

2027 CLS Application Worksheet

Purpose of this worksheet

Use this worksheet to plan and draft your three CLS essay responses. This worksheet is not part of the application and should not be submitted. Copy your final responses into the online application before the deadline.

Applicant resources: [Review CLS applicant resources](#)

Language information: [Explore CLS languages](#)

Before You Begin

- Review the information for your target language and the language-level guidance before drafting.
- Read each Official Prompt as a whole and address all of its guiding questions. You may organize your response in the order that best supports your main point.
- Use specific examples and explain what they reveal about your preparation, goals, or plans.
- Write for an informed general reader. Evaluators know the CLS Program, but they may not share your knowledge of your target language, academic field, profession, institution, or community.
- If you applied previously, ensure that your essays reflect your current experiences, goals, and interests.
- Draft early, revise for clarity, and leave time to paste your response into the application and check the application word counter.

How to Use This Worksheet

The guiding questions in each Official Prompt are the questions you must answer. Reviewers will evaluate your response based on how clearly and fully it addresses those questions.

The optional brainstorming questions are provided only to help you generate possible examples, connections, and details. You do not need to answer every optional question, and you should not organize your essay as a series of responses to them. Select only the ideas that help you answer the Official Prompt effectively.

Write for an Informed General Reader

Evaluators are familiar with the CLS Program, so you do not need to explain how the program works or repeat information from the prompt. However, they may not have expertise in your target language, academic field, profession, institution, or community. Briefly explain any context, terminology, acronyms, or proficiency labels needed to understand your experiences and goals. Then focus on what you did, learned, or plan to do and why it matters.

Provide context, not a lecture. Include only the background an evaluator needs to follow your reasoning. Your experiences, choices, and plans should remain the focus.

Important Guidance on Essay Preparation

The essays help reviewers understand your motivations and fit for this federally funded scholarship. Using Super Intelligence tools, such as generative chatbots or agents, to brainstorm, structure, or create content for your essays may hinder this process and make it difficult for reviewers to assess your fit for the program. You may reuse material from previous applications as a starting point, but your essays should reflect your current goals and interests.

Essay 1: Commitment to Language Learning

400-word maximum

Official Prompt

The CLS Program supports U.S. students building high-level linguistic and cultural expertise in languages critical to U.S. security, economic competitiveness, and global engagement.

Please address the following points:

- Why are you interested in your target language and culture? Describe any past formal or informal experience with the language. If you are a true beginner, you may have limited to no previous opportunities to discuss.
- How will CLS advance your language proficiency, and how will you meet the demands of an intensive language program?
- How will you keep building your language skills after CLS, even if resources are limited on your campus?

Optional Questions for Brainstorming

Use these questions only to generate ideas. You do not need to answer each one. Your essay should focus on answering all parts of the Official Prompt above. As you develop examples, consider what context an evaluator outside your language or field will need.

- What first drew you to this language and culture, and how has your interest developed over time?
- What previous experiences, in language learning or another demanding area, demonstrate your initiative, persistence, and ability to use feedback?
- What can you currently do in the language, what do you most need to develop, and why does that growth matter for your goals?
- What strategies will help you meet the demands of intensive study and continue learning after CLS, especially if campus resources are limited?
- What brief context will help an evaluator understand your previous opportunities, current proficiency, or access to instruction?

Drafting Tips

- Describe your language experience concretely. If you use a proficiency label, briefly explain what you can currently do and what you hope to do more effectively.
- Connect your past experience, the CLS opportunity, and your post-program plan so the essay reads as one continuous language-learning journey.
- For beginners, readiness is not tied to prior travel or immersion. Focus on evidence that you can learn intensively, use feedback, and persist.
- Make the post-CLS plan specific and sustainable. Name the methods, communities, or routines you are likely to use.

Essay 1: Planning Notes

Main point I want the evaluator to understand

Best example or evidence

Context a reader outside my language or field will need

What the example demonstrates and how it answers the prompt

Essay 1: Commitment to Language Learning | Draft

Draft response (400-word maximum)

Revision check: Have I answered all of the guiding questions in the Official Prompt? Is my central point clear? Did I provide only the specialized context the evaluator needs? Have I used the optional brainstorming questions selectively rather than trying to address them all? Is the response within 400 words?

Essay 2: Citizen Diplomacy

400-word maximum

Official Prompt

CLS scholars serve as citizen diplomats. They represent the United States while adapting to an intensive academic schedule and an unfamiliar culture, all while building relationships with host community members.

