

## Rutgers Law School

# A GUIDE TO POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

*Updated June 2024*

***Using the Guide:*** This guide provides an overview of postgraduate fellowships, offers examples of various types of fellowships by category, and provides guidance on the application process. There are many more fellowships available, and additional guidance from advisors and others is indispensable. Furthermore, deadlines and specifications for fellowships often change and therefore we urge students to check each fellowship's web pages for up-to-date information. ***This Guide should be used in conjunction with the various job sites that provide updated information about postgraduate fellowships, including public service updates from Rutgers, PSJD, USA.gov, and Symplicity.com. Fellowship postings begin to come out in March of the year before the fellowship begins.***

**Part 1** of this Guide: Overview and guidance for all postgraduate legal fellowships.

**Part 2** of this Guide: A deeper focus on project-based fellowships, as they require some additional steps and considerations.

# ***PART ONE: Postgraduate Fellowships***

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# **PART 1: Postgraduate Fellowships**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

One of the best ways to begin your career in the social justice/civil rights/legal services sector is by securing a postgraduate public interest fellowship – and fellowships ought to be a part of any public interest job search.

Postgraduate fellowships are usually for a term of one or two years and provide public service opportunities for recent law graduates, including judicial clerks, to launch their careers in public interest. There are hundreds of fellowships available each year; while some involve a multi-step application process and a proposed project, others resemble a limited-term job, and require more familiar application materials. Some large project-based fellowships have deadlines in the early fall, and students must have already secured a host/sponsoring organization, developed a project, and drafted a proposal. However, there are other types of fellowships that typically do not require proposals and have deadlines that run throughout the academic year.

Applying for fellowships can be time-consuming, but don't be daunted. The key to success is approaching the process in an organized and well-thought-out manner. While fellowships may vary in terms of their specifications, their selection criteria and their priorities, all funders take a variety of qualifications into account, including both academic credentials and relevant experience. Be diligent, take the time to research each fellowship carefully, and try to gain some insight into what the funders are looking for.

Public interest fellowships are a terrific opportunity for a number of reasons. They allow graduates to pursue their passions and interests creatively. Moreover, most fellowships provide top-rate training and supervision and serve as an impressive credential for attorneys as they build their careers. They also provide networking opportunities, and fellows can develop strong professional contacts in their field of interest. Obtaining a fellowship will provide a graduate with a solid foundation for the next step.

While fellowships are a fantastic way to launch a career, keep in mind that they are not the only way of securing a postgraduate legal position in the public interest/public service sector. Also, not all kinds of fellowships are for everyone. However, we strongly recommend that students become knowledgeable about fellowship opportunities and think seriously about them. Students should cast a wide net and explore all entry points into their desired careers.

We recommend students begin the fellowship process in the late spring of 2L year (or 3L year if you will be clerking) and take full advantage of the resources offered by the Pro Bono and Public Interest Office and the Center for Career Development. We hope you will find this guide useful as you begin to target postgraduate fellowships.

## **II. TYPES OF FELLOWSHIPS**

Fellowships come in all shapes and sizes, but for the most part they fall into several general categories, which are outlined below. Note that the first two categories (project-based and organization-based) are the most common.

### **a. Project-based Fellowships**

#### ***About Project-based Fellowships:***

Project-based fellowships are funded by foundations and provide support for recent law graduates to carry out a project in conjunction with an existing nonprofit organization (often referred to as the “host organization”). The project is developed in partnership with the host organization to meet an existing need, and will reflect both the applicant’s interests, strengths, and experiences, and the host organization’s priorities and capacity. First, the applicant will secure a host organization and together with the host organization will design the project. Then, the applicant will apply to the funder with the proposed project and a commitment from the host. The funder will select projects/fellows to fund itself or it will try to match projects/fellows with “sponsors,” such as law firms, that will commit to pay the fellow’s salary

and sometimes additional expenses. Typically, projects will propose to expand the scope of the host organization's existing legal services, often by developing a new advocacy strategy or by reaching a new target population or increasing the effectiveness of the organization's services to a particular population. These fellowships may be open to current 3Ls/4Ls, judicial clerks and/ or recent graduates. The term of a fellowship is usually one or two years.

Each foundation that funds project-based fellowships has its own eligibility criteria for the type of project, the applicant, and the host organization. Funders may also differ in the application and selection process, and in the subject matter, legal approaches and location they seek to fund. Understanding these differences will help you create stronger applications.

Application deadlines for most project-based fellowships are one year before the commencement of the fellowship and typically take place in the fall. **Usually, this means that the application will be due in the fall of your 3L/4L year or the year during which you are clerking.** These applications do require considerable time and preparatory work as they require the applicant to secure a host organization and develop a project proposal before the application is actually drafted and submitted in September.

Applicants may partner with an organization they have worked with before, or they may seek a commitment from a new organization through a formal or informal application process. Either way, the applicant and the partner together will design a project that will address individual or community needs that are not otherwise adequately met. A strong application will propose a project that the applicant is especially suited to carry out, and that fits well within the organization's goals and mission and enables the organization to enhance or expand its services.

**\*\* NOTE:** A great deal of useful information is available on each fellowship's website, including past projects and host organizations; eligibility details for applicant, host, and project; application instructions; and "tips" for making a strong application. Some also have valuable information sessions online or in person, or recorded on their websites.

