

# risd/careers/ Fulbright U.S. Student Program

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## Getting Started with RISD

**Please note:** Application Components have changed for the 2025 application cycle, particularly the Purpose Statement, Personal Statement (discontinued), and Essays.

- Future applicants: There still is a lot of helpful information in here in your consideration of developing a proposal! This will be updated for the 2026 cycle.
- Current applicants: Please refer to guidance you are receiving from the RISD Fulbright Program Advisor.

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## THE FULBRIGHT WEBSITE – IMPORTANT PAGES

You will need to review the Fulbright website in detail and refer to it often. Be sure you are on the Fulbright U.S. Student Program website (not the Fulbright Scholars website or a host country Fulbright website).

**Start here:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org>

These are some of the most important pages to get you started:

- **Specific Country Information & Requirements:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries>
- **Application Components:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/application-components>
- **Portfolio:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/required-supplementary-materials-for-arts-applicants>
- **Competition & Selection:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/competition-selection>
- **Statistics by Country:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/statistics>
- **Applicant Information Sessions:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/information-sessions>
- **Tutorials and Recorded Webinars:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/videos-tutorials>
- **Fulbright Program Officers:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/contact-us>

## WHO CAN APPLY FOR A U.S. STUDENT FULBRIGHT GRANT THROUGH RISD?

Enrolled Seniors, Fifth Years, and Graduate Students, and recent alumni up to three years after graduation may apply through RISD. Students may begin the application process in their Junior year but cannot submit an application until the fall of their Senior year. Applicants must have a bachelor degree before the start of the grant and must be a U.S. citizen.

- **ENROLLED:** Enrolled students should apply through their institution and must meet all required RISD deadlines.
- **AFFILIATED:** Recent alumni (up to three years after graduation) are eligible to apply through RISD if they meet all required internal deadlines; however, our services may be impacted by capacity.
- **AT-LARGE:** Alumni who do not meet RISD's required deadlines and/or who wish to not affiliate with RISD, may apply "at-large." Depending on time and resources available, a RISD Careers Advisor may review one draft of your application statements and provide feedback. Fulbright welcomes at-large applicants. In fact, some schools do not have a Fulbright Program Advisor and most do not offer the extensive Fulbright services we do. Most schools only serve graduating students or perhaps alumni one year out.

### Do enrolled undergraduates or enrolled graduates or alumni applicants have an advantage?

The Fulbright Study/Research grant does not have categories by degree level. Fulbright looks for a diverse group of awardees in terms of program of study, type of project, and degree level. While most countries prefer a representation from all degree levels, some do have restrictions, which are indicated in their country page. Graduating seniors are not measured against more advanced students and need not demonstrate a project as thoroughly developed as graduate students.

All applicants, but especially, bachelor's level applicants, should be careful to not present yourself as the expert, which you are most likely not. You are there to study and learn from the country and community. Reasonable and humble goals will be better received over grandiose, pie in the sky ambition. Bachelor's level applicants should have detailed letters of affiliation, strong support, and clear structure. For all applicants, the expectation of faculty engagement must be reasonable. Faculty support is often not the same as at your home institution.

Candidates who have up to seven years of professional study and/or experience in the field in which they are applying will be considered. Those with more than seven years of experience should apply to the Fulbright Scholar Program <https://cies.org/>

## WHAT IS THE TIMELINE?

Developing a compelling Fulbright application takes time, energy, and commitment. You aren't working on a Fulbright application every day or even every week; but it is a long process as you build your research, project design, and portfolio, and, you wait for feedback, news from potential affiliations, and news from Fulbright. **Once you start the application process the grant is a good year or so away!**

Check for exact dates and follow the **RISD Fulbright Checklist & Deadlines**, which is updated every April for the new application cycle and found here: <https://careercenter.risd.edu/fulbright>

To briefly outline the timeline...

- You will start working on your Fulbright ideas and research in the winter or spring – maybe even earlier.
- Things will intensify during the summer as you pull all the pieces together into an application package.
- You will submit early fall.
- Then the FOLLOWING winter, you will find out if you are Semi-Finalist and if your application is moving to the host country for review.
- A few months later, in the spring, you will be notified of Fulbright's decision.
- Grants begin late summer or fall – a year after you submitted. Or even the winter of the NEXT year for some countries.

## MEETING RISD DEADLINES

Because RISD is responsible for arranging for your Fulbright interview and evaluation, **applicants applying through RISD must meet RISD's internal deadlines**. Developing a Fulbright proposal is not something you can do at the last minute. It often takes applicants 1-2 years to develop a strong proposal. In addition, obtaining support from faculty and developing affiliate relationships during the summer can be very challenging. Consider that many countries have a culture of long holidays in the summer and holiday means a real break. You may find that affiliate contacts are not available particularly mid-July to early September. Be sure to review the RISD Checklist & Deadlines carefully. **Print it and put it on your fridge!** <https://careercenter.risd.edu/fulbright>

You will notice that RISD required deadlines will include the word "by." **We STRONGLY encourage you to send documents before the deadlines**. This will provide you with earlier reviews meaning more time to re-draft, incorporate feedback, fine-tune, and move on your next draft or the next application component. Keep in mind that when a large number of applicants send materials right on the deadline, it can take 3 weeks for you to receive a review and response. In order to support RISD applicants effectively, efficiently, and fairly we need to stick to internal deadlines. If you cannot meet RISD's internal deadlines and you are welcome to apply at-large.

### Important notes:

- RISD Careers helps facilitate an intense application process. But this is your application. Not only your ideas, your work, and your words, but also your process. Our deadlines and support is in place to keep all our applicants on track; it is up to you to develop an application approach that works for you. For most

this includes setting additional internal deadlines and sticking to them. Keep in mind that part of a Fulbright experience is working through the application and making it your own.

- RISD Careers focuses our draft review help May to mid-August BEFORE your interview. After your interview, we will be available for advising only. The FPA will continue providing guidance via email and advising appointments. We are happy to look at application sections with you but we won't be providing in-depth reviews like we do in the summer. This is because we want to be fair to all applicants and because this is your application, your project, your ideas, your process.

## WORKING WITH RISD'S FULBRIGHT PROGRAM ADVISOR

RISD believes the Fulbright mission aligns well with RISD student and alumni interests, values, and talents. RISD is committed to supporting this intensive grant with extensive services, not offered by many schools. If you apply through RISD, the RISD Fulbright Program Advisor (FPA) will support you through all steps of the Fulbright application process – from developing your project idea to advice on proposal structure. I'm RISD's FPA – My name is Lisa Cramer and I work in the RISD Career Center. I am here to assist you in creating an effective, competitive proposal. Advising can be done in person, via Zoom, and/or email. Appointments can be made at: <https://careercenter.risd.edu/meet-us>

The application process is demanding. It requires the coordination of many components, time for reflection, and careful refinement. It will require numerous drafts of your statements. Applicants revise their statements anywhere from 7-15 times. **To make this process as smooth as possible and to support all applicants effectively, efficiently, and fairly, here are a few things that will help us work together:**

- You are at the beginning stage and excited about this opportunity but don't know where to start? Review the RISD Career Center Fulbright site, the RISD Fulbright site, the U.S. Fulbright Student Program site, and attend a RISD Fulbright Information Session. Then make an appointment with a RISD Career Center Advisor. We are happy to help you narrow your ideas and consider your country choices.
- You have started the process but feel stuck, have run into an obstacle, have questions that are building, or you want to talk about an idea? Make an appointment with me.
- You have a specific question or have an update for me? Send me an email.
- You want me to review something BEFORE a scheduled meeting? Send it to me at least 3-4 work days in advance and I will try to schedule time to review before we meet.
- You have made progress on a draft and would like a review? Send me your document ideally as a word.doc; other text formats are fine but please do not send as a PDF as I will have to convert to Word and then often must clean up formatting that didn't transfer. Only send complete documents ready for review; avoid sending parts or individual paragraphs.

