

# Project InSight Junior Fellow Guidebook

Project InSight Junior Fellowship is an opportunity for High School students to explore the broad reaching fields related to vision. Project InSight Junior Fellows conduct at least 10 meaningful interactions with professionals in fields related to eye health, vision care, or working with individuals with visual impairments. A Junior Fellowship could lead to a Full Project InSight Fellowship where a youth works with a professional mentor and a personal advisor (often a school-based advisor) to complete 120 hours of apprenticeship in a professional setting.

Junior Fellows who complete and document 10 interactions earn a \$250 stipend.

Funding for Project InSight is made possible by the Fox Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide the most vulnerable and under-resourced populations, especially people who are blind or visually impaired, with equal opportunity to thrive in their schools, careers, and communities.

For more information about Project InSight and the fellowship program, please visit <https://www.projectinsightfellows.org/>.

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# Project InSight Junior Fellow Guidebook

## A Guide for Fellows and Advisors

The purpose of this guide is to support youth with an emerging interest in engaging in fields related to eye health, vision care, or supporting visually impaired populations. A Project InSight Junior Fellow explores this interest through a series of interactions with professionals in fields related to eye health, vision care, or working with people with visual impairments. Junior Fellows are supported by an adult Advisor who will help guide them through the process.

### Definition of Roles

**Junior Fellow:** A youth who engages in real-world interactions with professionals in fields related to eye health, vision care, or another area related to supporting people with visual impairment. These interactions could be 10 of a combination of informational interviews, shadow days, and/or site visits. Other interactions may also be proposed to determine eligibility. Junior Fellows are high school aged youth who are interested in exploring these fields.

**Advisor:** A supportive school or community based adult who will guide the Fellow through the process of identifying, planning for, conducting, and documenting interactions with professionals using ImBlaze. Advisors are often teachers or counselors at school or another community resource center with which the youth is affiliated.

**Professionals:** The workplace professionals engage with the youth to provide insight into their chosen profession. These interactions can be one time informational interviews, an interactive tour or site visit of a facility, a shadow day (or shadow hour) where a youth observes the professional in action. These can be both in person and remote (possible for an interview)

# Junior Fellowship Flow

- 1) Youth applies to be a Junior Fellow and identifies an adult Advisor
- 2) Project InSight Director connects with Junior Fellow and Advisor to begin process
- 3) Youth and Advisor meet to discuss interests, get set up on ImBlaze, and start to identify potential professionals
- 4) Youth and Advisor work to create interview questions
- 5) Youth and Advisor draft outreach materials (email and phone scripts)
- 6) Youth begins outreach to professionals
- 7) Youth conducts interviews, shadow days, and/or site visits - **and documents each interaction**
- 8) Youth uploads documentation from each interaction to ImBlaze
- 9) Once 10 interactions are completed, Youth and Advisor connect with Project InSight Directors to Wrap-Up and Reflect on the opportunities

## Tips for Junior Fellowship Interactions

### Interest

*The genuine interests of the student are at the center of all work.*

### Youth Interest:

Students may identify themselves as committed to an exploration of fields related to eye health, vision care, or support for visually impaired populations in a variety of ways. Schools that encourage student personal narratives may notice a personal history with visual impairment. Schools with Academies, Pathways, CTE programs, or clubs may notice students gravitating toward the helping fields (e.g., medicine, education, assistive technology). Schools hosting career talks may notice students engaged in conversations with ophthalmologists, optometrists, opticians, special education teachers, lens manufacturers, braille writers, developers of adaptive technologies or guide dog trainers. Advisors of these students should encourage Youth to consider applying for a Project InSight Fellowship.

## Relationships

*Meaningful relationships are developed between students and adults.*

The Junior Fellowship will:

- Identify and value student existing social capital
- Support Youth interest development
- Develop Youth's confidence and capacity to outreach to prospective professionals
- Build Youth and school social capital
- Practice professional skills: professional email, cold calling, interviewing, follow-up

Here are a few ideas for professional exploration in fields related to eye health, vision care, and working with individuals with visual impairments:

- Ophthalmology and Optometry
- Adaptive technology
- Lens Crafting
- Orientation and Mobility
- Accessible architecture
- Special education
- Support animals and animal eye care

### **Identifying Professionals:**

Advisors should work with students to find appropriate professionals with whom they can connect. These professionals may be known contacts to the Advisor, school community, or within a student's personal network. A professional may also be someone a student and the advisor are meeting for the first time. Some tips for finding appropriate professionals are:

Research local professionals and organizations who employ professionals in the field of interest. Schools using ImBlaze may already have identified willing or prospective mentors in a field of interest. Be creative. It may be a challenge, for example, for a minor to secure an interview or shadow day in a hospital, but health care professionals also do work in neighborhood clinics, on mobile units, and in schools. A large manufacturing plant may be hesitant to allow students to work with heavy machinery, but a local optician or pharmacy may have on-site lens crafting services.

## Outreach to Professionals:

When reaching out to a professional to ask for an interview or site visit, it is important to have a clear plan. Below are samples of scripts/emails, interview questions, and a “Thank you plus” follow up letter. Please adapt them to meet your needs!

### Requesting an informational interview sample script:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am in \_\_\_\_\_ grade at \_\_\_\_\_. I am interested in learning about \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to speak with me about my interests? I would love to set up a time to do an informational interview with you to help me learn more about your profession. If you are willing to meet with me, could you please share a few times that might work for you?

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

### Sample informational interview questions:

1. What is your job title?
2. How did you get into this work?
3. Can you tell me a little about what you do?
4. What is something people might not know about your work that you think is important for them to know?
5. Who are or have been your mentors in your professional life?
6. Add additional questions that are specific to your interests...

### “Thank you plus” sample letter:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_. This was such a valuable experience for me because \_\_\_\_\_.

One of the most valuable things I learned from you was \_\_\_\_\_.

PLUS PROMPTS (use one of these or come up with one that fits your needs)::

- Are there other people you could connect me to who you think could help me learn more about working with the visually impaired?
- Would you be open to having me contact you in the future if I have further questions?
- After our conversation, I thought of a question that I wonder if you could answer...

Thank you again for taking the time to \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

**Documentation:**

For each experience with a professional, the youth is responsible for posting evidence of their interaction in ImBlaze. Examples of evidence include: notes from an informational interview or photos from a site visit. Other forms of evidence are also acceptable if agreed up with the Advisor.

**Wrap-Up and Reflect:**

The Advisor will support the Fellow in uploading documentation on ImBlaze. Once a youth has completed 10 professional interactions, request a meeting with the Project InSight Directors to share about the experiences and discuss interest in continued engagement. Stipends will be distributed after the meeting with the Co-Directors of Project InSight.