*We offer more guidance and recommendations for putting together a project-based fellowship*

application in **Part II: Project-based Fellowships.**

***Examples of Project-based Fellowships:***

**Equal Justice Works (EJW)**

EJW organizes, trains, and supports public service-minded law students through summer and postgraduate public interest fellowships. Among these, about 70 design-your-own fellowships are awarded each year to 3Ls/4Ls and recent graduates. Each of these two-year fellowships is funded by a law firm or corporation, and that firm or corporation has a role in the final selection. Applicants must design a project in conjunction with a nonprofit host organization which brings something new to the organization (distinguishing the fellow's role from that of a staff attorney). This project must be a carefully designed initiative involving innovative and effective legal advocacy on behalf of individuals, groups, or issues not adequately represented in the legal system. Advocacy may entail a wide range of approaches, including, but not limited to, community legal education, training, organization of direct services, litigation, transactional work, and administrative or legislative efforts.

***Application deadline is September 10, 2024.***

***[www.equaljusticeworks.org/opportunities/design-your-own-fellowship](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/opportunities/design-your-own-fellowship)***

**Independence Foundation Public Interest Law Fellowship**

The Independence Foundation Public Interest Law Fellowship Program supports public interest fellows to work at organizations in the Philadelphia region that provide free legal services to disadvantaged clients. Applicants secure a position with a sponsoring organization and develop a project before applying for the fellowship. The focus of the fellow's work must be on direct representation. Applicants can be current or recent graduates. The fellowships are one year, presumptively renewable for a second year.

***Application deadline is October 7, 2024.***

***[www.independencefoundation.org/fellowships/public-interest-law-fellowships](http://www.independencefoundation.org/fellowships/public-interest-law-fellowships)***

**Justice Catalyst Fellowship**

The Justice Catalyst Fellowship activates path-breaking approaches to social justice lawyering and affirmative litigation which have a real-world impact and improve the lives of low-wage



workers, the poor, and the marginalized. To this end, the Catalyst Fellowship also launches and supports early-stage projects with existing public interest organizations or public agencies that employ or wish to adopt innovative approaches or legal strategies to address social problems. Justice Catalyst administers one-year (potentially renewable) project-based fellowships for graduating law students and for those up to two years out of law school to support public-interest work at nonprofit organizations as well as unions, plaintiff and public interest law firms, and government agencies.

*Applications are typically due in December for the following year. An early prospectus may be submitted in the fall for preliminary feedback.*

[www.justicecatalyst.org/fellowships](http://www.justicecatalyst.org/fellowships)

### **Maida Post-Graduate Public Interest Fellowship Program**

The Maida Public Interest Fellowship Program was established in 2015 through the generosity of James and Dr. Sharon Maida. The fellowship aims to acknowledge, support, and sustain public interest legal work for the students and graduates of Rutgers Law School. Rutgers Law students and recent alumni secure a commitment from a public interest organization or government entity that will provide supervision and employer-paid benefits. The applicant then applies for the fellowship with a project or a work plan. The term of the fellowship is one or two years.

*Applications are typically due in March. Note that it is not offered every year.*

### **Skadden Fellowship**

The Skadden Foundation, funded by a bequest from the firm, awards 28 two-year fellowships each year to graduating law students and outgoing judicial clerks. Fellows provide civil legal services to people living in poverty (though Skadden does not fund civil projects that work with adults detained in the carceral system). The guiding principle of this fellowship is to improve civil legal services for the poor and fight barriers to economic independence. The applicant must design a detailed and viable project together with a nonprofit host organization capable of providing exceptional supervision.

*Applications for Fall 2025 are due September 6, 2024.*

[www.skaddenfellowships.org/applicant](http://www.skaddenfellowships.org/applicant)

*There are a few fellowships from law schools that are available to all law students, e.g.*

### **Berkeley Law Foundation**

Each year, the Berkeley Law Foundation awards grants to recent law graduates or new lawyers undertaking public interest projects that serve legally disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

*Grants are usually awarded in the spring of the year the fellowship begins*

[www.berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships](http://www.berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships)

### **Columbia Law School Postgraduate J.D. Public Interest and Government Fellowship**

Columbia Pathways fellowship is available to graduating law students who demonstrate a serious commitment to, and preparation for, careers as public interest, government, or human rights lawyers. Recipients work at a qualifying host organization in the U.S. or abroad for one year.

*Applications are typically due in early May for the fall of that same year*

[www.law.columbia.edu/careers/public-interest/postgraduate-fellowships/columbia-fellowships](http://www.law.columbia.edu/careers/public-interest/postgraduate-fellowships/columbia-fellowships)

- **Entrepreneurial Fellowships**

Entrepreneurial fellowships provide funding to new projects and organizations that serve unmet legal needs.

### ***Examples of Entrepreneurial Fellowships:***

#### **Ashoka Fellowship**

The Ashoka Fellowship program aims to sponsor the next generation of social entrepreneurs—innovative individuals who can find solutions to society’s most pressing social, cultural, and environmental challenges in the United States and across the world. Fellows receive a three-year stipend, individualized support from Ashoka, and a supportive network with other fellows and alumni. You must receive a nomination to become an Ashoka Fellow; although the nominations are usually from someone else, you can also nominate yourself.

## **Echoing Green**

The Echoing Green Fellowship provides funding and support to budding leaders and their organizations. Organizations must pursue novel solutions to major problems. The organizations and leaders that Echoing Green works with are diverse and span across the globe. One of the major focuses of Echoing Green is racial equity, and it seeks applicants who will transform or dismantle systems and practices that lead to disparities determined by race in the applicant's communities. The program also seeks leaders who can identify the root causes of the inequity they are addressing and are able to show how their work is advancing innovative solutions to address those inequities on a systematic level.

