1. **Determine who you could ask to be a writer.** To identify people, first look at the fellowship’s criteria specific instructions. Does it say they must be a faculty member? Next, check to see what the foundation is hoping to see in the letters. Are they looking for someone to write a letter about your leadership ability?
2. **When do you need your letters by?** As a general rule, applicants should ask for a letter at least one month in advance of the fellowship deadline. For specific fellowships, our office as earlier recommendation letter deadlines – so please adjust your ask accordingly.
3. **Write your elevator pitch asking for your letter of recommendation.** Your elevator pitch should specifically ask “can you write me a strong letter of recommendation for the \_\_\_\_\_ award.” It should also include some basic details about the award, why you are applying, and why you are asking this specific person for a letter.
4. **Get ready to ask!** Complete this checklist:

* Schedule a meeting with your writer to ask them in person for the letter; plan to have a conversation.
* Practice your elevator pitch
* Prepare supplemental documents to share with your writer if they say yes to writing.
  + A copy of your resume
  + A personal statement or other application question response as a sample
  + Details on the award

1. **Send a follow up email.** Make it easy on your writer to keep track of all details by sending a follow up email after they agree to write for you.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for meeting today and agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for me for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_award/scholarship. As we discussed, letters of recommendation are needed by XX/XX/XXXX.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the Office of Competitive Fellowships will be in touch with you via email with specific instructions for the letter content and submission process. (This line does not apply to Fulbright applicants)

If I can provide any additional information to assist you in your letter writing, please let me know!

Thank you,

Your Name

1. Reminders and Results. Your letter writers are busy people! There is no harm in sending a polite reminder and early thank you one week prior to the deadline. The Office of Competitive Fellowships will let you know if we are still missing a letter for you.

Once you know the results of the competition, be sure to connect with your letter writers again – even if it was not a desired outcome. Your writers are invested in you and want to hear from you either way because they care about your development.

Final Tips:

* What if you want to ask someone for a letter, but you’ve already asked them before?

This is totally ok! If it is someone you have a great relationship with, they are still probably one of the best people to write for you! It is usually fairly easy for letter writers to adapt letters to new awards or opportunities.

* What if I ask someone for a letter and they say no?

This sometimes does happen, but remember your goal is to get the STRONGEST letter possible. If someone says no, there is going to be someone that is a better fit. Thank that for their honesty and consideration and remember that the reason they are saying no isn’t necessarily because of you!

* What if I am asked to draft a letter? The Office of Competitive Fellowships does not allow this practice. Please contact us if this request is made of you.
* Remember – Letters of Recommendation are a common practice in higher education. No faculty or staff member will unfamiliar with this process, so be confident in your ask and get ready to secure those letters!