

Compelling COVER LETTERS

Trachtenberg School
Career Development Services
Career Guide

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Trachtenberg School
of Public Policy
& Public Administration

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

COVER LETTER GUIDE

Your cover letter presents *your story*.

It highlights your *unique* job specific skills.

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PURPOSE OF A COVER LETTER

The cover letter acts as your **written pitch** to the employer. It details your **main strengths** and **experiences** that make you **STAND OUT** from other applicants. The overall **quality** of this document gives an *immediate impression* of the strength of your application.

A STRONG Cover Letter:

- Presents your motivations and qualifications for applying for the job. Details the contributions that YOU can bring to the organization
- Does **NOT** simply restate your resume. Construct a narrative that encompasses your relevant experiences to tell your unique story
- Is *tailored to meet the specific needs* of the position as well as *the culture and mission* of the organization
- Leaves the reader wanting to *know more about who you are* and *what you have accomplished* that makes you well-qualified for the position

• The **Resume Tells** • The **Cover Letter Sells** • The **Interview Compels** •

HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

GETTING STARTED



Think critically about YOU: what do YOU want to accomplish; what are YOUR core competencies – your unique abilities that you can contribute to the organization, and what are YOUR professional goals?

Use the checklist below to help YOU determine what to **SELL** in your next cover letter!

	Identify at least 3-5 reasons why you are a good candidate for the position. Write them down before you begin writing the cover letter.
	Consider what you know about the organization and why you want to work there.
	List your central strengths and specialties. How do these qualities contribute to the needs of the position and make you an asset to the organization?
	Who do you know at the organization? Utilize your social, academic, and professional networks to get a better understanding of the organization. To do this, reach out to alumni, past supervisors, and/or friends on social media sites such as LinkedIn.



When applying for specific jobs or internships, tailor your cover letter by using the **key words & competencies** found in the position description.



Why does this matter?

Employers look for key words when reading your cover letter, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) programs scan for specific words. Linking your skills and accomplishments to the announcement increases your chances of getting your cover letter noticed!

ANALYZING THE JOB DESCRIPTION



The job description provides applicants with a description of the main qualifications and responsibilities needed for the vacant position. Use this to not only determine whether you have the credentials for the job, but to also showcase how you meet the necessary skills to fulfill the vacancy.

Steps for Success:

Step One: Review the Announcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carefully read the job description in its entirety. ▪ Note all of the “required” and “preferred” skills listed in the description that you have demonstrated or in which you have had prior experience. ▪ If your core competencies do not align with the position, reevaluate to determine how you will message yourself in a compelling way.
Step Two: Scrutinize the Duties/Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read the “job tasks.” How does your unique set of skills make you well-qualified for the position? ▪ Are these responsibilities interesting to you? Would you enjoy doing them on a daily basis? Will they be challenging enough?
Step Three: Conduct Additional Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the organization’s website to familiarize yourself with terminology and language that is frequently used as well as the vision/mission. ▪ Use your professional network – including TSPPPA alumni, past supervisors and coworkers, and LinkedIn connections – to gain additional insights about the organization’s culture and needs.

COVER LETTER OVERVIEW

Whether sent in the mail or via email as an attachment, cover letters should follow standard formatting:

Header & Date

- Align to match your resume header or a standard header in the same font as your resume.
- The header should include your name and contact information.
- Include the date on which you submit the application.

Hiring Manager’s Name and Address of the Organization

- If possible, address the cover letter to a specific person or hiring manager.
- If not listed, call the agency to obtain this information, unless the job posting states “no calls please.”
 - Address the cover letter “To the Hiring Manager” or “To the Hiring Committee.”
 - Do not address “To Whom it May Concern” or “Dear Sir or Madam.”

Body

- **Introductory Paragraph:**
 - This is your “virtual handshake” to the employer. Make a strong and lasting first-impression by showing enthusiasm, demonstrating knowledge of the organization, and by sharing a compelling reason(s) why you are well-qualified for the position. Additionally, if you were referred to the vacancy, include the name of your contact in this first paragraph.
- **Middle Paragraphs (length will vary based on experience/connection to the announcement):**
 - Discuss how your background matches the qualifications and requirements of the position. Use specific, detailed, and concise language to subtly weave in your reasons for applying. Whenever possible, personalize the job requirements so that your personality shines through.
 - Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization by complementing your experiences with their goals and specific interests. Your goal is to offer evidence that you “speak the same language” and would fit well with the company environment.
- **Concluding Paragraph:**
 - Reiterate your interest in the position, highlight the attributes you would bring to the organization if hired, and express your interest in having the opportunity to meet the employer in-person to further discuss your qualifications.

Closing:

- Electronic format closes with “sincerely” (or a similar professional closing line) followed by your name.
- Hard copy format closes with “sincerely” followed by your signature and your typed name below.

ACTUALLY WRITING THE COVER LETTER



Your cover letter should be a cohesive document that *tells a story*. To ensure that your letter has *flow* and is written in a *natural voice*, read your cover letter out loud. It's also recommended to reread your cover letter backwards sentence by sentence to make sure that each sentence is well constructed.

THE HEADER

Your resume and cover letter should look like a complete package. So, the same font/type face used for your resume should also be used for your cover letter. Following your header, which **highlights your contact information** (name, address, phone number, and email), include the date of your application submission as well as the employer's contact information.