## **Soros Justice Fellowships**

The Soros Justice Fellowships fund individuals to undertake projects that advance reform and catalyze change on a range of issues facing the U.S. criminal legal system. The fellowships are part of a larger effort to reduce the destructive impact of current criminal justice policies on the lives of individuals. There are three fellowships that fall under the Justice Fellowship: Advocacy Fellowships (duration 18 months), Media Fellowships (duration 12 months), and Youth Fellowships (duration 18 months). Applicants should have a clear understanding of the intersection of criminal justice issues with the needs of low-income communities and people of color communities.

*Typically, applications are due in November for a fellowship beginning in the fall of the following year.*

### **b. Organization-based Fellowships**

#### ***About Organization-based Fellowships:***

A number of nonprofit organizations administer their own fellowships. The organization determines the salary, length of the fellowship, and the scope of the fellow's work within the organization. Candidates apply directly to the organization, and the organization selects the fellow. The fellowship is basically a term-limited job with the organization, typically designed for new law graduates or attorneys with little experience in the practice area. There is no expectation that the fellow will continue working with the organization when the fellowship ends. Indeed, unless a staff position opens or the organization is able to find additional

funding to increase its staff, the fellow is unlikely to remain. However, the fellow is well-positioned to obtain the next job in the same field.

Although organization-based fellowships are competitive, the application process for them is relatively straightforward and familiar. You do not have to develop your own project; instead, the focus is on your commitment to the work the organization already does. PSJD.org offers the most comprehensive list of organization-based fellowships.

***The following are examples of Organization-based Fellowships:***

**ACLU Fellowship (examples)**

- **ACLU-Marvin Karpatkin Fellowship:** The Marvin Karpatkin Fellowship is a 2- year fellowship in the ACLU’s Racial Justice Program (RJP).
- **Nadine Strossen Fellowship with the National Security Project:** The National Security Project works on behalf of people and communities harmed by the government in the name of national security.
- **William Brennan Fellowship with the Speech, Privacy and Technology Project:** The Brennan Fellowship focuses on First Amendment advocacy.
- Also, each year **various local affiliates of the ACLU** offer fellowships.

**Center for Appellate Litigation (CAL)**

The Center for Appellate Litigation (CAL) is a leading holistic legal services organization dedicated to providing high-quality appellate and post-conviction representation to indigent New Yorkers in criminal matters. Staff attorney fellowships are three-year positions, open to 3Ls, judicial clerks and recent graduates. Fellows gain extensive exposure to appellate practice and to all aspects of post-conviction proceedings. This entails building relationships with clients; writing briefs and arguing in the Appellate Division and Appellate Term; writing motions to vacate convictions; and appearing in court for post-conviction proceedings.

*Typically, applications are due in early November for a fellowship beginning in September of the following year.*

### **Disability Rights Advocates-Sidney M. Wolinsky Fellowship**

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) is the leading disability rights legal center, and works to advance equal rights and opportunities for disabled people across America. This fellowship is for two years, and entails working with the DRA in New York or California while receiving mentorship from more experienced lawyers.

### **Equal Justice Initiative Legal Fellowship**

The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) was founded in 1989 to tackle issues surrounding mass incarceration and excessive punishment (including the death penalty) in the American criminal legal system. EJI's more recent initiative focuses on race and poverty through historical research and consideration of remedies designed to address contemporary and historic injuries that many people of color have experienced in the rural south. This two-year fellowship is open to 3Ls and recent graduates.

*Typically, applications are due by early November for a fellowship beginning in September of the following year.*

### **If/When/How-Reproductive Justice Fellowship Program**

The Reproductive Justice Fellowship Program (RFJP) fellows are placed with partner organizations around the country for a year-long program that provides them with experience, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

### **Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights George N. Lindsay Fellowship**

The George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellowship is for recent law school graduates to work with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights in Washington DC. Lindsay Fellows work with lawyers on pressing civil rights issues in areas such as voting rights, economic justice, criminal justice, hate crimes, fair housing, and education. The Lawyers' Committee Public Policy, Special Litigation and Advocacy, Fellows become involved with substantive legal work, including co-counseling litigation with prominent law firms and non-litigation activities that include legislative and public policy advocacy.

*This is an early process: applications are typically due in June for a fellowship beginning in September of the following year.*

### **Lynn Walker Huntley Social Justice Fellowship**

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) together offer the Lynn Walker Huntley Social Justice Fellowship. This two-year fellowship helps early-career attorneys develop the skills and experiences needed to advance racial justice in education. As part of SEF's Public Policy and Advocacy team, the fellow develops and implements strategies that advance education justice policies at the local, state, and federal levels. Fellows also participate in impact litigation under the mentorship of SPLC's legal department. Focusing on the south, the fellow will be based in Atlanta GA.

*Typically, applications are due in the early fall for a fellowship beginning in September of the following year.*

### **Reporters Committee-Jack Nelson-Dow Jones Foundation Legal Fellowship**

The Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press in Washington DC is dedicated to protecting the First Amendment rights of journalists and provides several different fellowships. The one-year Jack Nelson-Dow Jones Foundation Legal Fellowship is for a recent law school graduate and provides the fellow with the opportunity to participate in trial and appellate court litigation focused on state and federal freedom of information law. The fellow will also contribute to RCFP's amicus and policy work and respond to inquiries from journalists and news organizations.

### **Zubrow Fellowship**

The Sol and Helen Zubrow Fellowship in Children's Law provides an opportunity to engage in a wide variety of advocacy efforts on behalf of children in the foster care, juvenile and criminal justice systems. Fellows are involved in training, legislative efforts, litigation, policy work, and some direct representation on issues ranging from the rights of dependent youth aging out of the foster care system to the needs of incarcerated children. This two-year fellowship is with the Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia.