### **Here are a few things to know about how we will review your statements:**

- The schedule on the RISD Checklist & Deadlines incorporates reviews by the FPA or a RISD Career Advisor. To make this possible, we also have to carefully follow the RISD Checklist & Deadlines. As time permits, we will review additional drafts but we will make sure all timely applicants receive a review as scheduled first.
- We will set specific time aside to review your drafts and will do our best to get back to every applicant within two weeks. However, RISD students can be a bit on the last minute side. If we receive everyone's drafts on the date due, we will not be able to review and respond to everyone within two weeks. In these cases, we will prioritize based on date and time received. Whenever possible, we will let you know when we plan to review your statement. Consider that if you send your drafts early, they will be reviewed earlier giving you more time to revise.

- We are not the expert in your discipline or in the 140+ countries. It is up to you to research and understand the context, know the facts, and navigate the country/culture nuances. You tell us! We are not your professor, we are your teammate. We ask questions to get you thinking and considering various audiences.
- When reviewing your statements, we add comments and suggestions into the body of your statements highlighted in blue and then return them to you for your consideration. You are responsible for reviewing and understanding the suggestions, and deciding which changes to make. YOUR voice and passion for the project must be evident.
- Because we are reviewing statements from many applicants at various stages, I don't have time to carefully edit our reviews. Our human brains work faster than our hands sometimes ; ) If something is unclear, please ask for clarification. If something is troubling you, please let us know. It could be a misunderstanding.
- We do not professionally proofread your draft statements. We will fix typos and grammar errors we catch, and offer style suggestions for clearer sentence structure and order where we can; but we are advisors not editors. You most definitely do not have to accept all our suggestions. Our primary review purpose is to make sure you are addressing all Fulbright Key Content (see below) for a solid proposal.

Remember I am only one voice, only one opinion. **Be sure to seek support and advice from others.** At the same time, consider the feedback you receive carefully. Everyone who looks at your proposal will see different things, and have different perspectives and advice. Consider suggestions thoughtfully, but this is your application, this is your project, these are your ideas. Be true to yourself, your style, and your project.

- Consult with **professors** in your department and/or in other disciplines related to your project (Liberal Arts professors, for example) to develop your idea. Their knowledge of your studio discipline and topics will help expand and deepen your research and project development.
- Access **Fleet Library's collections** at RISD (both online and print) to develop your research topic. Email or meet with a Research Librarian (researchhelp@risd.edu) to expand on your findings, identify critical sources, and/or build research skills.
- Meet with the RISD **Center for Arts & Language** staff at various stages of your proposal writing process - early brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising. Writing is as much a tool for figuring things out in process as it is a final product of persuasion. While the RISD Center for Arts & Language is closed for peer tutoring in the summer, staff members are available to meet with Fulbright applicants to help you brainstorm, outline, draft, and revise.
- Meet with **RISD Global** to determine any RISD connections in your country choice and to help you develop your affiliate.
- Enlist other reviewers such as a mentor, a peer, family members, or a Fulbright recipient who you trust to offer honest, constructive feedback but will not steer you away from your purpose or the Fulbright mission.

***This is YOUR grant. YOU are responsible for your proposal, the process, and the words.***

Do consider that heavily edited, overly polished proposals may raise red flags with Fulbright reviewers.

## FULBRIGHT PROGRAM OPTIONS

### STUDY/RESEARCH

- **Arts or Academics:** Applicants may apply under the Academic, or the Creative and Performing Arts track. Which track depends on the nature of your project and how you frame it.

- **Arts:** Fulbright welcomes artists from all disciplines. They believe artists embrace cultural engagement, are fantastic ambassadors, and often have the biggest impact in the grant year. Most RISD applicants apply under the Arts. Not only is this the obvious fit for RISD students and alumni, but this route allows you to submit a portfolio. Your work can make a strong case and help support your project ideas. Your project should have a clear, specific focus on your growth as an artist/designer. How will you “improve your craft”? You should be participating as an artist/designing and taking your work to a new level rather than only being inspired or influenced by the host country. Arts applicants can propose research too but that research should be through the lens of the arts - practicing, learning, observing, applying, making, and interacting. Arts applicants can propose:
  - An independent project which will advance their artistic abilities.
  - Enrollment in a degree-granting program in a practicing or performing arts field. Note: if the graduate program requires a portfolio for admission, then you should definitely apply under the arts.
  - Taking courses to improve their craft as a non-degree seeking student while conducting an independent project.
- **Academic:** If your project leans on the “study of” side and it is not about making or furthering your craft, you could consider applying under the Academic route. However, do keep in mind that you need the proper academic credentials and you will be competing with applicants with degrees in academic fields who have conducted serious academic research. Once you move to the academic world your work will be required to meet academic research standards. Also, if you apply under Academics, you cannot submit a portfolio.
- **Study / Research Open Independent, Graduate Enrollment, or Open Hybrid:** Each country has outlined requirement and/or preferences for the type of Study/Research grants projects they are interested in. There are basically three broad types with lots of gray area in between.
  - Open study/research Independent is the traditional Fulbright award in which you design a project from beginning to end that allows you to work with people of the host country to mutually advance in your field of interest.
  - Graduate enrollment is an option in a number of countries. In this case the program, activities, and outcomes are set – its graduate study. However, you still make a case for... why Fulbright? What is the meaningful cross-cultural exchange? Why this country? How is this something you can’t do in the U.S.? You have to make a strong case for this isn’t just being about funding for graduate study and that your exploration goes beyond the institution of graduate study. And, for most countries, you also have to apply and be accepted to the university program – usually through the school’s separate process. You also may or may not have to pay tuition.
  - Open study/research Hybrid are what most RISD Fulbrighters do. Most have some connection to a university, academy, or institution in which there is some structured class or workshop learning. Perhaps as a visiting scholar or more loosely associated. Plus, there is some sort of independent mission / burning learning question exploration. Usually, to do this effectively, RISD applicants have secondary affiliates which get them out in the community exploring, practicing, and applying their skills and learning.

## ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

The English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary/secondary schools, or universities overseas who will work to improve foreign students’ English language abilities and knowledge of the U.S. while also having the opportunity to increase your language skills and knowledge of the host country. Some countries have structured teaching programs but many countries allow plenty of time for country engagement, extracurricular activities, and even project research



alongside the teaching commitment. Usually applicants do not have a choice in the school placement within the country so any research project or activities of interest proposed must be flexible geographically. Review the country summary page carefully. Strong English skills are required and other language requirements as per country apply. Showing your interest in the host country language is important. While learning a new language should not be your primary purpose or distract from your work, incorporating ways to learn or practice the language to enhance your experience may be a good idea.