Sample One:

<p style="text-align: center;">EMILY L. HUNTER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2100 Foxhall Road N.W., Apt. 201 • Washington, DC 20007 • (202) 555-1234 • ehunter@email.com</p> <p>January 1, 2013</p> <p>Mr. John Doe Senior Associate Department of Justice 123 First Street Washington, DC 20001</p> <p>Dear Mr. Doe:</p>

Sample Two:

<p>Emily L. Hunter 2100 Foxhall Road, N.W. Apartment 201 Washington, DC 20007 p. 202-555-1234 e. ehunter@email.com</p> <p>January 1, 2013</p> <p>Mr. John Doe Senior Associate Department of Justice 123 First Street Washington, DC 20001</p> <p>Dear Mr. Doe:</p>
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THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

To make an immediate impression, grab the employer's attention by demonstrating knowledge of the organization and enthusiasm for the position. If you have a contact within the organization, **mention his or her name in the first sentence** to make your cover letter STAND OUT right from the beginning.

In the first paragraph, YOU SHOULD address the following:

- ✓ Clearly state the position to which you are applying and explain where you learned about the opportunity.
- ✓ If you have a connection with someone at the organization, include his or her name and position, and explain how you know him or her.
- ✓ Discuss why you are a good match for the position and the organization. Identify 2-3 key qualifications you have that will make you an asset to the position/organization, and include these in your introductory paragraph. These 2-3 main traits that you highlight will then be addressed in the middle paragraphs of your cover letter.
- ✓ Remember: Anything you say in your cover letter should **MATCH** your resume!

Sample One:

After discussing ABC's summer fellowship position with Jane Smith at a recent recruiting event, I am eager to express my interest in applying for this opening. My educational background in public administration and foreign policy coupled with internships at the Department of Justice and the Office of International Affairs have strengthened my technical, communication, and analytical skill sets, providing me with a strong foundation to exceed the responsibilities of the ABC Summer Fellowship role.

Sample Two:

With a long history of developing and implementing successful service-learning programs, an extensive background working with multiple stakeholders, especially volunteers, and a deep commitment to active citizenship, I'm thrilled to apply for the **International Service-Learning Coordinator** position. From my first position after college as an AmeriCorps State member through my commitment to public service in my current role as Graduate Assistant at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University, this position perfectly merges my skills, background, and passions.

Sample Three:

Capitalizing on my past accomplishments conducting and analyzing policy research and program evaluations, I enthusiastically write to express interest in serving the National Women's Law Center as your next Policy Fellow. As a recent master's graduate from the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University, my educational coursework and rigorous internship experiences have provided me with strong leadership abilities and a quantitative and qualitative research background. Bringing these qualities with me to the Policy Fellow position, I know I will have great success in contributing to the mission of the National Women's Law Center by aiding in the generation of innovative policy solutions to address the dynamic challenges faced by women throughout the nation.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS

*The purpose is to demonstrate with concrete examples that you are well-suited to fit the mission of the organization. Construct a personal narrative that matches the needs of the organization to your experiences and skill sets. Present relevant aspects of your background, drawing from the items in your resume that qualify you for the job; however, **do not simply restate your resume!** Expand on anecdotes and successes that make you well-qualified for the position.*

In your body paragraphs, YOU SHOULD address the following:

- ✓ *Emphasize in each paragraph a few targeted qualifications that demonstrate how you are a good match for the position and the organization.*
- ✓ *Highlight specific examples from previous positions that showcase how you acquired these attributes as well as explain how you have utilized your skillsets to achieve results.*
- ✓ *Tell a story. Do not just list your skills.*
- ✓ *Refer to your resume for inspiration and to make sure it matches the story you tell in your cover letter; however, do not just repeat your resume!*

Sample One (Narrative Style):

Over the past six years, I have studied, trained, and worked on the same international globalization issues that are being sought for this consultant position. My understanding of the rapid globalization of political institutions and economies has been honed through professional experiences in Asia and Latin America, as well as my undergraduate degree in International Affairs and Master of Public Policy. Through graduate level courses such as Global Economics, International Development, and Public Sector Financial Management, I have built my quantitative and policy analysis skills to impact positive change within all global sectors. Most recently, one of my policy papers on the regional human rights impact of China's economic growth was selected for publication in the *Trachtenberg School Policy Perspectives Journal*.

My most recent position as the President of the Public Policy Student Association has given me the experience to fulfill your company's needs for a consultant that is both a leader and community builder. Setting and exceeding a fundraising goal of \$10,000 to help build a playground at a nearby school, I led a team to recruit student donors at the George Washington University. To reach this objective, I capitalized on a good-natured rivalry between two residence halls to create a competition-based fundraiser with prizes from local vendors. On site, I served as the team leader for the playground build, where our students and community residents worked together to accomplish this wonderful addition to the neighborhood.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoy devising creative paths and strategic thinking to reach and exceed a challenging goal, and I believe working as a consultant at ABC Incorporated would allow me to apply my rigorous analytical training to generating solutions to the issues of international globalization.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS CONTINUED

Sample Two (Narrative):

Currently, I am pursuing a Master of Public Policy degree at The George Washington University where I have made urban sustainability and transportation policy a primary focus. Under the program, I have researched and authored analyses of a diverse range of transportation policy topics to include environmental justice, intelligent transportation systems, and a comparison of the budgetary and economic impacts of implementing BRT versus LRT alternatives in the Columbia Pike Corridor of Arlington County, VA. My knowledge of these issues is complemented by my econometric and statistical analysis skills, which include analysis of large data sets using SPSS and Stata software. My coursework has imparted me with skills that I believe can serve the needs of this position.