Please address the following points:

- How will you adapt to new cultural perspectives and experiences, including collaborating with a cohort of American peers?
- What experiences and perspectives have prepared you to represent the United States as a citizen diplomat?
- How do you plan to develop an understanding of the people, cultures, and communities connected to your target language?

Optional Questions for Brainstorming

Use these questions only to generate ideas. You do not need to answer each one. Your essay should focus on answering all parts of the Official Prompt above. As you develop examples, consider what context an evaluator outside your language or field will need.

- What experience best demonstrates how you listen, adjust, or communicate in an unfamiliar environment? What did you learn from it?
- How will you contribute to a collaborative cohort while remaining open to perspectives and approaches different from your own?
- Which parts of your experiences or communities will help you represent the diversity and complexity of the United States thoughtfully?
- What are you genuinely curious to learn from people and communities connected to your target language, and how will you build respectful, reciprocal relationships?
- What brief context will help an evaluator understand the people, setting, or perspectives involved in your example without reducing anyone to a label?

Drafting Tips

- Briefly establish the context for your example, then focus on how you listened, responded, adjusted, or learned.
- Show citizen diplomacy through specific behaviors: curiosity, humility, adaptability, respectful dialogue, and relationship-building.
- Choose examples that demonstrate reflection and growth, not simply exposure to different people or places.
- Address both parts of the community experience: engagement with people connected to the target language and collaboration with American peers.

Essay 2: Planning Notes

Main point I want the evaluator to understand

Best example or evidence

Context a reader outside my language or field will need

What the example demonstrates and how it answers the prompt

Essay 2: Citizen Diplomacy | Draft

Draft response (400-word maximum)

Revision check: Have I answered all of the guiding questions in the Official Prompt? Is my central point clear? Did I provide only the specialized context the evaluator needs? Have I used the optional brainstorming questions selectively rather than trying to address them all? Is the response within 400 words?

Essay 3: Goals and National Impact

400-word maximum

Official Prompt

The CLS Program equips the next generation of American leaders with international experience, global networks, and foreign language skills, preparing participants to apply these abilities in service of U.S. national interests.

Please address the following points:

- What are your academic or professional goals, and how does your target language advance them?
- How will you apply your target language and cultural expertise gained through CLS to contribute to your career, community, or field of study?
- Beyond your personal path, how might your participation benefit the United States in the future, for example, by building relationships with other countries, supporting U.S. businesses and innovation, or contributing to U.S. security?

Optional Questions for Brainstorming

Use these questions only to generate ideas. You do not need to answer each one. Your essay should focus on answering all parts of the Official Prompt above. As you develop examples, consider what context an evaluator outside your language or field will need.

- How would you describe your academic or professional direction to an informed reader outside your field?
- What will stronger language proficiency and cultural expertise allow you to do more effectively?
- How will you apply those abilities in your career, community, or field of study?
- Who could benefit from your work, and what would that benefit look like in practice?
- How could that work contribute to a broader U.S. interest, such as stronger international relationships, innovation, economic competitiveness, expanded expertise, or security?

Drafting Tips

- Explain specialized work in plain language and define national impact in a way that is credible for your path. You do not need to pursue government or diplomacy.
- Move beyond general statements. Identify the people, field, community, organization, or sector that could benefit from your skills.
- Keep the chain of impact clear: CLS experience, stronger language and cultural expertise, practical application, broader benefit.

Essay 3: Planning Notes

Main point I want the evaluator to understand

Best example or evidence

Context a reader outside my language or field will need

What the example demonstrates and how it answers the prompt

Essay 3: Goals and National Impact | Draft

Draft response (400-word maximum)

Revision check: Have I answered all of the guiding questions in the Official Prompt? Is my central point clear? Did I provide only the specialized context the evaluator needs? Have I used the optional brainstorming questions selectively rather than trying to address them all? Is the response within 400 words?

Final Review Checklist

- ☐ Each essay answers all of the guiding questions in its Official Prompt and is 400 words or fewer according to the online application counter.
- ☐ I used the optional brainstorming questions selectively, not as a list of additional questions to answer.
- ☐ I did not spend space summarizing CLS or repeating information evaluators already know from the prompt.
- ☐ I provided enough context for a reader unfamiliar with my target language, field, institution, profession, or community.
- ☐ I briefly explained specialized terms, acronyms, or proficiency labels when their meaning was important.
- ☐ Each essay has a clear central point supported by specific, relevant examples.
- ☐ I explained what my examples demonstrate rather than only describing what happened.
- ☐ The three essays serve distinct purposes and do not repeat the same ideas unnecessarily.
- ☐ The final wording is my own, accurately represents my experience, and has been proofread carefully.
- ☐ I saved a backup copy before submitting the online application.

Good luck with your application!