The ETA Program is a great route to a cross-cultural/international experience and springboard to the next step in your path. The ETA program may also be a good option for BFA/BA applicants in countries where higher level degree students are preferred for the Study/Research grant. However, your experience, preparedness, and interest in teaching English to non-native speakers must be strong and clear. **Teaching should be the focus of your purpose statement, and you must clearly describe what you will be able to bring to the classroom in the host country and explain any ideas you have on how to reach students coming from a different pedagogical tradition.** It is also important to articulate how a year of teaching English to non-native speakers will impact your career and educational trajectory.

## WOULD YOU MAKE A STRONG FULBRIGHT CANDIDATE?

### First, are you eligible?

- Applicants must be U.S. citizens at the time of application.
- Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree or the equivalent by the beginning date of the grant. Preference is given to applicants who have received most of their undergraduate education in the United States.
- Applicants must have sufficient language proficiency of the host country to carry out the proposed project. It is recommended that applicants have at least a hospitality level knowledge of the language before commencing the grant.
- Having a solid academic and/or professional record is a factor, however, there is no minimum GPA (a B average is good rule of thumb).
- Candidates who have not resided or studied in the country to which they are applying for more than six months, not counting undergraduate study abroad, are preferred. Applicants who have had extensive previous foreign experience in the host country and/or have had the opportunity for considerable time abroad are at a competitive disadvantage, but still eligible.
- Candidates proposing a project in a country of their heritage are more than welcome. You should make it clear though that you haven't spent extensive time in the country (or perhaps that it was a long time ago) and that this isn't an opportunity to visit family. Keep in mind that Fulbright is interested in supporting NEW cultural experiences. If you have a strong connection and family ties to a country, maybe consider another country for a Fulbright experience.
- Confirm that you meet any special country requirements by carefully reviewing the host country page at: <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries>

### Then ask yourself...

- Are you prepared to spend your time and energy on a Fulbright application? Selected candidates are generally those who begin the application process early and are disciplined. As with any grant, and especially the Fulbright, successful proposals are well-researched and well-thought-out.
- Why do you want to research or study internationally? You need to explain the importance and relevance of your project in relation to the host country. Why do you need to conduct your study/research there? Why this country? Why this affiliation? Why you?

- What do you have to offer? You will learn and gain a lot, no doubt but what do you have to offer? What can you bring to the table? What is the exchange element?
- Are you interested in the host country beyond your project and how will you immerse yourself in the culture? Remember that this is a cultural exchange program and you will be a cultural ambassador. It is important that your enthusiasm for the country and interest in engaging with the people is authentic.
- Are you ready for this experience and can you prove it? Fulbright is looking for mature students with the ability to carry out independent projects. You should be prepared artistically, academically, and linguistically. Fulbright is looking for flexible, adaptable, open-minded students who are looking to learn from and make contributions to the host country. And remember, show – through examples and experiences – don't tell.

## WHAT MAKES A COMPETITIVE PROPOSAL?

Developing a competitive proposal is not a science and there isn't a formula. It is a very human, unique process. There is no one way, no one answer. All pieces of the application are important. Fulbright reviewers spend hours carefully reviewing every component of your application. In general, the selection is a balance between an applicant's talent, project creativity/ uniqueness, feasibility, and an investment in cultural exchange.

### What will make your proposal stand out?

- **Cultural Exchange:** Fulbright is at its core a cultural exchange program. Your project is a means for you to engage in a meaningful way. Fulbright is interested in knowing how – outside of the academic world or outside of your field – you will engage in the community. They want to know that you are interested in the host country people and culture. They appreciate well-rounded candidates with diverse skills and interests who will engage in a variety of ways.
- **Impact:** Develop a project that is not only about you and your work. There needs to be an exchange element. The impact doesn't have to be grandiose; you don't have to save the world. But what can you give back? How might you make a difference? What might the impact be on the community and/or your affiliate? How will you share and participate but not impose? Many RISD applicants are interested in social justice and having a positive impact on community, but don't try to be the hero and don't make big country generalizations.
- **Connections:** Show clear connections between your project, portfolio, background, and host country interest. It is okay if your path has not been a straight line or even if you are crossing disciplines. But don't make reviewers read between the lines. Make the connections for them. Why does this make sense for you? For your project topic? In this country? With this affiliate? Why is this proposed project the perfect fit for you now? Everything in the application should support your Statement of Grant Purpose. Avoid repeating across components but rather offer a cohesive narrative.
- **Relevance:** So what? Why is this compelling? Why is this important? To you? The host country? Your affiliate? The community? Society at large? Competitive projects are contemporary, timely, and reflect what is going on in the world. In addition, you want to maximize your limited space and not be repetitive across components. Everything should be included for a reason. Every word counts. Ask yourself why am I telling them this? What is the connection to my proposal?
- **Feasibility:** Propose a project that is focused and clear, activities that are reasonable, and goals that are attainable. Focus on a single topic. You have only one or two pages to make it clear that you have the skills, time, and resources to undertake this project. Demonstrate your language skills and/or that you understand the importance of language in strengthening relationships and enhancing your experience. Address how any space, facilities, equipment, and material needs will be met.



- **Innovative:** Consider not only new, unique, or under developed/exposed areas of research in your field but also consider projects outside of conventional cities and countries. Fulbright strives for diversity across applicants, projects, and locations. Check out the Fulbright applicant/award statistics and consider Fulbright's undersubscribed host country programs. <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/statistics>
- **Sensitivity, genuineness, and humility:** Highlight your interpersonal and intercultural communication skills. Fulbright is not a research funder. They are not specifically funding your study or research project objectives or outcomes. They are funding the exchange and diplomacy. This is primarily about your being a citizen ambassador. Your genuine interest in the country should be apparent and honest curiosity about the country will benefit you. If you are approaching a controversial issue in the host country, you need to show, not only that you have done your research and have the background and experience to take this on, but that you will do so with sensitivity and without judgment.
- **Potential:** Show that you have something to learn. This is a learning opportunity. They are not looking for you to be already accomplished; they want to see room for growth and the potential to make new discoveries. Where will the Fulbright take you?
- **Passion:** Explain your motivations. Tell them how you got to this point of applying for a Fulbright. Show them how excited and motivated you are to make this happen and why.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

The idea and the passion for a study/research topic has to come from you. Consider...

- What are you aching to learn more about?
- What questions are on your mind?
- What do you want to explore?
- What could you offer?

Then begin research on possible project ideas, on countries, and on expert individuals and organizations in your field of interest. Brainstorm your ideas with a professor, a mentor, a grant recipient peer, a RISD Career Advisor, the RISD Center for Arts & Language, and/or with me. Head to the RISD Fleet Library (in-person or online) to access the collections to develop your research topic or talk a Research Librarian.

Use the Statement of Grant Purpose Fulbright Key Content (see below) to help you narrow and focus your ideas and your writing.

Something will hit you. Either the country you are interested in will lead you to your project idea, which will lead you to your affiliate. Or your project idea will lead you to an expert, which will lead you to your affiliate and then your country choice. Or an expert you are interested in will lead you to your project idea and then to the country.