In addition to my academic training in transportation policy analysis, I also have seven years of experience providing research and analysis support in various contexts. From 2005 to 2010, I collected data, performed quantitative risk assessment, researched and analyzed case law, and authored reports for senior associates in support of the activities of a law firm in the DC-area. The experience sharpened my investigative, analytic, and writing skills, and I continue to employ those skills today in my position with internal stakeholders and clients through written reports, presentations, and conferences. As a result of my work experience, I am confident in addressing varied audiences, juggling multiple time-sensitive projects, and performing to best serve client and team needs.

Sample Three (Bullet):

My zeal for serving underrepresented groups has been demonstrated by my eight years of progressive experience training and working with diverse populations. This life passion prompted my pursuit of a Master of Public Policy degree from The Trachtenberg School at the George Washington University. Through courses such as Federal Acquisition, International Development, and Public Sector Financial Management, my cultural awareness and fervor to influence positive change within government entities heightened. I was able to sharpen my perception of globalization as well as enhance my quantitative and communication skills by producing high-quality work that was published in the *Trachtenberg School Policy Perspectives Journal*.

The central focus on social injustice and poverty in Latino neighborhoods drew me to the Program Lead position at ABC, INC. My experiences and values align with this focus, and I am interested in applying my leadership and analytical skills to help address these problems. If chosen for the position, I would contribute:

- Demonstrated administrative and management experience including supervision, planning, and program development;
- Grant writing background with a specialization in proposal development;
- Budgeting and fiscal management experience for large-scale projects;
- A proven track record in diversity efforts;
- Connection with leading national professional organizations in the public policy arena;
- Strategic planning and awareness of the legal landscape of domestic and international law and policy.

My education, past professional experiences, and leadership opportunities lead me to believe that working as a Program Lead in your organization would allow me to apply my rigorous analytical training to generating solutions to the issues of poverty, inequality, and social injustice.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS CONTINUED

Sample Four (Bullet):

While earning my master's degree in Public Administration from The Trachtenberg School at the George Washington University, I served as a Program Analyst for the Department of Homeland Security for two years. In this role I coordinated the development of detailed qualitative and quantitative cost information to support budget requests, assess program effectiveness, and recommend improvements. I also led the team that participated in the development of policies, procedures, and techniques designed to improve the budget formulation process and the role it plays in program operations.

The combination of my professional experience coupled with my education provided me with the following skills that are closely aligned with the Financial Analyst position:

- Technical writing skills and public speaking expertise;
- Effective coalition builder including hands-on experience building relationships with Congressional staff, lobbyists, advocacy organizations, and media outlets;
- Quantitative research and statistical analysis focused on analyzing and interpreting large national data sets.

Utilizing these acquired competencies, I know that I will be effective in planning, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of ABC's budget formulation and execution programs, and will be successful in the development of long-range program plans, goals, objectives, and milestones. Furthermore, I am confident that if given the opportunity to serve as your next Financial Analyst, I will bring enthusiasm, a fresh perspective, and diligence to the role.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

*This is generally the **shortest paragraph**. Invite the hiring manager to review your resume and express interest in meeting in-person to discuss your qualifications. It is very important to conclude or wrap-up the cover letter by thanking the hiring manager for his or her time.*

In your final paragraph, YOU SHOULD address the following:

- ✓ *Remind the hiring manager why you are qualified for the position.*
- ✓ *Express your interest in learning more about the organization and position.*
- ✓ *Provide the hiring manager with your current contact information.*
- ✓ *Thank the hiring manager for reviewing your application.*
- ✓ *Demonstrate that you are genuinely interested in the opportunity!*

Sample One:

I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss the position and how I might be able to contribute to the goals of ABC. Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email. I look forward to hearing from you!

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH CONTINUED

Sample Two:

Overall, my experiences in the field of Public Policy, my cultural knowledge and acquisition of foreign language, and my ability to build and maintain relationships will ensure that I contribute to the success of the XYZ as your next Policy Analyst Consultant. I look forward to speaking with you further to learn more about this position. Thank you for your review and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact by phone, (123) 555-1234, or email.

Sample Three:

I believe that my prior coursework, work experiences, and interests will allow me to provide great value to the National Women's Law Center. As I am eager to work with an organization that is dedicated to promoting and advancing policies that protect women's health, my salary requirements are negotiable based upon the position and the total compensation package. I would love to speak more about my qualifications in regards to the Health Policy Fellow position, and have attached my resume, writing sample, and references to this application. If you have any further questions, I can be reached at 555-235-6645 or via email at johnsmith@email.com.

