How to Write a Strong Rich/Collins Application

A guide originally created by a sister program for The Center for Civic Leadership at Rice University and edited by the Brandeis Department of Community Service for the Rich/Collins Fellowship.
What does a Rich/Collins Application Entail?

➔ Essay Application:
  - Project Idea
  - History/Research
  - Personal Leadership
  - Sustainability/Evaluation

➔ Resume

➔ Community Partner Letter

➔ Project Budget
Why does a proposal not get funded?
The committee does not believe your project aligns with its Fellowship guidelines or mission.

- Make sure to thoroughly review the mission of the Fellowship and guidelines.

- Rich/Collins Family Endowment:
  - Support student leadership and innovation
  - Supporting project development with a impact on the Waltham, Brandeis, and other local Boston communities (30 miles of Brandeis).
  - One-semester, $500-$4,000 limit.
The committee does not believe that you understand the problem you are trying to address.

✓ Demonstrate an understanding on the issue and context
  ○ History and context of the issue
  ○ Applicable research showing need

✓ Show personal prior experience or knowledge
  ○ What’s your tie to the issue or organization?
  ○ What background knowledge do you bring?
The committee does not believe in your solution.

- Do your research.
- Have other projects like this succeeded? Failed? Why?
- What makes your idea special? Is the idea new or building off past lessons from prior projects?
The committee does not believe in your qualifications.

- Demonstrate that you have the capabilities to execute your project.
  - Time
  - Desire
  - Experience or Skill Set

- Demonstrate that you have mentors, partners, faculty, and/or peers that can support you.
  - Willing community partner
  - Faculty/Staff support (optional)
The committee does not believe your proposal is sustainable.

- Is the scope of the project reasonable for the proposed timeline (Spring semester)?

- Are there clear outcomes?
  - How will you evaluate your project?

- Is there capacity for continuation or long-term impact?
  - What are you leaving behind?

**Tip**
Build sustainability and capacity with your partner organization through involving other Brandeis students throughout to continue the project long-term.
The committee does not believe or trust your budget.

- Make sure expenses are clear & the math is correct.
- Estimate costs using real prices and unit estimations consistent with your project scope.
- Is it clear where the money is going and why?
- Does the budget match the proposal narratives?
- Don’t ask for too much or too little
What are the keys to a successful Rich/Collins proposal?
**Essays**

- Present a strong narrative for your project idea.
- Ground your proposal in background research/knowledge.
- Write clearly and concisely.
- Demonstrate capacity to execute proposed project.
- Articulate your personal growth goals.

**Resume**

- Present an updated resume (*No high school things unless relevant to project)*.
- Limit resume to 1-2 pages.
- Ensure it is free of grammatical errors and misspellings.
- Emphasize skill sets or experiences relevant to your project.
- Take by the Hiatt Career Center for a 2nd look.
Community Partner Letter

- Make sure your community partner knows your project well.
- Have your community partner be sure to include their willingness to support you and this project.
- Ask them to articulate how this project would benefit the community or organization.
- Make sure you have follow-up plan once you know about selection or not.

Budget

- Present a well-researched budget. Base your budget on price research if able.
- Make sure your math adds up correctly.
- Be specific (# of people, # of units, price per unit).
- Clarify anything that may be confusing or seem unrelated.
- Stay away from “Do Not Fund” list
- Have DCS look at it if you have ?’s
What are things I should know to craft a successful budget proposal?
What’s Allowed

- Office Supplies
- Project supplies
  - Can include equipment that will be used long-term by organization
- Equipment rental
- Custodian and Security Costs
- Space Rental
- Food Costs
  - May need food waiver form.
- Advertising
- Research
- Digital and Media Needs (website, LTS, etc.)
- Some stipends/gratitude payments for speakers
  - People paying must be over 18
- Transportation reimbursement
- Some select Giveaways
  - Ex: Food gift cards for participants
- Many other things yet to be thought of!
  - Most things are approved if discussed with staff.

