



What is an HIA Action Project?

After the summer fellowship programs, all HIA Fellows plan and implement an HIA Action Project—a hands-on initiative inspired by the HIA fellowship experience. The Action Project is an opportunity for fellows to apply the ideas that inspired them in their HIA summer program to real-life issues in their home community or abroad. Action Projects may take many different forms, including community service, public advocacy, art projects, lectures, conferences, and social entrepreneurship.

How does the Action Project fit into the HIA Experience?

HIA believes that Action Projects are just as important as the summer fellowship. We believe that conceiving, developing, and implementing an Action Project will help move the fellow's experience within HIA from one of educational inquiry to one of civic action.

We also believe that:

- The skills and knowledge the fellows will gain by carrying out an Action Project will contribute to their growth as a leader and social innovator.
- The Action Project is a small, yet meaningful demonstration of their commitment to addressing a minority rights challenge in your own community.
- The experience of collaborating with the HIA network is the beginning of the fellows' sustained partnership with HIA—one in which we hope to support each fellow so that they may have a greater impact on the broader public.

What guidelines should the fellows follow when developing an Action Project?

Know the problem, audience, and method. The project should be focused on addressing a specific challenge, with a specific method, for a specific audience. For example, if the problem is about the challenge of immigrant children being excluded from educational opportunities, the hypothetical method could be a campaign to raise awareness among an audience of immigrant parents in the neighborhood about after-school programs that would be helpful for their children. Or it could be about educating the local city council or School Board about a successful after-school program a fellow might have visited during an HIA program.

No reinvention of the wheel. In many cases, the most successful Action Projects aren't entirely original ideas at all. They're just examples of an HIA Fellow coming up with a great way to implement someone else's good idea in their community.

Creativity. There are any number of ways that one can address social and civic challenges through an Action Project.

Keeping it small. By far, the most common reason that Action Projects fail is that the scope of the project is too broad. Narrowing the focus makes implementation and evaluation much more feasible, especially since the fellows probably only have limited time and money to devote to their projects.

A clear goal. The experience of past Fellows shows that the project will be both easier and more effective if one can very clearly articulate the goal to be achieved (e.g., helping enroll 15 immigrant children in a language-training course) and the specific steps one would need to take to meet this goal (e.g., working with a local NGO to publicize the language-training course among parents). Ideally, the goal should be measurable and verifiable.