Sample Four:

I would be proud to help foster systemic progressive change in our nation by serving as a Communications Policy Project Manager at John Smith Associates. My extensive experience with electoral campaigns and nonprofit organizations combined with my ability to thrive in a fast-paced dynamic environment, strong work ethic, and energy will add measurable value to your organization. If you would like any further materials at this time, please do not hesitate to contact me directly by phone or email. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

CLOSING

Sample One (Hard Copy):

Sincerely,

Kate Jones (Signature in ink) } 4 lines

Kate Jones

Sample Two (Electronic Copy):

Best regards,

Kate Jones



There are many ways in which you can "sign" your cover letter when sending it electronically. You can print your cover letter, sign it, and scan it prior to sending, or you can simply print your name and provide your contact information underneath. Either format is acceptable and is a matter of preference for the sender.

HOW TO APPROACH THE SALARY QUESTION

Some employers will ask the applicant to share his or her salary requirements in the cover letter. Your goal is to acknowledge the request, but if possible to refrain from giving a salary range. A guideline is to **sound flexible** and convey that you are **willing to negotiate**.

If they ask for your salary requirements but don't require you to include specifics:

- "My salary requirements are negotiable based upon the responsibilities of the position as well as the compensation package."
- "The job posting asks for salary requirements, and as positions can vary greatly in compensation, I am prepared to be flexible regarding salary; I am eager to learn more about the position."
- "I am open to negotiation with regard to salary."

If they indicate that you **MUST** include a specific salary requirement:

- *Do Your Research:* Look at comps for current professionals in similar positions based on factors such as title/grade of the position, field, location, and experience level.
- *Give a Range:* Define a salary range based on your experience and research of the average salaries.
 - **Example:** "Per your request of the salary requirement, I am looking for something in the mid-upper \$50s based on my level of experience and research of starting salaries for similar positions. I am, however, willing to negotiate further following my interview."
 - **Example:** "In response to your salary request, my requirements are between \$45,000 - \$50,000; however, I am flexible and open to discussions about the overall compensation package."

BASIC DO'S & DON'T'S

DO

- Write a cover letter responding directly to the job announcement
- Describe your relevant skills and reasons for applying
- Be as specific as possible when describing relevant experience
- Proofread!
- Show understanding of the organizations' goals and mission
- Be concise
- Address the cover letter to a specific person by name
- Entice the hiring manager to learn more about you
- Use high quality paper if sending by mail
- Highlight why you are motivated for the position

DON'T

- Write a generic or form cover letter
- Summarize your resume
- Make spelling and grammar mistakes
- Write more than 1 page
- Address the letter to "To Whom it May Concern" or "Sir/Madam"
- Only talk about why you want the position instead of highlighting how you will be an asset to the organization
- Use cliché words and phrases, jargon, and/or unknown abbreviations



Why does this matter?

With numerous applicants vying for the same position, **DO NOT** make mistakes that will cost you an interview. Instead, set yourself apart by determining your unique selling points. To help you get started, ask yourself: *why should the hiring manager take a chance on you?* Then, create a list of the **top five reasons** you're an excellent candidate.

FINAL CHECKLIST

Have you done the following?



	Contact Information. Check that you have the correct name, address, phone number, and email of the hiring manager.
	Margins. No more than 1 inch and no smaller than 8/10 of an inch.
	Abbreviations. Does your cover letter contain any abbreviations that are not explained? Note: only use an abbreviation if you refer to the organization more than once.
	Accomplishment/Results Oriented. Did you include specific results and quantifiable accomplishments in your experience section? Do you include compelling highlights?
	Key Words. Does your cover letter include some or most of the key words mentioned in the job description?
	SPELLCHECK! Check for spelling and grammar errors. Have a friend review it to catch any additional errors.
	Your Brand. Does your cover letter tell the story you want it to tell?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



- How long should a cover letter be?*

 - The cover letter should be no longer than one page.
- Does a cover letter include special formatting?*

 - Consider **bolding** important words, such as those that match the job description.
- Should my cover letter be sent as the body of an email or as an attachment?*

 - Look for directions in the job announcement and follow them carefully. Some hiring managers prefer to have the letter copied into the email while others favor attachments.
 - If **no directions** are given, it is suggested that you both paste your cover letter into the body of the email and attach a PDF copy of your cover letter with an appropriate title (i.e. Joe Smith – Cover Letter).
- Do I always have to submit a cover letter with my resume?*

 - Even when an employer does not specifically ask for a cover letter, take the initiative and include a copy. A well-written and compelling cover letter increases your chances of landing the interview.
- When and how should I follow up after submitting my cover letter and resume?*

 - Unless the position listing discourages phone calls, you may contact the employer via e-mail or phone **seven and ten days** after your application submission. Your goal is to confirm the receipt of your application materials and to inquire where the employer is in the hiring process.
- What size font and type should I use?*

 - General type should stay between 10–12pt. The best fonts are easy to read and have clean lines such as sans serif fonts including: Arial, Century Gothic, Lucida Sans, and Times New Roman.
- What are the biggest mistakes cover-letter writers make?*

 - **Not addressing the letter to a direct individual.** "To Whom It May Concern" shows the employer that you were not concerned enough to find out the name of the person with the hiring power.
 - **Only explaining how the company will help you** grow personally and professionally instead of highlighting the strengths and qualities you would bring to the company.
 - **Making grammar and spelling errors** throughout your document.
- Can you include contractions in your cover letter?*

 - Professionals have contrasting views on the usage of contractions such as I'm, you're, don't, and etc. Because there are discrepancies, you should use your best judgment when writing your cover letter. In general, to sound more formal avoid using contractions; however, if contractions add to the natural flow of the document, include them.