Look to the following for inspiration:

- **The RISD Fulbright Site:** <http://www.risdfulbright.com/>
- **The RISD Recipients & Summaries:** <https://careercenter.risd.edu/fulbright>
- **Fulbright Videos & Tutorials including link to the Fulbright YouTube Channels:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/videos-tutorials>
- **The Fulbright Community:** <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/alumni/state-alumni>
- **The Fulbright Blog:** <https://blog.fulbrightonline.org/>

**And.....START EARLY!!!!** It takes many of our applicants 1-2 years to develop a strong proposal.

## HOST COUNTRY AFFILIATION (Study/Research Applicants Only)

### Affiliate Search – Open Study Research Independent or Hybrid

In most cases, the applicant is responsible for identifying and arranging their own host country affiliations and for providing documentation of the affiliation in the application. Types of affiliations vary, but may include universities, research organizations, think tanks, libraries, laboratories, non-profits, NGOs, museums, and galleries. Generally for-profit business affiliations are not acceptable. Individual artist/designer affiliations may be acceptable as a second or third affiliate. Also, considering the host country engagement and cross-cultural nature of Fulbright, affiliation with an American University or American International University or a University not of the host country AND/OR having an American affiliate contact would be hard to justify.

Affiliation requirements are country-specific; check the host country's affiliation requirement for details. Unless it says that the country will arrange the affiliation and they do not want you to submit a letter, we strongly recommend that you include proof of an affiliation, even if it says it is not required or it is only encouraged. Having proof of affiliation is crucial and will make your application competitive. Some applicants make arrangements to have more than one affiliation (if acceptable to host country) to enhance their experience and/or to secure appropriate support for their project (the application allows three letters).

### Search Ideas:

- **RISD faculty members and staff** are excellent resources to help you find experts or appropriate institutions that are doing work in your field internationally, and perhaps they will be willing to introduce you.
- **RISD Global**, the hub for global discourse at RISD, may be able to help you determine RISD connections in your country choice and possible affiliate options. <https://global.risd.edu/>
- Some countries have very active **Fulbright Commissions**. You may be able to reach out to a Fulbright Commissioner directly via email and ask for assistance with your affiliate development and/or specific questions. A Commissioner will not provide feedback on your project ideas or proposal but they may answer questions about appropriate affiliations and lead you in the right direction. Their expectation is that the affiliation and project development is the applicant's responsibility. Review the Fulbright country page for your country and see if there is a link to their Fulbright site. <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries>
- **RISD Fulbrighters** are often happy to share their insights. Reach out to RISD Fulbrighter from your discipline or host country of interest. You will find a list of recipients on this page: <https://careercenter.risd.edu/fulbright> Google them! And, you can read more about some of our RISD Fulbrighters' experiences at: <http://www.risdfulbright.com/>
- Other Fulbright Students, even if they are not in your discipline, may be of help. Check **the Fulbright U.S. Student Grantee Directory**. Maybe they can provide some insights even if they are not in your discipline. <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/alumni/grantee-directory>
- The **Fulbright Scholar Program Directory** may be a source to find connections. Different from the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, the Scholar program is an exchange program for faculty and advanced professionals. By searching this Directory you may find Scholar grantees who might help with host country affiliate information and maybe even with introductions. <https://cies.org/fulbright-scholar-directory>
- Research **host country university programs** and read about faculty and graduates' work and interests. Reach out to them directly to learn more. Often a course description, an article, research paper, or exhibition will provide a lead.
- Consider reaching out to a **non-academic department** at a host country university to make initial connections - someone in admissions, international admissions, international student services, perhaps

even someone in a student club. Maybe at the school you are interested in the culture is to start with an administration office. Maybe you can get a conversation started on a peer-to-peer level and then they can connect you with the right people to talk to.

- Research and reach out to **artist professionals, studios, collectives, and/or residencies** in the host country. They may not qualify as a primary affiliate but they may be able to connect you to others at universities or organizations. And, maybe they could be a secondary affiliate or someone you'd like to meet in country. They may provide a new angle to your project.
- Consider the contextual aspects of your project and reach out to **museums, community groups, cultural and/or organizations** for leads.
- Talk to anyone and everyone! Let **colleagues, friends, and family** know about your project ideas. You never know who might have a connection of know of someone who knows someone who has a connection. Sometimes the search starts by reaching out as a friend across the seas.

### Affiliate Search – Graduate Enrollment

Your affiliate will obviously be the institution of graduate study. You will likely not have an admission decision when you submit to Fulbright in the early fall. You will likely not even applied yet. Fulbright understands and does not expect you to have an offer letter. They will conduct their review, you will apply to the school, and in the spring you hope both results are positive. But you could receive one and not the other.

For most countries you should only include an affiliation letter for graduate enrollment proposals if it enhances your application. (However, some do ask that you include a letter from the school stating that the program is offered and you are eligible to apply.) This is not required but is there a faculty person with similar interests with whom you have been in touch? Are they willing to write a letter, not guaranteeing admission, but perhaps outlining their interest in your application and ideas?

### Affiliate Development

Remember that you should keep your initial communication short and concise. You want to capture their interest and not overwhelm them. You can offer to provide more details if they feel this might be a good fit. In your initial email, be sure to include “Fulbright” in your first sentence and even in the subject line, explain your project briefly, and ask if the person can be of help or could refer you to someone else who might. If you are flexible with your project, you may want to reach out early on and ask for advice. The affiliate may help guide your project development. If you know what you want to do and want more control over your project, you may want to wait until you have a well-constructed draft that includes proposed activities and goals. At some point, you will be asked to send a summary or outline, your resume, and likely images of your work. Some affiliates may ask to see your final draft before they will write the letter.

Don't forget about the old school device... the telephone! Email works as a great introduction but applicants often find they make most progress by picking up the phone and having a real conversation.

Fulbright Finland has some helpful articles for any affiliation development that could be easily adapted to any host country:

- <https://www.fulbright.fi/tips-students-finding-host-university-finland>
  - How to approach a potential host?
  - Maximizing your host relationship
- <https://www.fulbright.fi/information-fulbright-us-student-program-prospective-host>
  - Information on the Fulbright U.S. Student Program for the Prospective Host

## Affiliation Timing

Start early! Obtaining an affiliation letter can be a time-consuming process. Establishing an affiliation requires research, prep work, and usually quite a bit of email communication back and forth. Keep in mind that many countries, particularly European countries, go on holiday in the summer. And holiday means holiday, a real break. Applicants often find they have trouble securing an affiliate in the summer.

By the end of June, you should be in communication with your affiliates and working with them to determine the specific nature of your relationship – activities, coursework, access to facilities and equipment, networking support, and/or collaboration. Having affiliation information is important in order for you to advance your project and proposal writing. In addition, because the feasibility and nature of the project rests on the affiliation, if the affiliation is not secured before the mid-August RISD lock application deadline, RISD may determine to not conduct the interview.

As your affiliate relationship conversations develop, you will need to let them know that you need a letter affirming their support by the mid-August deadline. You may want to provide them with a template for this letter. Securing the letter is not only a Fulbright requirement but the letter ensures this is real. A Professor, who you are in contact with, might be interested and enthusiastic, but they likely have to get administrative or academic approval. There may be others that need to sign off. And, you may have to explain and/or negotiate expectations, purpose, and maybe the difference between the Fulbright Student and Scholar program, often a point of confusion. We have had a few applicants over the years assume everything is in place through verbal and email conversations, but at the last minute find out the Provost or equivalent won't sign the letter.