Remember to Budget:

- Off and on-campus outreach
  - Flyers
  - Food
  - Advertisements (paper, online, etc.)
- Community space rental
  - Ex. McDevitt Middle School,
    - $220 for 4 hours (space + custodian)
- Security
  - If large on campus event or some off-site events
- Custodian costs
- Sound permit (if applicable)
- Translator (if applicable)
- Check out this Student Activities list of common expenses and free equipment their office offers!
What’s Not Allowed

- T-Shirts
- Donations to Organizations
- Fast-Food Expenses
- Large payments to individual members of the nonprofit
  - This can’t just be payroll for your nonprofit.
- Buying large amounts of supplies to donate vs. funding to do a donation drive;
  - Ex: They will fund supplies to do canned food drive; They don’t just want to buy 500 cans and you be done.
- Expenses that occur after Spring semester
  - Funding runs out at end of semester; unused funding goes back into endowment
# Examples of a Bad Budget

### Bad Budgeting Tips

- Include “Do Not Fund” items
- Include items that do not tie directly to the project or seem excessive
  - Stipends to unaffiliated staff
  - Metal detectors
- Forgetting to show cost per unit and/or research to back up “why” you need the funds. Leaving vague or no description.
  - Ex. “Food: $400”
- Doing math incorrectly
  - Your “Total Budget Request” number doesn’t add up correctly.

### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Total # Needed</th>
<th>Cost Per Item</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dunkin Donuts Gift Cards</td>
<td>Incentivize attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonalds Gift Cards</td>
<td>Incentivize attendance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyft Rides</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>$160.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$410 should be enough for our event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$410.00</td>
<td>$410.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panelists</td>
<td>Debrief and expand discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal detector</td>
<td>if off campus/non school people are allowed to attend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation to Will Brummett</td>
<td>Staff bonus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software</td>
<td>to record the event</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of a Good Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1: After School Programming</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Budget</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils 12PK</td>
<td>$3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pens 50-count</td>
<td>$5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers 100PK</td>
<td>$10.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper (ream)</td>
<td>$14.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors 2PK</td>
<td>$8.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stickers 1000-count</td>
<td>$12.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid glue</td>
<td>$1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Paper 50-count</td>
<td>$3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School supplies</strong></td>
<td><strong>$169.99</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remaining school supplies to be donated to partner organization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student snacks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice boxes 32-count</td>
<td>$9.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crackers 8-count</td>
<td>$2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Cheese 48-count</td>
<td>$29.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>$3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper towels 3PK</td>
<td>$3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rice student transportation (Gas)</strong></td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimates</strong></td>
<td><strong>$968.19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prizes</strong></td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$968.19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 2: Issue Advocacy Video</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster board</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers 24PK</td>
<td>$13.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-notes Spk</td>
<td>$10.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$34.69</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Amount Requested</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,002.88</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note: Programming is for 20 students for 3 weeks with 5 Rice volunteers**

**Examples of a Good Budget**

**Good Budgeting Tips**

- Make sure it is clear what you are budgeting for/how it ties to project.
  - If not clear, add explanation.
  - Ex: How many students? How long? How many sessions?
- Estimate your expenses based on market prices (research!), Student Activities estimates, call for estimates, etc.
- Organize your budget!
  - Is it easy to follow?
- Dream big but be realistic:
  - Don’t add fluff; if $100 will do for certain areas, ask for $100, not $150
- Do the math correctly
- No interview, your budget speaks for you!
  - Is it clear? comprehensive?
Final 4 Tips To Make Your Application Strong!

Tip
Feel free to ask a DCS staff member, close friend, or trusted faculty or staff to read over parts of your application before you submit it!
Be confident and concise! Make every word count.

Tip
Follow allocated word counts and edit out EVERYTHING that is unnecessary! Make sure your full essays show up in the PDF; if not, attach via Word Doc.
Give your Community Partner Time

They need at least 1 week to write letter

Tip
Send them your community partner letter of support form early on once they agree to work with you. Set an earlier deadline for them before Nov. 4th
Double check your budget.
Make sure your budget is correct and comprehensive.

Tip
Unsure if your budget is too small or too big? Have Will or Lucas in the DCS office look at it and talk to you about it before you apply.
Update your resume!
Take it by Hiatt Career Center.

Tip
Edit your resume to show relevant skills sets and experiences you think will help you with your Rich/Collins project. Be sure to include GPA as well. No misspellings!
For feedback on your Rich/Collins Community Leadership and Impact Fellowship application materials, contact Samantha de Melim at sdemelim@brandeis.edu or email RCCLIF@brandeis.edu

All Application Materials are due to Samantha de Melim by Monday, November 4th, at 11:59 P.M. EST.
You can do this well! Know you have help. Everything is due Fri. Nov. 9th