FROM ANNOUNCEMENT TO COVER LETTER

Sample Announcement:

Note how the highlighted key words in the job announcement are integrated into the cover letter on the next page

No child should grow up hungry in America. Since 1984, Share Our Strength® has led the fight against hunger and poverty by inspiring and organizing individuals and businesses to share their strengths. Share Our Strength, a national nonprofit, is ending childhood hunger in America by ensuring all children get the healthy food they need. By connecting kids in need with nutritious food and teaching their families how to cook healthy, affordable meals, the No Kid Hungry Campaign surrounds children in this nation with healthy food where they live, learn and play.

Responsibilities:

The Program Manager will be responsible for providing technical assistance to state and local No Kid Hungry campaigns; and helping to manage a best practices center that will develop resources, foster cross-state learning, and communicate lessons from our No Kid Hungry campaigns.

- Provide technical assistance and consulting to public and private partners working to end childhood hunger;
- Work with state and local partners to collect and analyze programmatic data; assess progress towards annual goals; develop corrective action when necessary; and communicate success of NKH campaigns;
- Analyze and synthesize research, and track policies and practices at the federal, state, and local level that increase access to food and nutrition programs for low-income children;
- Communicate best practices and policies to a wide variety of audiences through written memos, issue briefs, and case studies and through presentations;
- Plan and facilitate conference calls, webinars, and workshops for partners;
- Oversee research projects and evaluation of No Kid Hungry campaign strategies;
- Represent Share Our Strength at conferences, briefings and coalition meetings; and
- Work with the organization's marketing, communication, and development teams to provide information about childhood hunger and support specific projects.

Reports to: Director, No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices

Location: Washington, DC- HQ

Qualifications:

- Master's degree in public policy or related field or equivalent work experience;
- 3-5 years work experience with a focus on anti-hunger/child nutrition policy, research, advocacy, or program administration;
- Knowledge of SNAP and/or child nutrition programs;
- Experience providing technical assistance, strategic planning, or consulting services to nonprofit organizations;
- Excellent written and verbal communications skills;
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and proactively in a fast-paced environment;
- Highly effective within a fluid, entrepreneurial environment; and
- High energy and a demonstrated passion for our work.

[Matching Cover Letter:](#)

KATHRYN B. SMITH

555 First St NE, Apt 31 • Washington, DC 20002 • 202.555.4789 • KATHRYNB@GMAIL.COM

March 27, 2013

Human Resources
Share Our Strength
1730 M St. NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Share Our Strength,

With a background in providing technical assistance to local and state groups and collecting and analyzing data to track program goals and outcomes, as well as a deep commitment to food security issues, I am extremely excited to apply for the position of Program Manger, No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices. My previous work experiences as an advocate for anti-hunger programs for Oxfam America and as a program manager for local and state groups with Crossroads Campaigns, combined with my graduate experience in working with a local food hub to develop a commercial kitchen, have provided me with both a background in and a passion for anti-hunger campaigns and program management. The Program Manager at No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices position will perfectly meld my professional skills and passions.

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices' approach to providing technical assistance to public and private partners on the local and state levels resonates with me, as that has been the crux of my work as a program manager. In my job with Crossroads Campaigns, I managed an expansive voter contact program for a coalition of nonprofit civic engagement organizations in Arizona leading up to the November elections. In managing this program, I helped the groups set individual and coalition-wide metrics, oversaw each group's specific program, managed the data collection process, and provided technical assistance and management in order to meet program goals. I tracked and evaluated program progress on a weekly basis and consulted directly with each group to ensure program outcomes were met.

My background has also prepared me for the Center for Best Practice's method of developing resources, fostering learning, and communicating lessons. In my capacity as a graduate student of public administration, I regularly analyzed and synthesized research and policies on the federal, state, and local levels and presented findings through both written and oral presentations. As an intern for the American Association of University Women (AAUW) I communicated policy nuances to AAUW's members through the organization's weekly newsletter and weekly in-person lobbying briefs. Further, as a Net Impact Board Fellow at the George Washington University, I provided direct consulting services to a local nonprofit organization and created a strategic plan for the organization to gain local public and private partners.

My ability to oversee projects, work within and motivate high-performing teams, and effectively represent organizations in a wide variety of settings have been demonstrated in several ways. From managing several clients and interns at once at Crossroads Campaigns, to representing Oxfam America as a public advocate, to successfully executing a social impact and feasibility study for Blue Ridge Produce with four other graduate students, I bring an entrepreneurial spirit, an analytical mind, and a passion for my work to everything I do.

This position is an ideal fit for my background in program management and technical assistance, experience in analyzing research and policies, and passion for food security and anti-hunger policies. I would love the opportunity to speak with you further about the position and how I could contribute to the No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices. Thank you for your consideration; I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Kathryn B. Smith

Kathryn B. Smith

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

Sample One

Kate Jones

120 14th Street, NW, Apartment B · Washington, D.C. 20025
202-555-5456 · kjones123@gmail.com

Mr. John Doe
ABC Consulting
Senior Associate
123 First Street
Washington, DC 20000

Dear Mr. John Doe,

Since partnering with your staff on the Community Capacity Initiative while I was working for Communities First, I have admired ABC Consulting's approach to organizational capacity building and social ventures. I enjoyed learning more about the firm through your on-campus recruiting process this fall and am excited to apply for the summer fellow position within the Nonprofit Practice of ABC Consulting. My experience with consulting projects and complex organizations, interpersonal and leadership skills, and analytical perspective make me a strong match for the position.

