

Opening Doors: Station Application Guide

Download this guide to prepare your responses before starting the online application

Application Overview

Application Deadline: August 30, 2025

Estimated Time: 25-35 minutes

Format: Online form

Review Process: Applications reviewed by PMJA staff and DEI Committee

Notification: Selected stations notified by September 30, 2025

Before You Begin: Information to Gather

Station Leadership Approval

- ☐ Station management has authorized the application
- ☐ Contact information for authorizing manager
- ☐ Confirmation of payroll processing capabilities
- ☐ Budget approval for any additional compensation beyond PMJA funding

Staff Information

- ☐ Primary supervisor identified (name, title, experience)
- ☐ Current newsroom size and staff composition up to date <https://www.pmja.org/member-organizations>
- ☐ Other staff who will mentor/support the intern

Content Planning

- ☐ 3-5 specific story ideas related to science, technology, or economics in your community

- ☐ Assessment of current coverage in these areas
- ☐ Available resources and expertise

Logistics Planning

- ☐ Preferred semester selection (Fall 2025, Winter 2026, Spring 2026, Summer 2026)
- ☐ Housing assistance plan (especially important for non-preferred locations)
- ☐ Onboarding process outline
- ☐ Professional development opportunities available

Application Questions by Section

Section 1: Station Information

Basic contact and verification information

Key Requirements:

- Current PMJA membership
- **All newsroom staff MUST be listed in PMJA account before applying - <https://www.pmja.org/member-organizations>**
- Management authorization confirmed

Section 2: Internship Structure & Supervision

Question: Supervision and onboarding approach (250 words) *What to include:*

- Weekly check-in schedule and supervision structure
- Integration into editorial meetings and newsroom operations
- First week onboarding process and orientation plan
- Professional development opportunities and skill-building support
- Equipment, workspace, and resource access
- How other staff will support and mentor the intern

Tip: This combines supervision, onboarding, and professional development in one comprehensive response. Show you've thought through the practical details from day one through the full internship.

Section 3: Science, Technology & Economics Focus

Question: Station's approach to coverage (300 words)

- Current coverage approach OR development plans
- Community needs and opportunities in these areas
- How the intern will contribute to and enhance coverage
- Available resources, expertise, and connections
- Long-term vision for this coverage area

Question: Specific story ideas (200 words) *Provide 3-5 concrete examples with:*

- Story concept and angle
- Community impact and relevance
- Realistic scope for intern skill level

Section 4: Financial & Administrative

Key Confirmations Needed:

- Payroll processing capability
- Tax withholding responsibility
- **Minimum \$15/hour living wage commitment**
- Any additional compensation planned
- Management authorization for financial commitments

Important: Ensure your management team understands and has approved the financial and administrative responsibilities.

Section 5: Housing & Location

Housing support options:

- Affordable housing resource lists
- Staff connections for rental opportunities
- Temporary housing availability
- Housing stipends beyond salary
- Transportation and commuting assistance
- Cost of living guidance

For stations outside preferred locations: Comprehensive housing assistance plan required
(300 words) Must include:

- Specific steps to help intern find housing
- Timeline for housing search and support
- Available resources and staff connections
- Transportation solutions and accessibility
- Emergency backup plans and alternatives

Section 6: Station Culture & Commitment

Question: Why participate in Opening Doors? *(200 words) Consider addressing:*

- Alignment with station values
- Professional development commitment
- Community service goals
- Newsroom objectives

Question: Benefits to station and community *(200 words) Think about:*

- Enhanced coverage capabilities
- Fresh perspectives and energy
- Community connection opportunities
- Long-term talent pipeline

Question: Newsroom environment *(200 words) Highlight:*

- Current culture and practices
- Support for emerging journalists
- Mentorship approach

- Integration strategies

Tips for Strong Applications

Do:

- **Be specific** with examples and concrete plans
- **Show enthusiasm** for mentoring and professional development
- **Demonstrate understanding** of the program's goals
- **Highlight unique opportunities** your station offers
- **Address logistics thoroughly**, especially housing for non-preferred locations
- **Connect to community needs** in your coverage planning

Don't:

- Use generic responses that could apply to any station
- Underestimate the housing assistance requirements
- Forget to confirm management authorization
- Overlook the administrative requirements (payroll, taxes, etc.)
- Focus only on what you'll get without showing what you'll contribute

For Stations Outside Preferred Locations:

Your housing assistance plan is critical. Be thorough and specific:

- Research actual housing options and costs
- Identify staff willing to help with housing search
- Consider temporary housing for initial weeks
- Address transportation and cost of living
- Have backup plans ready

For Science, Technology & Economics Coverage in your community:

Whether you're established or developing:

- Connect to real community needs and interests
- Provide concrete, doable story ideas
- Show available resources and expertise
- Demonstrate long-term vision

Selection Criteria

Applications evaluated on:

- **Quality and comprehensiveness** of responses (20%)
- **Science/tech/economics focus** and community alignment (25%)
- **Supervision and support structure** (20%)
- **Inclusive newsroom culture** and commitment (15%)
- **Geographic** considerations (15%)
- **Housing and relocation support** (5%)

After You Apply

September 2025: Applications reviewed and station-student matching begins

September 30: Selected stations notified

October: Pre-internship orientation

October 2025-May 2026: 16-week internship period

Selected stations will:

- Review student profiles
- Participate in virtual interviews
- Confirm final matches
- Complete pre-internship planning

Questions?

Before applying: Review program details at <https://www.pmja.org/opening-doors-station-application>

Program questions: Contact training@pmja.org with "Opening Doors Question" in subject line

Checklist Before Submitting

- ☐ Station management has authorized the application
- ☐ PMJA membership is current and will be maintained
- ☐ All newsroom staff have been added to your PMJA account
- ☐ Payroll contact has confirmed ability to process intern payroll
- ☐ Primary supervisor is identified and committed
- ☐ Onboarding plan is outlined
- ☐ 3+ specific story ideas are ready
- ☐ Housing assistance plan is comprehensive (if outside preferred locations)
- ☐ All required commitments are understood and accepted
- ☐ Application is complete and reviewed for accuracy

Remember: Incomplete applications will not be considered. Take time to provide thoughtful, specific responses that show your station's readiness to provide an excellent internship experience.

For the most current information, visit: <https://www.pmja.org/opening-doors-station-application>