

START YOUR CAREER AT A STARTUP WITH VFA

*Everything you need to
know to apply to the*

Class of 2021

VENTURE
FOR AMERICA

Written Essay



The essays are a critical part of the application process. The first essay helps us understand both why you are applying and what you hope to achieve from becoming a Venture For America Fellow. The second essay can be seen as a pitch and gives us a fuller picture of your academic and professional accomplishments. Both essays give us a sense of your ability to contribute to a growing startup and your alignment with our mission.

This step is also our first chance to get to know you beyond just the basic information. And during your pitch, it doesn't matter what role you pick because you're not committing yourself to any particular role if you're admitted.

Essay and Pitch Tips

Understand Venture For America. Do research about VFA's mission, cities, and Fellows. Check to make sure you understand why VFA hosts a Fellowship program in its cities (if you don't, reach out to us!). Then, reflect on your own story and how it might contribute to our mission and program.

Get specific. There are opportunities to work in startups or start a company outside of our program. Tell us explicitly why becoming a VFA Fellow makes sense for your career, what motivated you to apply, and why it excites you.

Proofread. Check for grammar, typos, and sentence flow before you hit submit. Read it aloud to yourself and have a friend read it over for you.

Show, don't tell. Don't just tell us what you want, explain to us why you are interested in a specific field (i.e. project management, software engineering) that we support. Use specific numbers to tell your story, like stating how many people you oversaw in an organization, how much money you managed, or the number of sales you generated from an experience! Startups want to see the results of your work, so connect your answers back to clear examples from your work and life experiences.

Take them seriously. Lay off the jokes, curse words, and slang here. Treat these essays with the same seriousness you did for your college applications or a cover letter for a traditional job.

VFA ESSAY CHECKLIST

Content

- Each response to the prompts is between 300 and 400 words
- Response shows awareness of VFA's mission and why it's your best next step
- Illustrated how professional growth aligns with working at a startup or small business
- Conveyed how personal goals line up with one of our 14 different cities
- Pitch includes examples of past accomplishments with results (i.e. metrics, data)

Formatting

- Writing is clear, concise, and comprehensible
- Free of grammatical and spelling errors
- All dates, content, and accomplishments aligned with resume
- Spaces used to separate sections and make them more legible
- Someone else proofreads for typos and consistent verb tense

Written Essay

The following writing sample is an example of a strong essay submission because the candidate shows a deep understanding of Venture For America, our mission, and how the program aligns with their career goals.

"My desire to join Venture For America stems from these two pillars: community and an ecosystem of change. Entering the startup environment can be challenging, but one's experience can drastically change when you have a cohort of people by your side. This is where a community, like Venture for America, plays a critical role in helping adapt fellows to the challenges of a startup. I enjoy the company of others and am looking for an environment where individuals help each other through being a fellow, which is exactly what Venture for America does. Compared to applying to any other startup, Venture for America creates a network of individuals that are eager to make new friends and work alongside each other to contribute to the entrepreneurial ecosystem of a city. In essence, the Venture for America's ecosystem brings people together towards one mission: propelling the entrepreneurial ecosystem of a city through the community. This is the culture that I am looking for and ultimately distinguishes my desire to be a part of Venture for America.

In relation to my long term interests and startup desire, my long-term goals are to contribute to my city - Detroit - in some capacity. In order to do so, I want to leave Detroit and experience what it is like to work in another city and learn from top decision-makers somewhere else and bring it back to Detroit. Venture for America has both, a large network of job placements across the U.S. and an ecosystem of top talent, and will contribute to my goal to better Detroit. Whether that turns out to be capacity building through consulting or even my own capacity building startup, I am open for new experiences. Venture for America focuses on smaller cities and will create a transferable experience for me that I can bring back to Detroit. Ultimately, I want to be challenged in every aspect in order to build something in Detroit in the long run and Venture for America can provide these challenges, while also positively contributing to another city in return."