I have a history of achievement and innovation in intricate organizations that spans seven years of full-time employment and several consulting engagements. At Communities First, I built the relationships necessary to navigate a complex culture and establish a new program, Outreach Now. While this effort required interpersonal skills, leadership, and flexibility over the long-term, I approached each task analytically to identify key issues and articulate step-by-step plans.

This analytic perspective was applied with the consulting projects I took on as a graduate student at the George Washington University. Building upon my professional experience, I am currently providing pro-bono consulting for the DC Urban Initiative. My analytical frameworks guide our work to develop an innovative Asset Management tool that will help the client better invest its resources.

I share ABC's commitment to community that you demonstrate through pro bono services and the leadership roles your staff plays in cities around the world, and I admire the firm's long-running diversity and inclusion efforts. The opportunity to be part of a learning organization that emphasizes coaching and training is one I value greatly.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My resume is attached for your review. Please let me know if I can provide references or additional information. I look forward to talking with you and your team further about the Policy Analyst position.

Sincerely,

Kate Jones

Kate Jones

John Smith

4422 James Drive, Apt 839, Alexandria, VA 22210 | John.Smith@gmail.com | (C) 555.555.2141 | www.linkedin.com/in/jsmith

November 10, 2012

Americans Against Hunger
1234 K St. NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20020

Dear Hiring Manager:

With a long history of developing and implementing successful training programs, an extensive background working with multiple stakeholders, especially volunteers, and a deep commitment to food security and nutrition issues, I am thrilled to apply for the Training Development Manager position. From my first position after college as an AmeriCorps*VISTA working in a multi-service organization that included a food pantry, to serving over two hundred meals at food kitchens through my community service, to assessing the impact of “food deserts” in impoverished communities with my role at the Center for Social Policy, this position perfectly merges my skills, background, and passions.

Americans Against Hunger’s pragmatic, hands-on approach is one that resonates deeply with me, as that is my style as a trainer and manager. My success as a collaborative and solutions-oriented manager has been a cornerstone of my career, especially when approaching complex, highly detailed projects. One highlight was in my role as the Director of Programs for D.C. Cares, where I was able to successfully transform their partnerships with organizations and volunteers into strengthened relationships, expanded programming, and increased agency revenue. This was achieved through knowing how to simultaneously assess and expand, while also building sustainable and effective organizational systems.

In my work designing, collaborating on and delivering trainings, I also apply this practical, interactive style. I have extensive training, facilitation, programmatic, and presentation experience that is rooted in community development and capacity building. My professional training development philosophy is embodied by wonderful feedback I received from a conference where I co-led an all-day workshop, “Facilitators led with great energy, humility and expertise.” I approach this work with creativity, mindfulness towards results, and capacity to engage all participants. My versatile communication skills and capacity to collaborate with remote and diverse teams has been demonstrated in a variety of settings.

This position is a natural alignment with my training development and program management experience, deep commitment to the field of food security, and accomplished background in meeting ambitious performance goals. I would love the opportunity to speak with you further about this position and how I could contribute to Americans Against Hunger’s Training Development Manager position.

Best regards,

John Smith
jsmith@gmail.com
123-234-3456

Jane Butler

jane.butler@gmail.com 202-555-2370 55 Main Street, NW Washington, DC

April 1, 2013

Matthew Tyler
Executive Director
Battelle
200 M Street NW, Suite 2
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Tyler:

My passion to advocate on behalf of impoverished communities, coupled with my accomplished history in capacity building, technical assistance, and leadership development, makes me incredibly excited to apply for the **Organizational Development Specialist** position at Battelle.

Building strong, authentic partnerships has been a cornerstone of my career, and my approach to providing technical assistance is always one of respect, trust, and shared vision for success. From advising the Charities of Hope organization's initiative in Hartford, CT to strengthening nonprofit capacity when I was with the Northwestern CT Area Health Education Center, I bring a keen, analytical eye, strategic mind, and collaborative spirit to all of my work. Whether connecting in a community where I have existing relationships or coming in with a fresh perspective to a new area, I am able to adapt to new environments quickly and easily in cultivating community building.

One of my proudest accomplishments in capacity building came when I was leading an environmental service-learning project with DC Parks and Recreation focused on conserving and preserving state parks and landscape. In just the first two years of my supervision of the thirteen DC Parks and Recreation members, **we brought in over half a million dollars in new community funding and engaged thousands of volunteers.** This was achieved through my knowledge of coaching and supporting on an individual and organizational level, as well as my understanding of how to provide strategic and pragmatic organizational development guidance. This has always been my approach to community and capacity building, and as my resume reflects, has enabled me to be an effective partner, advisor, and leader in social change.

Battelle's Organizational Development Specialist position merges my long-held fervor for strengthening the nonprofit community, extensive background working with underserved communities, and skills in the area of service-learning. I look forward to engaging in further conversations regarding this opportunity!