**c. Cohort Fellowships (funder selects fellow; places fellow in selected org)**

***About Cohort Fellowships:***

There are a few fellowship programs that don't quite fit into the "project-based" or "organization-based" category. We will call them "cohort fellowships." Applicants apply to the funder for the fellowship. The funder selects the fellows and places them in organizations they have identified to provide needed legal services. The funder has identified the area of practice and the partner organizations, so applicants do not submit a project proposal. The funder provides some of the training and support for the fellows.

***Examples of Cohort Fellowships:***

**Equal Justice Works**

Equal Justice Work runs several two-year hybrid fellowship programs in different substantive areas. Fellows are placed in legal services offices in locations throughout the United States. Equal Justice Works contributes to training, support, and community building for the fellows.

Housing Justice

Fellows provide legal advice, referrals, and full representation for tenants, in support of safe, fair, and affordable housing to residents of VA, MD and SC.

Elder Justice

Fellows address the gap in civil legal services for victims of elder abuse and exploitation, with a special emphasis on serving rural communities.

Disaster Relief

Fellows provide comprehensive legal services before, during and after a disaster.

Crime Victims Advocacy Program

Fellows help to increase access to legal aid for survivors of crime in underserved communities.

**Immigrant Justice Corps**

Responding to the absence of counsel in immigration proceedings in New York City, Immigrant Justice Corps was established in 2014 with a mission to recruit, train, and populate the immigration field with high quality legal advocates. Now, IJC awards 28 2-year fellowships

each year, and places fellows with selected host organizations across the country. IJC provides training, legal skills development and community building.

*Applications are typically due in March of the fellowship year.*

#### **d. Clinical Fellowships**

##### ***About Clinical Fellowships:***

There are a number of clinical fellowships that provide opportunities for recent graduates to pursue work in public interest, by teaching and working in a law school clinic. These fellowships can be a gateway to a clinical teaching career, and can also be an opportunity for high-level training in specific areas of public interest law. Most of these fellowships are tailored to attorneys with clerkship and/or practice experience, but some are open to 3L/4L applicants. Many offer fellows the opportunity to earn an LL.M. through their work in the fellowship. These fellowships are best suited for students who had considerable in-house clinical experience in law school.

##### ***Examples of Clinical Fellowships:***

##### **Georgetown University Law Center's Clinical Fellowships**

Georgetown Law School annually awards a number of clinical fellowships. Each clinical fellowship is associated with one of the Law Center's clinical programs and provides fellows with the opportunity to engage with the work of a specific clinic, participate in a year-long teacher training course, "Elements of Clinical Pedagogy," supervise students, and fulfill requirements for an LL.M. Fellowships are typically for a period of 2 years. In addition to subject matter, application deadlines and requirements may vary among programs. Below is a ***selected*** list of Georgetown Law School Clinics that regularly host fellowship programs:

- Appellate Litigation: This clinic handles a variety of matters at the appellate level before the D.C. courts, federal courts of appeals, and the United States Supreme Court.
- Center for Applied Legal Studies: This fellowship focuses specifically on teaching in a clinical setting. The clinic represents refugees seeking political asylum in the U.S.



- Criminal Justice (Prettyman & Stiller fellows): This clinic represents individuals charged with misdemeanor cases in the D.C. Superior Court and prisoners in parole revocation proceedings before the U.S. Parole Commission.
- Federal Legislation Clinic: The goal of this clinic is to provide a comprehensive education regarding the federal legislative and administrative process through active involvement in selected pieces of legislation and regulations.
- International Women's Human Rights Clinic: The International Human Rights Clinic works on an array of topics together with partner NGOs or advocates.
- Social Enterprise and Non-profit Clinic: This clinic provides corporate and transactional legal services to social enterprises, including nonprofit organizations, cooperative associations and small businesses.

#### **Pace Law School-Environmental Litigation Clinic Graduate Fellowship**

The fellow will work part-time in Pace's Environmental Law Program while working toward an LL.M. in Environmental Law.

#### **University of Baltimore- Clinic Fellowship Teacher Training Program**

In this three-year program, fellows are trained to become expert clinical teachers, social justice lawyers, and scholars. Fellows are supported to gain clinical teaching experience, to produce scholarship and to secure their next position.

#### **University of California, Los Angeles School of Law-Binder Clinical Fellowship Program**

This fellowship is typically for two years and was created for individuals looking to make a transition from law practice into legal academia. The program offers opportunities for clinical teaching and research designed to prepare the fellow to seek a permanent clinical faculty position at a law school.

### **University of Oregon–Domestic Violence Clinic Fellowship**

This attorney position will be part of the Domestic Violence Clinic. This position is a direct-service position and does not have an educational component. It reports to the faculty director and will be mentored by the clinic supervisor.

### **Yale Law School’s Robert M. Cover Fellowship in Public Interest Law**

This is a two-year fellowship designed for a lawyer with at least two years of practice experience who is considering a career in law school clinical teaching. The fellow will work with one of the law school’s clinics – representing clients, supervising students, assisting in teaching classes, and working on one’s own scholarship.

#### **e. Academic Fellowships**

##### ***About Academic Fellowships:***

A number of schools offer opportunities for law students pursuing academic careers to gain valuable research and writing experience. These fellowships are designed to provide the fellow with a foundation to launch an entry-level academic position.

##### ***Examples of Academic Fellowships:***

### **University of Chicago Law School, Harry A. Bigelow Teaching Fellowship**

Each year the University of Chicago Law School awards six Harry A. Bigelow Teaching Fellowships. The fellowships offer law school graduates an opportunity to prepare for an academic career. Fellows can pursue scholarly interests, attend workshops, interact with other faculty, and audit courses or seminars.