## Affiliation Letters

While extensive affiliation letters are not necessary, outlining important details will make your application more competitive. Keep in mind that the letter is a welcoming gesture rather than a recommendation letter. The role of the affiliate is to provide ongoing and substantive oversight and support to the applicant's project. The affiliation letter should:

- 1) Confirm that the host affiliate will be available during the grant year to mentor the applicant and/or supervise the applicant's work on the proposed project.
- 2) Indicate the host affiliate's understanding of your project, and speak to the feasibility and validity of what you are proposing.
- 3) Show enthusiasm for your work and willingness to work with you on the intended project.
- 4) Indicate how the applicant will be involved in the institution's activities and make note of what they believe you will bring to their work and/or the community.
- 5) Outline what, if required for your project, any equipment, facilities, materials, class/workshop fees, and/or exhibition cost that the affiliate will cover or help you secure.
- 6) Indicate any additional resources or contacts that they can provide to support your work.
- 7) Confirm, if applicable, that courses proposed are held in English and/or host country language courses and support is available.

Letters of affiliation should be scanned versions of the original hard-copy. The letter must be on institutional letterhead and with a hand-written signature. Copies of email correspondence will not be accepted. Letters written in a foreign language must be translated into English, and both the original letters and the English-language translations must be uploaded into the application. Since affiliation letters are not confidential, you will upload the letter yourself into the online application system. Before making a final decision on a Fulbright Semi-Finalist application, the Fulbright review committee will most likely contact affiliates to ensure that support and resources are in place.

## STATEMENT OF GRANT PURPOSE

This is the heart of your application and where most of your time will be spent. All other application components should support this statement. It needs to be clear, concise, and compelling. As you develop your Grant Purpose, make sure why this country is so important to you and how you will engage with the community really shines.

The Statement of Grant Purpose should include ALL the [Fulbright Key Content](#) below. Use these bullets as headers and respond to each to get started. This is in a sense a way for you to interview yourself. The process will help you develop your project, your writing, and ensure you are developing a compelling Fulbright proposal.

- Make sure to follow the proper formatting! Times New Roman 12-point font, single-spaced, 1 inch margins.
- Consider your audience carefully - RISD interviewers, reviewers in your field of study, host country experts, government officials, and the overarching Fulbright board. A variety of people from a variety of backgrounds must understand and connect to your project. **Write for the well-educated person and don't rely on exclusive art/design jargon.**
- Double check your ending! Do not wait until the final paragraphs to tell your readers the good stuff. If you see important goal or impact statements at the end, move them up to the first paragraphs.
- Know that while you have to develop a single, compelling project that you can explain in only two pages, your experience will be broader and deeper than you can imagine, and will go in directions you didn't expect!

### FULBRIGHT OPEN STUDY/RESEARCH – INDEPENDENT OR HYBRID - KEY CONTENT – 2 PAGES

- **Hook / Enticing Introduction:** A passionate/catchy opening (part or all of the introduction paragraph) to get the reader excited about or intrigued by your topic. Consider starting with a statement, question, story, or visual to draw in your reader. Give the readers a sense of what it is you want to learn and explore.
- **What / Overview:** Within the first or second paragraph, provide a 2-3 sentence overview telling the reader what you are going to do. "I propose to X in order to X by doing X at X." AND, outline your goals for your grant year within the first or second paragraph. This brief what, who, where why statement in sense acts as an index to the rest of your proposal. You'll spend later paragraphs explaining the details more fully. What are the questions you want to investigate? Fulbright loves learning questions.
- **Why:** What is the purpose of your project? Think of the Why section like a funnel. Start with the big picture and then narrow in – from the broader context to country to affiliate to you....
  - **Why / Context:** Provide needed background context and scale to inform the reader. Describe the problem or issue historically and/or currently, and who and what it affects. Include research that supports your statement to show your investment in the topic. Why is this important / relevant – to environment, to humans, to a community, to your field? What do you know now AND what do you want to explore and learn?
  - **Why This Country:** Identify and defend/explain the location of the project. Why this country? Why is this the perfect place for you to explore your topic? Why this institutional affiliate or advisor? What are they doing in terms of research or in addressing the above problem/issue outlined? This should be straightforward but also bubble up throughout your statements and application essays.
  - **Why You / Your Experience:** How does your current training relate to the project? What skills/experience do you have to make this possible and make your project a success? Address relevant education or employment experience and include any independent research experience. Talk about your readiness for an international experience, cross-cultural communication skills,

familiarity with the culture, and any language skills you have, how you might gain them, and/or how you might overcome any challenges.

- **How / Plan:** What exactly will you do and how? What is the nature of the project and what form will it take - formal study (what courses?), study with an expert, independent research, and/or studio or field work? With whom? For whom? Be sure to make it clear how the activities will support “improving your craft.” How will your affiliates support you – mentorship, supervision, facilities access, resources, networking? What is the exchange element? What might you give back? Explain how your intended goals outlined above will be realized. This how/plan section should be most of your second page.
- **When / Timeline:** Outline a chronological breakdown of your plan. This timeline may be incorporated into the above how/plan or a separate paragraph. The time qualifiers can be open estimates such as “in the first two months” or “in the first third of the grant.” While it is hard to be specific when the grant is so far away and there are so many unknowns, the timeline helps prove feasibility. This is where your reviewers can see your project happening.
- **Exchange Element:** What is the exchange element? What might you give back? Consider why did your affiliates agree to work with you? What were they excited about that you could do and share? In addition to being a cultural ambassador and providing a new perspective, is there something specific that you can point to help or advance their work?
- **Country Engagement:** How will you engage in the host country community and culture? Engagement through your project will likely come up in the above How / Plan but also consider how, outside your project or the academic world, will you get involved, meet the people, and learn about the culture? What other interests do you have that you might engage in in the host country to help you connect with the community (music, sports, volunteer work)? This is the cross-cultural interaction piece core to Fulbright. (You might include it in the Statement of Purpose, in the Personal Statement, in the application essays, or all three.)
- **So What / Results or Outcome:** What do you see happening at the end of your grant year? How will your work, research, study culminate? Be specific as possible but show openness and flexibility. Consider the exchange element. How will your work contribute to your affiliates or host country communities? How might you include your affiliates in the celebration of your accomplishments at the end of the grant year? Talk about outputs (the actual things, products, services - the “stuff” that results from your work, research, study). Talk about outcomes (the benefits of your “stuff?” - the knowledge that is transferred or behaviors that are changed. Outcomes are the differences made by the outputs. Outcomes here should reflect your goals outlined in the first paragraphs. No new grant year goals should come up at the end.
- **Impact / Future Plans:** What is the bigger picture significance of this experience? How might your exploration and the results be applied back to the U.S., to similar communities, and/or to your field of study/focus? What contribution will this experience have on your future academic/artistic plans or professional development? How will this prepare you for your next steps? Long term goals that may become possible because of this grant may come up at the end.

