Effective cover letters:

• Express commitment to the mission of the organization

  Example:
  “This project was immediately exciting to me for many reasons, [including] the opportunity to
  support [the organization’s] mission….I am keenly aware of this country’s need to increase
  accessibility to health care services to the uninsured and low-income members of our community.”

• Show interest in the issues addressed by the nonprofit

  Examples:
  “Over the past few years, I have been in close contact with several people who work at one of the
  leading nonprofit affordable housing developers in the country. Through frequent correspondence,
  I have managed to learn a lot about the many stages involved in affordable housing development,
  from funding to marketing.”

  “Having grown up in a family of physicians and attended a year of medical school, I have gained a
  unique understanding of many of the issues that [the organization] faces.”

• Demonstrate familiarity with the organization’s work

  Examples:
  “The projects pertaining to the Economic and Civic Enterprise Portfolio are especially interesting to
  me. I would be eager to work on initiatives similar to the micro-finance banking [project].”

  “I am impressed by [the organization’s] focus on investments in initiatives to improve school
  governance, management and labor relations.”

• Address specifically how your skills and experience are relevant to the job

  Examples:
  “My three years of experience at [a consulting firm] and academic background in business and
  applied mathematics make me well-equipped to begin immediately on a project extending [the
  organization’s] current metrics and reporting system.”

  “[The] internship would allow me to continue to use my travel industry experience, my consulting
  background, and my business school research, which includes a case study I am currently writing
  on ecotourism.”

• Explain how the summer job relates to career plans, where appropriate

  Example:
  “My principal reason for getting an MBA is to better understand the economic principles that affect
  choices individuals and businesses make regarding environmental protection. With a deeper
  understanding of economic issues, I hope to help businesses and communities develop economic
  incentives to make environmentally sustainable decisions. I am excited to see that your summer
  internship meshes so well with my interests.”

• Cite volunteer experience

  Examples:
  “My nonprofit experience ranges from fundraising on the board of a battered women’s shelter to
  volunteer consulting on a marketing plan for an adoption counseling clinic.”

  “I bring to [the organization] exposure and experiences in nonprofit management ranging from
  organizing a more-than-50-member volunteer group for Friends of the Earth Japan to conducting
  a consulting project for the fundraising strategy of an educational nonprofit.”