

**An Overview of Post-Graduate Fellowships  
June 9, 2020 @ 6 p.m.**

**Introduction:**

One of the best ways to jumpstart your career in the social justice/civil rights/legal services sector is by securing a post-graduate public interest fellowship. Fellowships are usually for one- or two-year terms and provide an outstanding public service opportunity for recent law graduates, including judicial clerks, to launch their careers in the public interest. The rewards of securing fellowship are tremendous. Fellows can use their legal skills to effect positive change for disadvantaged populations. Moreover, most fellowships provide top-rate training, supervision, and networking opportunities. Having held a fellowship is itself an impressive credential, so even if continued employment with a host organization does not materialize, a fellow has a strong professional foundation on which to build.

*The application process can be time-consuming and challenging, but obtaining one of the many prestigious fellowships will provide a graduate with a great foundation for and entry into the legal profession.*

**Types of Fellowships:**

There are hundreds of fellowships available; many involve a complicated, competitive application process, while others are one- to two-year jobs that require nothing more than a résumé and cover letter.

- **Project Based:** A project-based fellowship is funded by a third-party organization, allowing the fellow to work – usually on a specific project – with a host organization. For example, a graduating law student may wish to establish a project assisting homeless veterans. A legal services organization may desire to host the student to set up and run this project but may not have the funding to do so. With the legal services organization's cooperation, the law student would apply to a fellowship funding organization to fund the project. There are several such funding organizations. In the public interest legal arena, Equal Justice Works and the Skadden Fellowship Foundation are the largest funders and among the most sought-after fellowships.
  
- **Organizational Fellowships:** An organization-based fellowship is funded by the organization for which the fellow is working. The American Civil Liberties Union, for instance, hosts several fellows working on various issues. To the extent that the organization employing the fellow is also funding the fellowship, this is like a staff attorney job where the employer is paying the employee's salary.

- ACLU (<https://www.aclu.org/careers?office=416>).
  - Center for Reproductive Rights, *CRR-CLS Fellowship* (<https://www.reproductiverights.org/jobs/externally-funded-fellowship>).
  - Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/about/fellowship>,
  - Juvenile Law Center Zubrow Fellowship (<http://www.jlc.org/about-us/who-we-are/working-at-jlc/zubrow-fellowship-childrens-law>)
- **Government fellowships:** Government entities, including city, state and federal governmental agencies, also coordinate fellowship or honors programs. The DOJ hosts a variety of post-graduate fellowships; various city law departments, including NYC and San Francisco have entry-level honors program. And the NJ Office of Attorney General hosts an honors program. Government fellowships can be found on both PSJD and [USAJobs](#)
  - **Academic/Clinic fellowships:** law schools and other academic/research institutions are popular hosts for postgraduate fellows. Many teaching-oriented fellowships are like organizational fellowships in that the hosting academic institution funds the Fellow. Some research-based fellowships, however, may require the fellowship applicant to secure funding from a third-party funder.
    - Georgetown University Law Center Graduate Fellowship Program for Future Law Professors (<http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/academic-programs/clinical-programs/our-clinics/iwhr/iwhr-fellowships.cfm>)
  - **Law Firms:** A small number of law firms offer public interest fellowships as well. Typically, fellowships are term-limited opportunities (one to two years) designed to give a recent law graduate or junior attorney experience in public interest practice.
    - Relman & Dane, PLLC – Relman Civil Rights Fellowship (<http://www.relmanlaw.com/hiring.php>)
    - Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobsen (<http://www.friedfrank.com/index.cfm?pageid=49>)
    - McCarter & English - <https://www.mccarter.com/insights/mccarter-english-launching-pro-bono-fellowship-program-to-help-newark-residents-by-roi-nj/>

### 3. Timing:

Fellowship deadlines, particularly the deadlines of high-profile fellowships, can be as early as the summer of the year before the start date. Deadlines are scattered throughout the fall and winter, and some fellowship deadlines are as late as April. The deadlines and application requirements can change from year to year. Sometimes the funder will make a change even after the current year's requirements are announced publicly. Deadlines may also be extended

in hopes of attracting more applicants. Do not just rely on a brochure or website, such as the Application Deadline Calendar on PSJD, for accurate information. Recheck the deadlines and requirements with the funder's website. Some of the large project-based fellowships' funders require students to secure a "host" (sometimes called "sponsoring") organization and draft a sophisticated proposal. In contrast, others typically do not require proposals.

#### 4. Components of an Application

Post-graduate fellowships are highly competitive, and the process can be time-consuming. Most fellowships want students or clerks who are goal-oriented and have deep connection to their goals and mission. For project-based fellowships, there is a two-step process – i.e. first you will need to identify a host organization with whom you will develop a proposal, and then you will apply to the fellowship funder – e.g. Skadden, EJW. Our next two workshops will focus on how to research host organizations and craft a compelling project proposal.

- **Personal Narrative:** Some fellowships will request that applicant draft an essay describing her/his commitment and relevant experience. Others request only a cover letter. Regardless of the format, you should aim to persuade the funder of your passion and capacity. The narrative breathes life into your application and allows the reader to get a sense of who you are.
- **Résumé:** A résumé is a marketing piece that you can use to highlight your commitment to public service and to the specific position you seek. You should include your qualifications for a specific fellowship, especially if your narrative has a word limit. For fellowships, you can generally be less concerned with the one-page rule and more focused on including all your public sector work experience, community service, volunteer experience, and other public interest activities. The more detailed you are, the more you demonstrate your commitment to a long-term public interest career path. However, if you lack experience in the field, you can still balance that by drafting a detailed narrative that demonstrates your knowledge of and commitment to the issues at hand.
- **Recommendations:** Letters of recommendation are particularly important for fellowships. Some will ask for a list of references and will expect that at least one law professor and one previous employer will be on the list. The best recommenders are those who can discuss your personal strengths and the quality of your work in detail. It is also helpful if your recommender can spotlight some of your skills and traits that make you the ideal fellowship candidate. If you are a self-starter, work well independently, and have a good rapport with clients, that is important for the funders to know.

#### 5. Next Steps:

**Self-Assessment:** Whether you are considering organization- or project-based fellowships, you must think about issues that make you passionate and goals that you would like to achieve during a fellowship. You should also think about the type of organization with which you would like to work.

- Who do you want to work with? Juveniles, homeless, immigrants?
- What do you want to do? Counseling, education, advocacy, policy work, community organizing?
- Where do you want to work?
  - Where in the world?
  - Where do you want to spend your days (courtroom, classroom, office)?
- Why are you doing this – objective?
- How do you like to work – multitask? Solo, group projects?

**Familiarize yourself with the resources:** In addition to assessing your interests, be sure to get a sense of the various resources

- review the Post-Graduate Fellowships Guide
- Familiarize yourself with PSJD's Advanced Search Website to identify organizations, project-based and other fellowships
- Review EJW and Skadden applications
- Set up a time to meet with Dean Friedman or Feathers

**Next Session: 6/30: Host Organizations**

For our next session we will focus on identifying host organizations and developing a project proposal. For those of you who are considering a project-based fellowships, there are several approaches – e.g.

- Contact organizations for whom you have worked as a summer intern, extern, and/or pro bono volunteer
- Reach out to Rutgers alumni who have served as fellows
- Read and respond to postings of organizations that are conducting internal competitions for students they wish to host