## FULBRIGHT GRADUATE ENROLLMENT KEY CONTENT – 2 PAGES

- **Hook / Enticing Introduction:** A passionate/catchy opening (part or all of the introduction paragraph) to get the reader excited about or intrigued by your topic. Consider starting with a statement, question, story, or visual to draw in your reader. Give the readers a sense of what it is you want to learn and explore. An indirect or direct hit on why this country can be helpful.
- **What / Overview:** Within the first or second paragraph, provide a 2-3 sentence overview telling the reader what you are going to do. “I propose to X in order to X by doing X at X.” As you are proposing graduate study, the response here is obviously the program of study and institution (briefly here, in more detail later). But this is Fulbright. Fulbright, in a sense, holds you to a higher standard than regular enrollment. Even if the graduate program doesn’t require a “research question,” Fulbright does. What is your topic/field of study point of entry question to this graduate program? Don’t wait until the end to tell



us what your overarching goal or question is that this graduate program will allow you to investigate.

“Good research starts with a good question.”

- **Why:** The purpose of course is graduate study. But we need a little more....
  - **Why / Context:** Provide needed background context and scale to inform the reader. Describe the problem or issue historically and/or currently, and who or what it affects. Include research that supports your statement to show your investment in the topic. Why is this important / relevant – to the environment, to humans, to a community, to your field? Are your studies in some way Fulbright-esque (cross-cultural exchange)?
  - **Why This Country:** Why do you want to pursue this graduate study in the country to which you are applying? Beyond this being an amazing graduate program and great fit for you, why this country? How does this country help you answer your learning question? How will being in this foreign context impact your question?
  - **Why You / Your Experience:** Why is this graduate program in this country the next logical step for you? Do you have the requisite academic, artistic, field-specific background to undertake the proposed program? What do you know now and what do you want to learn? Do you have sufficient language skills to successfully complete the program? Do you have cross-cultural communication skills that prepare you for an international experience? Do you have the flexibility and dynamism necessary for active involvement in the host country beyond taking classes and meeting course requirements?
  - **Why this Institution?** What are your reasons for selecting this particular institution? But this shouldn't be a school infomercial. Frame your response specifically around you and your learning/path. How will this program help you best answer your learning questions? What resources do they have, and what research or artistic inquiry is happening at this institution that align with your trajectory and future plans?
- **How / Plan:** First and briefly, you may need to address program logistics - how many years of study, your tuition responsibility, the admission timeline/process. Obviously, coursework is the primary activity but this experience should be about more than going to classes and gaining a degree. Fulbright applicants are expected to go above and beyond coursework and demonstrate there is a specific and country relevant exploration angle to this study experience. Could you include a title of a course or two that you are excited about that might only be found at this school in this country? Are there facilities or resources you that are ideal for your study/experimentation? Does the program have a unique structure that intrigues you? What are doing beyond coursework? Is the program structured for collaborative projects or research so reviewers can get an idea of how you are working with other students and faculty?
- **Exchange Element:** What is the exchange element? How will the school benefit from you being an enrolled student - not just any ol' student in their program but someone who comes as a Fulbrighter? What is the cross-cultural exchange nature of your studies? What is the class profile? Are you one of the few or only international students/students from the U.S.? Can you make a case that you will bring in another voice/perspective? AND in connection to Country Engagement coming up next...is there an exchange element outside of the school? It doesn't have to be grand but what are the possibilities for a mutually beneficial exchange outside of the school and in the community?
- **Country Engagement:** Why do you want to gain a better understanding of the peoples and cultures of your host country beyond the institution of study? How will you engage in the community outside of the institution of study? Demonstrate that you won't just be a full-time student but a cultural ambassador beyond the program/school. Demonstrate a commitment to the community through volunteer and extra-curricular activity. This is the cross-cultural interaction piece that is the core of Fulbright. (You might address this in the Statement of Purpose, in the Personal Statement, in the application essay, or all three.)
- **So What / Results or Outcome:** The outcome is your degree so, unless the graduate program is asking you to outline a specific project outcome, likely you don't need a stand-alone results paragraph but do

consider -- what do you see happening at the end of your grant year? How will your research and study culminate?

- **Impact / Future Plans:** How will you use this degree when you return? How will the program translate to what you want to do back in the U.S.? How will this graduate program allow you to move forward and fit into the larger arch of your future?

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Whereas the Statement of Grant Purpose focuses on what you will be doing, ***the Personal Statement concentrates on how your background has influenced your development and how that relates to the Fulbright opportunity.*** The Personal Statement is your opportunity to introduce yourself to the Fulbright review committee – who are you and how do you demonstrate this to others? It should not be a recording of facts already listed on the application and should not be an elaboration of your Statement of Grant Purpose which focuses on what you propose to do. However, it should directly support your Grant Purpose and there should be a cohesive narrative between the two statements. Because you have limited space and every word matters, consider carefully...why are you telling your reviewers this?

There is no single, right way to approach the Personal Statement. Consider what you think is important for the review committee to know about you. The Personal Statement should not be TOO personal. It should focus on your intellectual and artistic journey, and relate directly to your project and interest in the country.

### It could include:

- Interest/engagement in the country
- Personal history and family background
- Intellectual/artistic development
- Educational/professional background
- Cultural opportunities/experiences
- Special interests and abilities
- Aspirations, career plans, or life goals

Fulbright reviewers appreciate **Critical Reflection** - seeing self-awareness of and reflection of growth. You can't address all of this in one page but as you develop this statement consider:

- Explain how your background has influenced your development and how that relates to the Fulbright opportunity. What is the arch of growth that got you to this point in which you applying for a Fulbright?
- Who influences you? Connecting to other artists can help explain your work and ideas. Acknowledging contemporary artists from the host country not only shows you've done your research but also helps make the why this country connection.
- Focus less on what specifically you have done (like a resume) and more about your learning process. What didn't you know, what did you learn, and now what you want to know?
- Show in your path the notion of choice. Show your recognition of agency and awareness of personal responsibility for decisions and actions.
- Show your growing multiple perspectives and developing interests. Show your experience with change and your openness to the possibility of change.
- Consider a story or example to connect your experience to your interests and values. What experiences have you had in which you learned about vulnerability and empathy?
- Words like discovered, accumulated, and became aware are passive. HOW you discovered, how you accumulated knowledge/skills, or how you became aware is more interesting.

- Convey your motivation for applying and how this relates to your project and future goals. Why would this grant be beneficial to you? How will it move you forward?

*Make sure to follow the proper formatting! Times New Roman 12-point font, single-spaced, 1 inch margins.*

## **PORTFOLIO (Study/Research Creative & Performing Arts Only)**

Your Portfolio is a critical component of the application. In fact, applications in the arts category are reviewed by the Fulbright U.S. Screening Committee by discipline, which means art and design experts will be reviewing your proposal and often look at your Portfolio first. As per the Fulbright website: **“Arts applicants should understand that they will be evaluated first and foremost on their technical and artistic skills within their artistic disciplines.”** Review the requirements and uploading instructions carefully and early on in the process in case you need to consider new works or new documentation of your work.