### **University of Wisconsin William H. Hastie Fellowship Program**

The program provides fellows with an opportunity to prepare for a career in teaching law. The two-year law school fellowship reflects a commitment to diversity in the legal profession and particularly encourages applications from candidates of color and other communities underrepresented in the legal field. Fellows pursue their scholarly agenda and receive mentoring in both teaching and scholarly work.

## **f. Government Fellowships**

### ***About Government Fellowships:***

Government Fellowships, typically referred to as “Honors Programs,” serve as the way new attorneys can secure entry-level positions, and applications are typically available only to law students immediately after graduation or after a judicial clerkship. Postings announcing attorney honors program openings are available on [USAJobs](#) and are consolidated and tracked in the Government Honors and Internship Handbook prepared by The Arizona University James E. Rogers College of Law (the “Arizona Guide”). Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of both resources.

### ***Examples of Government Fellowships:***

- ***Federal***

#### **Department of Justice Attorney General Honors Program**

The largest government honors program is the U.S. Department of Justice Attorney General’s Honors Program. It is the only way for new attorneys to enter the Department of Justice. Participating DOJ organizations include the antitrust, civil, civil rights, criminal, environment and natural resources, and tax divisions; the federal bureau of prisons; the executive office for the immigration review; the U.S. Trustees’ office; and select U.S. Attorney’s offices. For more information on the program and application, visit [justice.gov/legal-careers/entry-level-attorneys](http://justice.gov/legal-careers/entry-level-attorneys).

*Applications for these programs open in mid-summer with application deadlines in July–October.*

#### **The Barbara A. Ringer Copyright Honors Program**

The Ringer Honors Program offers eighteen to twenty-four-month fellowships for attorneys in the initial stages of their careers who demonstrate exceptional ability and interest in copyright law (Ringer Fellows). Ringer Fellows work closely with senior attorneys and others in the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), the Office of Policy and International Affairs (PIA),

the Office of the Register (REG), and/or the Office of Registration Policy and Practice (RPP) on a range of copyright-related law and policy matters.

### **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)–Honors Attorney Program**

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's Honors Attorney Program is a two-year entry-level professional development program. It is an opportunity for students in their final year of law school, new law school graduates in a post-graduate program, and recently graduated judicial clerks to learn and work in support of the FDIC's mission of maintaining stability and public confidence in the nation's financial system.

*Typically, applications are due in September of the year before the fellowship begins.*

- ***State***

### **State Attorneys General Offices**

State attorneys general offices (State AGOs), including New Jersey's, have a variety of job opportunities for new attorneys. Some state AGOs offer one-year fellowships, while others have Honors Attorney Programs. The American Constitution Society posts a video of a panel presentation and discussion about these opportunities at

[cslaw.org/video/opportunities-in-public-service-state-ag-honors-programs-fellowships/](http://cslaw.org/video/opportunities-in-public-service-state-ag-honors-programs-fellowships/)

### **The Empire State Fellows Program**

The Empire State Fellows Program is a full-time two-year leadership training program that prepares the next generation of professionals for careers as New York State policymakers. At the end of the fellowship, a performance review process will identify Empire State Fellows that will be given the opportunity to continue to serve as leaders in New York State government after completing the program.

### **g. Firm-Sponsored Public Interest/Pro Bono Fellowships**

#### ***About Firm-Sponsored Fellowships:***

Law firms have developed a variety of public interest fellowship models. In all of them, the fellow is paid by the firm for a period while they engage in public interest work. The models

are: 1) a law firm places a fellow with a designated public interest organization for a fixed time, with or without a commitment to work with the sponsoring law firm; 2) a law firm has the fellow work within the firm exclusively on *pro bono* matters, and 3) a public interest law firm hires a fellow to work essentially as an entry-level associate for a specific term.

### **Example one: Combining work at a law firm with work at a non-profit**

#### **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobsen**

The Fried Frank Civil Rights Fellowship was created to bridge the worlds of private law firm litigation and public service law in collaboration with two of the country's leading civil rights advocacy organizations, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (NAACP LDF) and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). The Fried Frank Civil Rights Fellowship provides an entry-level lawyer with the opportunity to spend two years as a Fried Frank litigator and then two years as a staff attorney with NAACP LDF or MALDEF. At the end of their four-year commitment, the fellows are encouraged to interview to return to Fried Frank or apply to continue at the relevant civil rights organization.

### **Example two: Working at a law firm and focusing on their *pro bono* docket**

#### **John J. Gibbons Fellowship in Public Interest & Constitutional Law, NJ**

Gibbons P.C. annually sponsors the two-year John J. Gibbons Fellowship in Public Interest & Constitutional Law. Preferably, the selected person has already served a judicial clerkship or been actively working in the field of public interest law; only in extraordinary cases will persons who are currently third-year law students be considered for the Fellowship. The Gibbons Fellow must have demonstrated a real commitment to public interest work.

#### **Lowenstein Sandler Pro Bono Fellowship, NJ**

The *pro bono* fellow will be a member of the team of the Lowenstein Center for the Public Interest for one year before cycling into the litigation department, where a two-year commitment is preferable. The Pro Bono Fellow will be responsible for a docket of *pro bono* litigation matters under the supervision of Center leadership.

### **McCarter & English Pro Bono Fellowship for the City of Newark, NJ**

This two-year *pro bono* fellowship provides an attorney with the opportunity to be part of the firm's pro bono program and to focus on legal services and policy development for the benefit of low-income individuals and families residing in Newark, with a particular emphasis on housing. Judicial clerkships and fluency in Spanish or other languages commonly spoken in Newark are preferred.

