

Crystal clear

Five tips for writing a strong Stage 1 application

Summing up a complex project in just a few paragraphs can be tough. What information should you include or leave out? How can you make sure your points are clear to someone who's unfamiliar with your programming? These tips can help guide you in the right direction as you draft your stage 1 application:

1. Read the RFP

Many applicants miss important information in the RFP. And as a result, they make mistakes on their applications. So read closely to make sure you understand our funding guidelines. We'll likely disqualify any application that doesn't meet our funding guidelines.

2. Don't repeat yourself

You have a limited word count for your responses — don't waste it repeating yourself. If a response to one question relates to an answer you already gave, you can reference the previous answer without repeating it. Then use the rest of your response to elaborate on it, or include new information.

3. Know your "elevator pitch"

This short, persuasive speech explains your work in the span of an elevator ride. Many applicants get bogged down in the details. They forget to give a clear, high-level explanation of what they do. Try using one or two sentences at the beginning of your "Project Activities" section for a short summary.

4. Use bullets and lists

Along with sentences and paragraphs, you can use lists to organize your answers. Bullets help you list your activities, participant details, goals or outcomes. They also help you to use fewer words. While there's no "bullets" feature in the online application, you can copy and paste bulleted text into a response field.

5. Get a fresh set of eyes

When you're close to a project, some things will seem obvious to you that aren't clear to others. After completing a draft of your application, have someone else take a look. Show it to a friend or colleague who doesn't know much about it. A second reader can help spot places where information is missing or unclear.