<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/required-supplementary-materials-for-arts-applicants>

### **Portfolio Tips:**

- Host country reviewers may not be artists or designers. Consider how your work might be reviewed to an untrained eye and consider that your images also act as a cultural ambassador – what will the host country think of your work?
- Solicit critiques from a professor or professional artists in terms of how your images demonstrate your artistic skills. I will review your Portfolio and advise in terms of the connection to your proposal but not on the quality.
- Make the connection to your grant project. This may not be the time to submit a gallery-ready portfolio but rather focus on the fit with your project. Your images should support your proposal and vice versa. Consider this statement by Fulbright reviewers “Strong work is important. However, not-so-strong work may be overcome by a project that shows trajectory and demonstrates strong execution of the project.”
- Take advantage of any opportunity to explain your work – in the portfolio narrative and image descriptions.
- Curate the order thoughtfully.
- Consider the inclusion of image details – 1-2 detail or installation shots are fine but don’t keep showing the same image.
- Consider showing your work in its environment – on the wall, in the room, in a gallery or installation space. Not for each piece but maybe 1-2 at the end of your portfolio. This view provides reviewers perspective and gives them insight into the broader intentions of the artist and of the work.
- Consider 1-2 images that show process and/or collaboration especially if that is important to your work and/or is an aspect of your proposed Fulbright project.
- Consider single image versus collage. There needs to be reason for more than one view of an image, otherwise it seems like “sneaking” in additional pieces to gain an advantage. There can be a few collage images where it makes sense but too many is overwhelming and diminishes the look of the whole piece as a single image. Reviewers may be more open to a few collages if applying under Design, and Architecture is the obvious exception as you submit an architecture portfolio.
- Present your work in a professional manner with high-quality images.
- Pay attention to the required size, number, and resolution.
- Title the images clearly, appropriately, and consistently.
- Make sure images work across platforms – Mac/Windows.

**Portfolio narrative responses are also required.** Do consider this additional narrative as an important place to talk about your work. Develop your narrative in a word/text document so you can edit and revise as needed.

- **ARTS EXPERIENCE SUMMARY:** Prepare a summary of your practical study, training, and experience specific to the proposed project.
- **PORTFOLIO DESCRIPTION:** Describe your portfolio as a whole. “How you selected the piece(s) submitted; relevance to your proposed project; time frame, location, or other descriptive details; developmental trajectory vs single series; or other information that will tell reviewers what they are looking at/listening to and why. “ You may describe collaborative efforts here or in the Image Description.
- **IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS:** In addition to fields for image title, size, and medium you have the opportunity to include a short narrative description. **USE this space!** Especially your non-art reviewers will want to know what is going on - how? why? what were you thinking? Be sure to include year/dates of execution, method of production, and/or specific role played. Anything submitted that is not entirely your own work must be clearly identified.

Your Portfolio will not be the focus of your RISD Interview (see below) as your Statement of Purpose is the heart of your proposal. However, you will receive feedback on your Portfolio to ensure you are meeting the Fulbright requirements, the order is appropriate, the identification is clear, and the overall content is a strong fit for your proposal. You will receive feedback in September giving you time to adjust if necessary.

## LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

Review the host countries language requirements early on in the process. This may even be a factor that helps you narrow your country choices. Some countries do not have a language requirement but encourage language study, some require a certain amount of study and level of ability before the grant commences, and some require that the language requirement is met AT the time of application. The closer you are to meeting this requirement the more competitive your application will be. Language can be a major factor in the decision as feasibility of the project is paramount. Even if a country indicates that English will be sufficient for carrying out the proposed project, for purposes of community engagement, at least a basic level of language skill should be obtained.

In cases where an applicant does not have the skills at the time of application, they must outline how they will gain those skills before and during their experience. Not having the language skills, may result in a less competitive application, however, if the reviewers love the proposal, they may be willing to be flexible on language skills at the time of application (unless it is required). If the applicant is selected as a Finalist, they may be required to prove they have done what they proposed in terms of language study and can meet the requirement before the grant begins. The Finalist will be required to submit a professional language evaluation showing they meet the requirement before the grant will be awarded. This stipulation will be outlined in the Terms & Conditions of the grant.

There are two language forms as part of the application process. If language skills are Recommended or Not Required, the forms are not required but it would be advantageous and is highly recommend that you submit both forms. At the very least, considering submitting the Language Self-Evaluation (LSE) form so you can show your interest in host country language learning. For programs where language skills are Strongly Recommended, both forms should be submitted.

### Foreign Language Evaluation (FLE) Evaluation Form:

The Foreign Language Evaluation (FLE) should be completed by a professional language teacher, preferably a university professor. Determine who your evaluator will be and walk them through the process. You can find the instructions for evaluators at: <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/instructions-for-foreign-language-evaluators>

The FLE, if applicable, should be completed as soon as possible. If you have the FLE early, you may be able to find out how you rate and have the opportunity to “test” again. Although the FLE form is submitted online and you do not have access to it, an evaluator will likely provide you the results and feedback.

### Language Self-Evaluation (LSE) Form:

- Talk about what you have done in terms of language study so far and what you plan to do to bring your language skills up before the grant would commence. This could range from intensive coursework to learning basic greetings and travel language to enhance your experience, result in a richer experience, and/or support your research.
- Talk about what you might do during your grant year to help you better engage in the community. While this is not a language study program grant, you may propose to take a course or engage in conversation classes or clubs.
- You can talk about what level of language skills you believe you will need to be successful or you can mention that you have confirmed with your affiliate that you will be able to communicate in English.
- You can talk about your abilities in other languages, how you learn languages, or how you communicate when you don’t know the language.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

You will need three recommendations to complete the Fulbright application. Without THREE recommendations you will not be able to successfully submit your application. Manage this process carefully as after all your hard work on your proposal, it would be incredibly unfortunate if this ended up being an application barrier.

### Recommendation Tips:

- Ensure ALL 3 recommendation have uploaded their letter into the online application well in advance of the deadline.
- Know that once a recommender uploads their letter or form there is no way for you (or me) to delete it. The only way to delete a recommendation letter is for the recommender to contact technical support for the online application.
- Recommenders should be the three individuals who can best speak to your ability to carry out the project proposed.
- The writers should discuss your intellectual and/or professional preparation, and/or your ability to represent the U.S. abroad.
- Ideally, choose three recommenders who will speak to different skills, experiences, and interests in order to cover more bases rather than be repetitive.
- Provide recommenders with a draft or sections of your proposal so they can write a well-informed letter but please do not wait until your proposal is final. Your recommenders will appreciate having time to prepare their letter. Let them know that when your proposal is final you will most definitely send them a copy and that you will keep them informed of your progress.

## TRANSCRIPTS

Request transcripts from all schools you have attended well in advance. This process can take time and you do not want to be worrying about this near the deadline. While Fulbright does not require “official” transcripts (official

meaning it did not pass through your hands, it is watermarked, in sealed envelope, etc.) at this point in the application process, you do need a copy of your transcripts from a Registrar's Office. The RISD transcripts that you can access in Workday will NOT work for your Fulbright application as they do not contain enough information (those versions do not even include the school name). Not including an appropriate transcript is one of the top reasons an application is rejected and not even reviewed by Fulbright. You will need to order transcripts from the Registrar's Office at RISD and any other schools you have attended, have it sent to yourself, and upload it into the online application. Make sure it is neat and legible, and right side up, portrait. This can take some time as transcripts often have backgrounds that are not easily scanned.

## THE ONLINE APPLICATION & SHORT ANSWER ESSAYS

It is extremely important that you start your Fulbright Online Application as soon as possible so you can familiarize yourself with the process, the pages, and the many questions. This is your opportunity to show that you are well-rounded individual. Your extra-curricular activities, awards, internships, and employment are important to your application and can help make your case that you will be an excellent U.S. cultural ambassador in various ways and in various communities. Be sure to emphasize your activities and skills OUTSIDE your area of study, and your "soft" skills like communication, leadership, adaptability, and maturity.