### **Example three: Working at a public interest law firm**

#### **Bredhoff & Kaiser PLLC, Washington, D.C.**

Bredhoff & Kaiser has a national practice representing both international and local labor unions and related organizations (such as pension, health and welfare funds), non-profits, and individuals. Areas of practice include employee benefits and tax matters, organizing rights, labor disputes, and internal union matters. Lawyers practice before federal and state courts at the trial and appellate levels, as well as administrative and other tribunals. The one-year Bredhoff & Kaiser Greenfield Fellowship program offers the opportunity to work alongside members of the firm on a variety of matters. With appropriate supervision, fellows take on real and increasing responsibility for factual and legal case development.

#### **Cohen Milstein Fellowship**

Cohen Milstein is a plaintiff-side litigation law firm that represents interests of individuals, whistleblowers, public entities and other institutions against corporate wrongdoing. The Cohen Milstein Fellowship offers recent law school graduates an opportunity to participate in all aspects of the firm's work, build litigation skills, experience litigation under different substantive areas of law, and explore the diverse career paths available for public interest litigators in the private sector. Over the course of their one-year term fellows will work with attorneys in practice areas across the firm, which include antitrust, securities & investor protection, civil rights & employment, consumer protection and employee benefits.

#### **Katz Banks Kumin, Washington, DC**

Katz Banks Kumin is an employment and whistleblower law firm and offers a one-year litigation fellowship. The fellowship offers new attorneys with a commitment to employment

law, civil rights and/or public interest issues the opportunity to work along with the firm's lawyers on whistleblower, employment discrimination, sexual harassment and civil rights cases.

### **Loevy & Loevy, Chicago, IL**

Loevy & Loevy is a civil rights law firm based in Chicago. The firm specializes in police misconduct, prisoners' rights, whistleblowers and class action matters, and litigates cases around the country. The two-year Justice Fellowship offers practicing attorneys, judicial law clerks, and law graduates committed to civil rights and criminal justice an opportunity to participate in all aspects of the firm's trial and appellate level civil rights practice, including its wrongful convictions, police shootings, and prisoners' rights practices.

## **III. BASIC TIMELINE**

Fellowship applications take varying amounts of time to complete, and deadlines are scattered throughout the year. Not all fellowships require the same materials, or have the same priorities, and you will want to tailor your materials for each fellowship application. It is important that you give yourself enough time to identify fellowships of interest, confirm the deadlines, know what materials are required for each, have a good understanding of what the funders value, and have all the pieces you need to apply. Always double check the deadlines and requirements by looking at the organization's website, or by calling.

Project-based fellowships have deadlines beginning in early September of the year before the fellowship begins. Because they require the applicant to secure a host organization and develop a project in order to submit an application, they involve significant advance preparation. For these fellowships, we recommend you start the process in the late spring of the year before the fellowship begins.

Application requirements for organization-based fellowships are more familiar: cover letter, resume, transcript, and references (and often a writing sample). For these applications there

is no need to secure a host organization or develop a project. However, the cover letter is very important. Deadlines vary, but some organization fellowships and many government fellowships have deadlines in the summer and in early September of the year before the fellowship would begin.

We suggest you set up your PSJD account by April or May of your 2L year (or 3L/4L year if you will be clerking) to alert you when fellowships are posted throughout the year.

**Here's how to set up your PSJD account:**

Go to PSJD.org. If you have not already created an account – do so! Then log on. Select the “Search Jobs” tab, and then, under the “Refine Search” sidebar on the right, “Job Qualities”. Under “Job Type,” you will find the following categories of postgraduate fellowships:

- Organizational (Fellowships administered and funded by the same organization)
- Project-Based (Fellowship funders AND host organizations seeking candidates with whom to develop a project proposal)
- Clinical/Academic (Fellowships with a teaching component)

*To save this search, click the bell icon. Then you can opt to receive email alerts.*

## **IV. BEGINNING STEPS:(or “How do I get started?”)**

This is all doable!

Start early!

Get organized!

- Think about your goals and your skills
- Do your research
- Talk with people
- Use the resources here at the law school



### **a. Self- assessment**

In thinking about which fellowship opportunities would be a good fit for you, and to maximize the value of your advisor's work with you, we encourage you to think about the following. (not to worry if you don't have answers yet):

Do you have a dream job for after graduation?

What are your short and long-term goals?

What have been the most meaningful experiences for you in law school or during summers?

Is there a population you want to serve?

What legal issues interest you the most?

What issues are you passionate about?

Are you geographically flexible?

What kind of work do you like? What work do you hope to do?

Research and writing

Interviewing and counseling clients

Representing clients in court

Advocating orally (appeals)

Drafting education materials

Community organizing

Other

What organizations interest you? Why?

## **b. Resources**

Beginning in the late spring, monitor PSJD and Symplicity for fellowship postings. The Pro Bono and Public Interest Office and the Center for Career Development often send emails with opportunities.

### **PSJD**

PSJD (Public Service Job Directory) offers the most comprehensive list of organization-based fellowships and project-based fellowship funders. A good number of organizations looking to host a fellow for a project-based fellowship also post there. But remember, not all organizations will craft a posting to host a fellowship candidate – so do not be limited by official postings in your search for a host for a project-based fellowship.

