START YOUR CAREER AT A STARTUP WITH VFA

Everything you need to know to apply to the Class of 2019
Become a Startup Leader or Startup Founder

Venture For America believes that entrepreneurs are made, not born—and the best way to become an entrepreneur is to learn directly from one. That’s why VFA Fellows work for two years at a startup as an apprentice to the founder. There, they learn hands-on what it takes to build, grow and lead a business.

After two years, Fellows are ready to become business leaders themselves—either as a leader at a startup or as the founder of a company of their own.

So who are we looking for to join our Fellowship?

• People who think like entrepreneurs; they see a problem and get working on a solution.
• People who thrive in a community, who want to give as much as they take.
• People who want to make an impact, who measure their achievements by how many they helped, not just what they did.

If this sounds like you, it’s time for you to apply.

Let’s get started.

What is VFA?

VFA is a two-year fellowship program for recent college grads who want to work at a startup and create jobs in American cities. VFA Fellows apply for jobs within our vetted company network, learn the important startup skills they’ll need to succeed at our month-long Training Camp, and then work for two years as full-time, salaried employees in one of 14 cities.

Baltimore  Kansas City
Birmingham  Miami
Charlotte  New Orleans
Cincinnati  Philadelphia
Cleveland  Pittsburgh
Columbus  San Antonio
Detroit  St. Louis
Application Overview

STEP 1
Online Application

In the first step, you’ll submit your demographic and academic information. Then, you’ll share with us five of your professional, extracurricular, and/or creative experiences, and you’ll have a chance to tell us about the skills you acquired during these experiences.

This steps takes about 30 minutes to complete.

STEP 2
Online Essay

In this round, you’ll complete a few short answer questions about why you want to be a VFA Fellow, and share which of your skills you feel ready to use immediately at a startup job. You’ll also upload your resume.

You will have five days to complete this step of the application.

STEP 3
Video Interview

If we think you might be a good fit, you’ll be invited to a video interview with a VFA Team member, Fellow, or Alum. We’ll talk about your experience, your goals, and what motivates you—all with the goal of assessing together whether you’re right for VFA and whether VFA is right for you.

The video interview will be scheduled to last 30 minutes.

STEP 4
Selection Day

Selection Day consists of interviews and challenges, and a chance to meet the VFA team and other candidates in person. We’ll pay close attention to your critical thinking, problem solving, character, interpersonal savvy, and mission alignment.

Selection Day is a full day that typically runs from 9:45am to 5:00pm with an optional post-event networking reception. Venture For America is able to provide travel assistance based on need, and if you attend Selection Day in a VFA city, we’ll cover the cost of a hotel room for the night prior to the interview.
Step by Step Application Tips

Activities Submission

The activities submission is our first chance to get to know you. In this section, we’re hoping to learn more about times when you grew personally or professionally, experiences where you gained a new responsibility, volunteer or work experiences that indicate your passion, leadership experience, or explicit skill development. We want to hear how these experiences can translate into a startup environment.

Activities Tips

Stay focused on startups. We want to see what you’ve done, but we also want to understand how these experiences can translate to success in a startup. For example, were you a leader of an on-campus organization? Tell us about how that taught you project management skills.

Show us your impact. Don’t just tell us what you did, describe the impact your work had. If possible, it’s helpful to use numbers to support your claims.

Just the top 5. We know you’ve probably done a lot, but we want you to pick the activities most relevant to startup life. Narrow them down by focusing on instances when you were self-directed or entrepreneurial, where you took on a leadership role, or where you learned skills you can apply to a business setting.

Written Essay & Resume Upload

The essays and resume are a critical part of the application process. The essays help us understand both why you are applying and what you hope to achieve from becoming a VFA Fellow. Your resume gives us a fuller picture of your academic & professional background. It shows us what you’ve done and what you bring to the table. Together, the essay and resume 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, so we encourage you to use this opportunity to really show us who you are.

Essay Tips

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

Proofread. Check for grammar, typos, and sentence flow before you hit submit. 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 want it and why it makes sense for you. 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 your college applications or a cover letter for a traditional job.
Resume Tips

**Simpler formatting is better.** One color, one font, one page, and a simple layout are all you need.

**Again, show don’t tell.** Use your bullet points to describe the impact your work had, not just what you did. Focus on your impact and make it measurable if you can.

*For example, “Planned annual club bake sale” is weak; “Planned annual bake sale that raised $1,000 in revenue (+45% increase versus the previous year) and engaged 50 out of 67 club members” is strong.*

**Must be blind.** In order to maintain a fair and equitable application process, we ask for you to not include your name on your resume. Be sure to check that you’ve also removed it from the file name as well.

For even more resume help, check out these guides from VFA’s Office Hours. To give yourself the strongest chance in our application process, make sure your resume follows this advice.

- How to Format a Startup Resume
- How to Turn Your College Experience into a Startup-Ready Resume
- Get Your Resume Startup Ready

Video Interview

The video interview is an opportunity for us to get to know you and to better understand how you might operate in an entrepreneurial work environment. Over the course of about half an hour, you’ll chat with a VFA Team member, Fellow or Alum and discuss both experiences from your past and how you might address potential work challenges in the future.

Treat the video interview like a real interview, because it is. We take this seriously and so should you.

**Video Interview Video Tips**

**Do your research.** Spend some time on our website ([this section will be helpful](https://www.vfa.org) to make sure you understand how VFA works, what our mission is, and be prepared to tell us why becoming a Fellow makes sense for your career.

**Dress professionally.** If you wouldn’t wear that outfit to an in-person interview, don’t wear it to video.

**Selection Day**

Selection Day is the final step in the application process. It’s a day of rigorous group activities and interviews. During the day, we’ll be paying close attention to your critical thinking, problem solving, character, interpersonal savvy, and mission alignment. We keep the specifics of this day intentionally vague and the focus is to see how well you perform under pressure.

**Selection Day Tips**

**Dress professionally.** Again, this is a real interview so make sure you dress the part.

**Focus on your performance.** You’ll be working alongside other candidates to complete the challenges but you are not competing against them. Your focus should be on showing us what you bring to the table.

**Don’t worry about preparing in advance.** We know you can study well, but we want to see how you perform on the spot. Just do your research on how our program works and why you believe the program is a fit for you. Then just make sure you get a good night’s sleep and come in with a great attitude!
DID YOU REMEMBER TO...?

REGISTRATION & ACTIVITIES SUBMISSION
☐ Use an email address that you check regularly?
☐ Pick your top five activities most relevant to startups?
☐ Tell us the impact you had in each activity?
☐ Proofread your answers?

ESSAY & RESUME UPLOAD
☐ Tell us explicitly why VFA excites you?
☐ Proofread your answers?
☐ Remove your name from both your resume and the file name?

VIDEO INTERVIEW
☐ Test your connection and account log in?
☐ Dress for an interview?
☐ Pick a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed?

SELECTION DAY
☐ Dress for an interview?
☐ Focus on what you bring to the table?
How to Apply

Ready to join us? Apply now!
Go to ventureforamerica.org/apply to get started.

Our criteria remain the same for every deadline, but we recommend applying as early as possible. The final deadline is more competitive and you may only apply once this year.

Still have questions?
Reach out to us at apply@ventureforamerica.org

Application deadlines for the Class of 2019

| August 27 |
| October 1 |
| November 13 |
| January 28 |