Best regards,

Jane Butler

Jane Butler

Jessica P. Laws

2250 F St, NW ▪ Washington, DC 20052 ▪ (555) 555-8256 ▪ jessicalaws@gmail.com

April 1, 2011

Mary White
CEO
Year Up
22 8th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. White,

My professional goal to work and grow in the field of youth development is what drew me to Year Up's mission and to apply for the Associate Director position. With academic training in strategic analysis and organizational development, a focus on youth development through multidisciplinary approaches, and demonstrated managerial skills, as evidenced by my leadership role at Youthbuild, I know I have the proven skills and track record of performance that will greatly enhance Year Up.

Earning a Master of Public Policy degree at The Trachtenberg School at the George Washington University has given me outstanding training in strategy, analytical thinking, and organizational management. This built upon my internship with Youthbuild where I applied these skills through a strategic planning project in collaboration with their executive team. Through ongoing strategic management and planning meetings, I not only implemented a holistic youth development program, but also developed a service-learning course with the objectives of increasing youth participation in decision-making and enabling youth to cultivate their leadership, critical thinking, and planning skills.

Overall, my educational background and professional experiences, including my YouthBuild internship, would allow me to bring the following strengths to the Associate Director position:

- An enthusiasm for challenges, especially those that require new ways of thinking and collaborative input across development specialties.
- Outstanding teamwork and leadership skills, where I have demonstrated my ability to both contribute and motivate.
- A dedicated work ethic and desire to make a difference, which is reflected in my academic and professional experience.

Based on these competencies, I am certain that my experience and professional diligence could be an asset to Year Up. My strengths in management, relationship building, and communication will enable me to impact the lives of many children and families throughout the Greater DC region.

Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. I look forward to learning more about how I can assist in meeting the immediate needs and long-term goals of Year Up. If you have further questions or would like to schedule an interview, please contact me at jessicalaws@gmail.com or 555-555-8256.

Sincerely,

Jessica P. Laws

Kristine L. Jackson

Current Address
2100 Foxhall Rd, NW
Washington, DC 20007

555.222.4789
kristinej@gmail.com

Permanent Address
555 South Main St
Hartford, CT 06415

May 15, 2013

Megan Sullivan
Executive Research Assistant
Billings Leadership Partners
executivesearch@billingspartners.com

Dear Ms. Sullivan,

Through my connection with Lauren King, former Program Director in San Francisco, I have been aware of the great work of Billings Leadership Partners for several years. With my comprehensive background in transformative program development, authentic partnership building, and leadership coaching, I am very intrigued by the **Program Manager** position.

Creating a leadership pipeline in the nonprofit and public sectors is an issue about which I have long been passionate since my years directing Teach For America (TFA) programs and community initiatives. In these capacities, I have been very successful at balancing multiple needs – individual coaching/mentoring, organizational development, and innovative program design. While leading the Communities for Children TFA initiative focused on prevention programs for youth, I not only selected and trained thirty-five TFA members, but also provided technical support to the communities – in just two years, this initiative brought in over half a million dollars in new community funding and engaged thousands of volunteers. This was achieved through my strong understanding of how to effectively coach and support on an individual and organizational level, as well as how to build meaningful and genuine community relationships.

My commitment to education reform has been shaped by experiences gained since my first position after college as a Program Coordinator for the Yellow House, an organization focused on working with students who had dropped out of public schools and were pursuing their GED. In this position, I established a ten month service-learning project funded by the StateFarm Good Neighbor Grant, which focused on teaching community members the importance of maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle. Since this endeavor, I have been involved in both the hands-on level and systemic issues of education reform, including working on the impact of failing schools in Las Vegas communities and volunteering at an alternative school in Oklahoma. Through my career and community service experiences, I have developed extensive training/coaching, facilitation, programmatic, and presentation experience. My successes in this area are indicative of my natural ability to understand the same population that is a part of the Billings Leadership Partners as well as my strength in communication.

I am currently in the process of a confidential job search as I am relocating to Washington, DC very soon. I am very flexible on timing and am available for next steps in this process. This position merges my passion for change through education, programmatic/management experience, and love of coaching others to be community leaders, so I look forward to engaging in further conversations regarding this opportunity!

Best regards,

Kristine L. Jackson

Michael Daniel
123 Third Street
Bethesda, MD 20816

January 15, 2013

Amanda Jones
Human Resources
JMD
22 First Street
Washington, DC 20052

Dear Ms. Jones,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my application materials for the Public Policy Fellows program at JMD. After attending the Public Policy Fellows information session at the George Washington University's Trachtenberg School, I came to admire JMD's problem solving approach towards improving public service. My similar public service values, experience in complex problem solving and improving the efficiency of organizations, and skills attained in the MPA program make me an outstanding candidate for the Public Policy Fellows program.

Analogous to the goals of JMD, my past professional experience has focused on taking the lead to improving the strategies and practices of non-profit and government organizations, ensuring a more effective service to the public. At DC's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, I developed a new organizational structure for the annual report, ensuring that decision makers can use the report to easily identify the city's homeland security gaps. JMD understands the complexity of public service organizations and the need to create sustainability with limited resources. American Red Cross local chapters face issues with complexity and limited resources during a disaster response. To address this problem, I wrote new guidelines on how to best augment the use of volunteers from partner organizations and improved strategies for the coordination and organization of these volunteers.