#### ***Again, here's how:***

Go to PSJD.org. If you have not already created an account – do so! Then log on. Select the “Search Jobs” tab from the bar at the top and then, under the “Refine Search” sidebar on the right, “Job Qualities”. Under “Job Type,” are the following categories of postgraduate fellowships:

- Organizational (Fellowships administered and funded by the same organization)
- Project-Based (Fellowship funders AND host organizations seeking candidates with whom to develop a project proposal)
- Clinical/Academic (Fellowships with a teaching component)

*To save this search, click the bell icon. Then you can opt to receive email alerts!*

Additional resources on PSJD:

Up at the top of the screen, select the tab “Explore Advice” and then “Postgraduate Fellowships.” There you will find useful resources providing advice on fellowship applications, and a calendar of application deadlines.

### **Symplicity**

Any fellowship funding or fellowship hosting announcements that is sent to Rutgers Law School is posted on Symplicity. Thus, while Symplicity is a useful resource, it is not exhaustive and must be used in conjunction with other resources.

### **Organization websites**

Organizations offering fellowship will usually have information and instructions on their websites. Organizations seeking to host a fellow for a project-based fellowship application sometimes have postings on their website, but many do not (so don't be limited to what is posted).

### **Funder websites**

Funders' websites (eg, Skadden, EJW, Justice Catalyst) contain great information about their fellowships including guidelines, application instructions, and advice. You can also find lists of former fellows, host organizations and projects that have been funded,

### **People**

Talking with people is necessary and valuable! This is true even at early stages. Alumni, current students, faculty members, former fellows, former supervisors and, of course, your public interest advisors are likely to have useful information about fellowships and organizations, and may be able to connect you with other practitioners working in your area of interest.

For those of you considering project-based fellowships, practitioners and clinic professors are great resources for identifying current issues and unmet needs.

And finally, if you are considering fellowships – or are interested in other postgraduate public interest opportunities, please -

**\*\*\*\**Meet with Dean Friedman or your other public interest advisors*\*\*\*\***

*Do this early, even if you are unsure about going forward.*

### **c. A Word About Project-based Fellowships**

You may be thinking “How do I get started with THESE?” “How can I possibly come up with a project idea?” *YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO DO THIS ALONE.* **Part II** of this Guide is focused specifically on Project-based Fellowships. To get started, you will be using the resources listed above. In thinking about fellowship hosts and project ideas, you will be asking:

- What are the issues I find most compelling?
- With which populations do I want to work?
- What organizations do I like?
- What are some unmet needs that a fellowship project could address?

## **V. THE APPLICATION**

### **a. Overview**

All fellowship applications are different. You want to pay careful attention to:

- who is eligible to apply
- the specific goals of the fellowship
- The requirements and components of each application

Overall, think about your application as a piece of advocacy: its purpose is to convey why you are the right person for this project or work and, if you are proposing a project, that the project addresses an important need and is realistic within the time frame given.

All fellowship funders look for commitment. But what exactly is commitment? Essentially it is a demonstration of deep and genuine caring for the issues and goals of the fellowship, thoughtful articulation of why you want the fellowship, and how you have developed the necessary skills and knowledge to carry it out.

Of course, commitment is expressed by the things you have done (e.g., prior work with the fellowship organization and/or experience with the legal issues and/or client population through clinics, externships, coursework, summers, pro bono). But also important are your

thoughts about your experiences, the genesis of your interests, and why the work is meaningful and important to you. Your cover letter or personal statements will pull together your experiences and add these important elements that a resume does not adequately express.

Every fellowship application will require:

- a cover letter or personal statement
- a resume
- recommendations

Many will also require:

- a writing sample
- a transcript

Project-based fellowship will ask for additional materials, including:

- a project description, including an explanation of the need you have identified, the goals of your project and how the project will work
- information from the host organization

See **Part II** for more information on project-based Fellowships.

#### **b. Personal Statement**

Some fellowship applications request that the applicant draft an essay describing their commitment and relevant experience. In the absence of a specific requirement, these items should still be included in your cover letter. Most funders and organizations look for applicants who have (and are able to articulate) a deep connection to the work, and those who have relevant skills, knowledge and experiences. Thus, regardless of the format, your goal is to persuade the funder/organization of your passion for the work, that you have the skills, knowledge and experiences to enable you to be a successful fellow, and that you will make good use of the opportunities and training that the fellowship offers. Importantly, you want your essay or cover letter to convey WHO you are and WHY you want to do this work. This is personal to you and will be different for every applicant.

**c. Resume**

A resume is a marketing piece that you create to highlight your commitment to public service and to the specific work you seek to do, and to convey relevant skills and experiences that will enable you to do the work well. For fellowships, you can be less concerned with the one-page rule, as your reader will want the full story of your public interest work and dedication. Include all your public sector work experience, community service, volunteer experience, and relevant law school involvements. The more detailed you are, the more you demonstrate your commitment to a long-term public interest career path. However, if your resume is not filled with such activities, you can still balance that by drafting a very detailed narrative that demonstrates your knowledge of and commitment to public interest.

**d. Recommendations**

Letters of recommendation are particularly important when asked for. The best recommenders are those who can discuss your personal strengths and the quality of your work in detail, and speak to those skills that are relevant to the fellowship. Make sure your recommender knows what you are applying for and understands what you would be doing if you received the fellowship. In selecting a recommender, don't be afraid to ask whether that person will be able to write an enthusiastic letter; fellowship letters should be richly detailed and extremely positive. In some situations, a recommender may even make a call on your behalf.

**e. Writing Sample**

When possible, submit a writing sample in the area of law you are seeking to practice. If you have nothing precisely on point, a writing sample on another topic could still demonstrate related expertise or a commitment to public interest issues. Most importantly, it should be a piece of writing that makes you proud.

## **VI. THE INTERVIEW**

If you have arrived at the interview stage, your application materials have been very well-

received. Still, there is a lot more you want to convey in your interview.

