerships, or clubs that you feel would best transfer to an industry/science research project. Provide examples of how you have used these strengths in the past. All of your strengths and abilities in the classroom apply to an industry position. Describe yourself using action-oriented words (i.e. Create, Lead, Manage, Encourage, Intensify, Author, Bridge, Analyze, etc).

- Your response to this question gives you the opportunity to summarize and highlight your strengths and share what you can bring to the table, so that potential mentors can learn about your unique experiences.
- Visit Sample Projects (<http://www.ignitededucation.org/the-experience/projects/>) to get a sense of the types of projects that have been offered in the past. Be sure to highlight your skills/experience that would be relevant to these AND other types of projects.
- As a teacher you have MANY strengths that transfer to a Fellowship environment! Listed below are just a few to help you start brainstorming:
 - Multi-tasking
 - Planning
 - Organizing
 - Communication/Writing
 - Technology
 - Ability to learn quickly
 - Working with a diverse group of people
 - Flexibility/Ability to adapt your plans on the go
 - Fluent in another language
- You may want to ask other teachers what your strengths are as they may be able to recognize them sooner than you do.
- How have administrators recognized your abilities in evaluations?
- Maybe ask your students why they enjoy your class or your teaching style.
- What kinds of projects are you hoping to work on? What skills do you have for those projects? Be sure to highlight these!
- What do you most want Hosts to remember about you?
- All of your strengths and abilities in the classroom will apply to a Fellowship position. Describe yourself using action-oriented words (i.e. Create, Lead, Manage, Encourage, Intensify, Author, Bridge, Analyze, etc).

SAMPLE RESPONSE

NOTE: Sample responses are from a successful applicant who graciously agreed to share them with new applicants. Specific names have been removed. **These are for informational purposes only and should NOT be quoted in the application.**

I have extensive classroom and research experiences that would enable me to successfully complete an industry or research Fellowship. My academic background is quite varied and distinctive. I have taken courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels in the physical, life, and social sciences as well as mathematics. I worked for a number of years in a university-based research facility as a laboratory biologist. In this position, I conducted public and privately sponsored biomedical technology studies in the scientific areas of toxicology and carcinogenesis using a variety of laboratory animals. The strengths gained from this position help me teach students the real world skills that are necessary for being a scientist. I have used my past academic training and personal interests to create and adapt an entirely new curriculum for a high school, senior-level capstone science course in forensic science. As a high school biology teacher who was unsatisfied with the traditional science fair model for students, I modified and modernized the science fair experimentation guidelines for high school students into an alternative science fair semester project focusing entirely on informal education in Chicago. As part of my professional development plan, I created two original, comprehensive high school science modules that were implemented in both formal and informal education settings for the Museum of Natural History. I am a dependable, hard-working self-starter with great attention to detail.

2. How does a Fellowship fit into your professional development plan? *Note that this question has been modified slightly from previous years.*

- What are you hoping to gain professionally?
- What skills and talents would you hope to use, learn or enhance?
- What are you hoping to bring back to your students?
- What kinds of Fellowships would you like to participate in?
- How will this type of learning enrich your teaching ability?
- How will the Fellowship support what you are already working on at your school?

SAMPLE RESPONSE

NOTE: Sample responses are from a successful applicant who graciously agreed to share them with new applicants. Specific names have been removed. **These are for informational purposes only and should NOT be quoted in the application.**

I would very much like an Ignited Fellowship because I have participated in a similar program in the past and found it personally rewarding and professionally fulfilling. Early on in my teaching career, I had the opportunity to participate in a project funded by the National Science Foundation. I was one of six teachers selected to be part of the Research Experience for Teachers (RET) program which promotes the active involvement of K-12 school teachers in engineering research in order to bring knowledge of engineering and technological innovation into their classrooms. For this program, I worked closely with a chemical engineering professor to help adapt and make his research regarding Type I Diabetes and Internet-based glucose monitoring program suitable for high school study. My original curriculum entitled, "Got Insulin? Understanding and Managing Type I Diabetes," was implemented in and well-received by my ninth grade honors biology classes the following fall. Now that I have taught for nearly five years, I would like to duplicate and even expand upon the experiences and knowledge gained during the RET. The overall goal of my professional development plan is to continue growing as an educator by adding real world experiences in the areas of science and technology so that I may better prepare my students for life after high school. With my past experiences and future professional goals, the Ignited Fellowship program fits perfectly into the natural progression of my professional development plan.

3. (Optional) Is there any additional information you would like to share about yourself, your background, or experience that you would like Mentors to consider when reviewing your Ignited resume?

Hosts may be interested in learning more about you and your background. This optional question allows you to provide information such as:

- Any courses you are taking or have taken to strengthen your professional skills/knowledge
- Degrees that are in progress
- Skills you've used or experience you may have gained outside of employment (i.e. through volunteerism, hobbies, etc).

In general, if there is any information about your background, skills or interests that didn't fit elsewhere in the application, you should include it here! Remember, your application is your chance to make a stellar first impression, which could lead to an interview invitation!