There are a number of important **essay questions** that require thoughtful responses and have specific character limits: Abstract, Host Country Engagement, Plans Upon Return to U.S., Arts Experience Summary, Arts Portfolio Description, and Funds from Other Sources. These essays are extremely IMPORTANT and should not be considered at the last minute but as part of your complete application package. Fulbright reviewers read and consider everything in your application package. Your responses in these essays inform the reviewer. You don't want to throw them off or set them up for something different than what you propose. Your responses need to align with your proposal statements – not only in content but in quality. Weak responses to these questions will have reviewers questioning the strong, thoughtful statements you worked so hard to develop. Prepare these statements off-line as you will most likely revise them a few times.

Your answer to the **Host Country Engagement** question should address how you will get involved in the community through your work, your project interest, and/or something outside of your project interest. It could include something directly related to your project or another activity you are interested in that will connect you to the community. Keep in mind that they are interested in knowing how - outside of the academic world, outside of your field, outside your affiliate - you will engage in the community. They want to know you are interested in the host country people and culture. **It's about the people, people!** Show don't tell - Don't just say you will engage, tell us how. Be specific, provide examples. This is the cross-cultural interaction piece that is central to the Fulbright mission. Also, consider community in the answer to your future plans response. What might you do professionally or academically is of interest but consider addressing how your work or how you might impact a U.S. community when you return.

Prepare your responses in Word or text as you will most likely revise them a few times. **Review and carefully double check, triple check, EACH section of the application and EVERY uploaded document.** Ensure your PDF files display correctly and are the correct number of pages.

Allow time to carefully develop your responses to these questions. July to mid-August is the time for developing all your application materials. All components, including short answer essays, application fields, and your portfolio should be ready for the application LOCK RISD review and interview. We strongly recommend you have someone proof not only your two statements but the other components. Fulbright is an application package and all components should be thoughtful, not rushed or last minute.



## SUPPLEMENTAL: CRITICAL LANGUAGE ENHANCEMENT AWARD (CLEA)

### About:

The Critical Language Enhancement Award (CLEA) promotes the Fulbright Program's goal of cross-cultural exchange and dialogue through 3-6 months of intensive study. The purpose is to cultivate higher levels of language proficiency prior to the grant and during the grant period. Depending on the country, language studies may be completed through formal classroom instruction, private tutoring, or a combination of the two. Applicants must meet the minimum CLEA language requirement by the start of the Fulbright grant, and demonstrate an interest in continuing their language training in future professional activities. Applicants receive: the same benefits and monthly maintenance stipends as for other Fulbright Student grants in the host country; tuition allowance for the approved language program and/or tutoring; an approximately a Book allowance.

CLEA is only offered in 6-10 countries. If you are applying to a country that offers CLEA, review: <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/types-of-awards/critical-language-enhancement-award>

### Process:

Applicants check they are applying for CLEA in the online application and then respond to:

- Language Study Plan Choice:
  - 3 to 6 month of intensive language study prior to the start of Study/Research grant.
  - 2 months of study prior to the start of Study/Research, with an additional 1 to 4 months of 10 hours per week tutoring, or a combination, concurrently with the Fulbright project.
- Language Study Plan Description
- Describe the impact on your Fulbright project and future goals

Applicants must first be selected for a Fulbright Study/Research Grant. You could receive the Study/Research but not the CLEA. (Also, you do not have to apply for CLEA. It does seem like an incredible opportunity to enhance your project; and, demonstrate motivation, interest, and commitment to the host country.) If you applying through RISD, your CLEA statements will be reviewed as part of the complete application package.

## THE RISD APPLICATION PACKAGE REVIEW AND INTERVIEW

Applicants applying through RISD have the opportunity to receive a full application package review, a portfolio review, and an interview with a committee of RISD faculty and staff who are familiar with Fulbright's mission and process and/or have experience in international exploration.

### Process:

- RISD applicants will LOCK their application for the mid-August RISD deadline. You want your application package for the application LOCK RISD reviews and interview to be strong and complete so interviewers to reflect your final work, not a draft. After the interview, you will be fine-tuning only, and this final stage is up to you.
- We will provide a comprehensive review of your application package, a portfolio review, and arrange for a campus interview. You will review the application review and portfolio review in writing within 2-3 weeks, before the interview period.
- The interview is approximately 20-30 minutes via Zoom and consists of questions from and conversations with the Committee. You will be interviewed by 3-5 RISD faculty or professional staff members who may not represent the discipline of your proposal project. We reach out to a broad range of faculty and staff to

join the RISD Interview Committee based on their experience, interest in, or commitment to cross cultural engagement, and/or their understanding of the impact of the Fulbright mission. Faculty and staff self-select their participation on the Committee based on their time and availability. The end of summer and the start of the semester is an incredibly busy time and we don't have the ability to curate the interviews to match your projects or discipline. Coordinating the interviews is tricky – simultaneously faculty and staff are signing up to interview and you are signing up to be interviewed, plus I'm very busy at this critical stage. So... interviews come together based on date/time and availability of all involved. Our RISD interviews actually reflect Fulbright reviews, particularly at the host country review stage, where your application will be reviewed by a well-educated, varied audience, likely not in your discipline. We are grateful for the time and energy of our interviewers, and find that their unique perspectives lead to conversations that are robust and insights that are helpful.

- After your interview, you have the opportunity to make revisions to your application. I'll be available for questions through email and advising appointments, but it is up to you to determine what changes you might like to make after the interview. It is very important that at this stage you make limited, select, thoughtful changes as re-developing your proposal at this point is not a good idea. Do not turn to professionals or AI in this final stage. We have found that this waters down your proposal as you lose your unique touches and voice. Fulbright wants to hear from you.

### Interview Purpose:

The interview purpose is to determine if the applicant is prepared to carry out their proposed project and thrive in the host country. The interview purpose is not for proposal guidance, critique, or editing. Interviewers evaluate based on the application packages submitted and the applicant's articulation of their ideas and interests during the interview. Also, the purpose is not to make decisions. RISD is not a gatekeeper. Interviewers may offer recommendations, resources, and advice to improve your experience if you receive the grant.

Interviewers will have these questions on their mind:

- Is the project and ideas yours - your passion, your voice, your work? (Not heavily edited or guided by others.
- Is why this particular country clear, strong, and compelling?
- Are you prepared for the activities proposed but there is also exciting room for growth in the grant field of study?
- Do you have a feasible, thoughtful, realistic project and the support you need to be successful?
- Do you have a plan but are flexible and open?
- Are you prepared for a new cultural experience and navigating the unfamiliar?
- Are you excited to engage in the community beyond their project interests and have ideas on how they might do this?

## NOTIFICATION

You will be notified by the end of January/early February if you are a Semi-Finalist and your proposal has been recommended for host country consideration. The final decisions will be announced sometime between March and June. Don't forget to thank your recommenders and affiliates. Let them know when your application was submitted and keep them updated along the way.

**No matter the result, the Fulbright application process is an experience in itself!** You will learn valuable grant writing skills and how to articulate your ideas, expand your project development skills, develop connections overseas, and re-consider your work and your path in new ways.