Additionally, the skills and tools attained in the MPA program will allow me to address the varied needs of clients, furthering JMD's mission and goals. I have had exemplary performance in the MPA coursework, acquiring a superior skillset that includes applied statistics, quantitative research, policy analysis, and leadership. In the spring 2013 semester, I will continue to align my experiences with JMD's goals by participating in a pro bono consulting capstone project with FEMA. The focus will be on offering recommendations to improve the National Preparedness Report.

My public service values and goals are parallel to the mission of JMD. Experiences in solving problems and offering ways to improve an organization will make me an asset to your organization. My graduate education has allowed me to attain a skillset that will add value to JMD and ensure that practical solutions will continue to be found. I look forward to speaking with you in more detail regarding the Public Policy Fellows programs. Specifically, I am interested in working on the issues of homeland security or energy and the environment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Daniel

Amanda Austin
aaustin@gmail.com
200 Third Street NW Apt 123; Washington, DC 20002
(555) 123 4567

March 28, 2013

ABC International
123 First Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20001

Operations Manager
Dear Mark Wood:

As a bilingual advocate with both analytical skills and contextual knowledge from years of field-level work, I am confident that I'm an ideal candidate to address school-to-prison pipeline issues in the Policy Advocate position at ABC International. My journey has taken me from being a direct service provider to community organizer and now to public policy analyst and advocate for reform.

With over ten years of experience working through neighborhood and political organizations in Santa Monica on housing, police, education, living wage, and development issues, I have the skills necessary to excel in this position. Through my work as a community organizer I have been able to build and sustain relationships with different levels of decision-making leaders. I have coordinated a range of events and campaigns and am adept at multitasking in a fast-paced, deadline oriented work environment. In my work on a local level living wage campaign, I learned the value and skill of being responsive to internal and external stakeholders. This is demonstrated by my experience building stakeholder coalitions, facilitating campaigns, and advocating for local policy reform.

My studies in public policy and experience with local level policy give me insight into both micro and macro level change. I believe the Advancement Project is at the cutting edge of the civil rights movement and brings a comprehensive lens by which to move a national agenda of reform for racial justice. Additionally, I am proficient in analyzing and interpreting data to inform decision-making and developing action plans as was done in our local campaign to reform school discipline policy. Through advocacy I believe we can change the lives of the far too many youth who see their opportunities cut short, their lives negatively affected, and their trauma reinforced when touched by the juvenile justice system.

I have honed my research skills through graduate courses in statistics, econometrics, and cost-benefit analysis and have applied them in my work at the Center for Children's Law and Policy. I also completed a cost-benefit analysis of the implementation of the Missouri Model in California that was selected as an article for publication in *Policy Perspectives*, our graduate student school journal. I chose this topic because I believe that the juvenile justice system is the most important institution to transform.

In closing, I believe the way that ABC International focuses on front-end systemic change is the way to address racial justice and transform the juvenile justice system for the entire population. I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you about the position and my qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Amanda Austin

Mary Williams

2299 New York Avenue • Washington, DC • 20005
CELL (717) 555-3663 • E-MAIL mwilliams62@gmail.com

June 17, 2013

Attn: Hiring Manager
Thompson Institute
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

As I near the completion of my Master of Public Policy with a concentration in Global Health, I am eager to synthesize my area of academic expertise with my extensive experience in the areas of advocacy, logistics management, and budgeting in both the public and private sectors. Not only do I have the political acumen necessary to frame complex issues for, and communicate with, a variety of audiences, but also the financial savvy and attention to detail required for managing the technical aspects of a project. Accordingly, I would like to express my interest in the Thompson Institute's opening for a Program Associate for the Coalition against Malaria.

Over the course of the last year I have quenched my thirst for serving others through public health by dedicating over 800 hours as a volunteer project co-lead on the public health team for an Engineers without Borders project in Kenya. I have utilized this opportunity to hone many of the analytical skills I have acquired in my coursework and current job at the Department of Treasury. In doing so, I have gained hands-on experience with project budgeting, work plan development, qualitative and quantitative health survey development, and project research. In coordinating these efforts, I have gained a greater sense of the dynamism needed to balance interests of teams within the project as well as those of stakeholders.

In addition to my ability to successfully manage a number of competing roles in a team environment, I also possess a strong independent work ethic and am well versed in many of the areas being sought for this position. During my time in government relations I worked closely with clients and principles in order to develop communications and advocacy strategies, including white papers and talking points that would resonate with members of Congress. Given this experience, I am well versed in the intricacies of strategic messaging and believe that I would be a strong asset to the Coalition against Malaria. Additionally, I am a comfortable managing logistics that require cross-organizational coordination and an assertive attitude, and can be counted on to carry high-level tasks and projects to finish line in order to meet tight deadlines.

Overall, I am incredibly driven to work on issues that I am passionate about and can closely identify with the Thompson Institute's plight to improve the human condition and reduce suffering through increased access to public health education. Moreover, I strongly desire a position such as that of a Program Associate, that would allow me to advocate for something I am truly vested in on a personal level, and to be able to work with others that are also closely tied to such a compelling mission.

In turn, I believe that my professional, academic, and volunteer experience in global health will allow me to provide a unique perspective as a member of the team at the Thompson Institute. I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss the position and how I might be able to contribute to the advancement of the organization's goals. Per your request for salary requirements, I am open to negotiation based on the responsibilities of the position as well as the compensation package. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you!

Kind regards,
Mary Williams