Interviews for public interest fellowships are very important. At this point, your interview carries great weight. In most general terms, the purpose of a fellowship interview is similar to a job interview: to determine whether you and the organization/funder are a “good match.” The organization/funder is looking for someone who has the outlook, knowledge, passion, skills, and personality that suit the organization’s goals and styles and wants to know that you will be able to make a real contribution to the work they need done. The organization/funder will favor awarding a fellowship to someone who will be enjoyable to supervise and train, and to someone who will use the experience as a step in their professional journey as a public interest lawyer.

Fellowship interviews are most often conducted by a small committee, so be prepared to be interviewed by more than one person at the same time. If you can, find out ahead of time who will be interviewing you.

There is no standard format for a fellowship interview. It is therefore extremely helpful to consult with your advisors and to speak with folks who have been through an interview for the same fellowship, or otherwise know about the organization or funder. We are often able to connect you with such people and are always available to arrange mock interviews.

As you get prepared, bear in mind the general advice for all public interest interviews:

- Research the organization and the funder
- Develop your narrative; think about your answers to the following questions:
  - Why this fellowship?
  - Why these legal issues?
  - Why these clients/communities?
  - Why am I a good fit for this fellowship?
- Know about relevant current events and advocacy efforts
- Know everything on your resume and cover letter, and be prepared to make

connections between your previous experiences and the fellowship you are seeking

- Be prepared to talk about your previous work (including clinic and pro bono work)
- Become familiar with the basic law in the organization's area of practice
- Alert your references
- Prepare a packet of materials to bring (in case they don't have your application materials at hand)
- Prepare several thoughtful questions to ask your interviewers

Common areas (and examples) of questions in fellowship interviews:

1. Questions about your commitment to and passion for the work

Why do you want this fellowship?

How does this fellowship fit within your longer-term goals?

What draws you to want to work with this particular organization?

What drew you to this project/area of practice?

Where do you see yourself in 5 (or 10) years?

What makes you a qualified candidate? (What would you bring to this position)?

What challenges do you foresee?

In many ways, these questions are not easy to answer, but they are usually the most important. To answer these questions well, you need to understand what the organization does and what its mission (or the funder's mission) is. You need to have thought about what you can bring to the fellowship, and why you want to go this route. You want to demonstrate confidence, capability, thoughtfulness and knowledge, but still show you are aware you have much to learn and know how to listen well. And don't forget to show you are a thoughtful human and would be a good and enjoyable colleague.

Some other questions you might be asked include:

What do you think is the most pressing issue in our area of work?

Given that impact litigation is risky, what other legal approaches should be used?

How are you prepared to work with clients who are different from you?

What do you see as your greatest challenge in working across differences?



2. Questions from your resume

Tell me about something significant you learned in your clinic/internship.

What conclusion did you reach in your Note?

Why did you change careers?

3. Questions about you as a person

What was your favorite part of law school?

Can you tell me about a collaborative project you worked on, and how you dealt with conflicts?

How would colleagues describe you?

4. Questions assessing your legal mind

Tell me about your writing sample.

Tell me about a matter you worked on (in your internship, externship, or clinic). What were the legal issues involved? How did the matter resolve?

5. Questions assessing ethics

Some legal organizations will be concerned with a candidate's ethical code, and ask questions designed to test a candidate's ability to weigh their obligation to the client or office against other concerns like candor to the tribunal.

6. Other questions

If you are applying to a geographic area where you don't have ties, you are likely to get some questions designed to assess whether you would really move there if given an offer.

**Questions for them**

You want to have a couple of questions ready. Most important - do not ask any question that can be answered by looking at the website.

When interviewing with a host organization, you may want to know such things as whether they have ever served as a host organization for a fellowship candidate before; whether they have specific project ideas or areas they want to address; what they see as their clients' greatest needs; and how supervision would work.

When interviewing with for an organization-based fellowship, you may want to ask about their priority areas going forward; about what kind of work a fellow would do; and how supervision would work.

## **VII. THE OFFERS (and how to handle them)**

Not surprisingly, the timing of fellowship offers tends to be unpredictable. Certainly, you may ask about the timing for decisions, but rarely will you be given a specific date. As a general matter, fellowships are awarded with the expectation that they will be accepted, and once a fellowship is offered, there is usually very little time given for a response. These are coveted and competitive positions, so waiting for you to respond would mean the organization or funder would risk losing the applicant in second place, etc. This means you should do everything you can in advance to be able to answer quickly if you receive an offer.

For all fellowships, accepting an offer is a commitment. Once a fellowship is accepted, all other outstanding applications must be withdrawn. With project-based fellowships, several issues make this a bit more complicated – and so we will address them separately in the section below.

For organization-based fellowships and all other fellowships **except** for those that are project-based, the rules and guidelines for managing offers and acceptances are the same as for jobs:

- Any communication should be professional and exceptionally considerate and gracious. At this point, you are communicating with people who work in your field of interest. Because the public interest community is small, you will likely cross paths again (either by applying again to that organization or working with them as a colleague). You want to do everything you can to establish good and lasting relationships with whoever you are in contact with.
- Maybe you are delighted to accept this offer, and then this part is easy and there is no reason to delay!

- If you receive an offer of a fellowship that is not your first choice, and your first choice remains outstanding, we suggest you respond with great appreciation, and then discuss with an advisor how to reach out to your preferred options to ask whether a decision on your application might be made before you need to reply to the offer.
- Most likely, you will be given a date to respond to the offer, and you want to abide by this. If you ask, you may be given more time, but probably not more than a few days or a week. If that happens, it is important that you respond within that time period.
- If and when you do accept a fellowship, you must withdraw your other applications (*but see below*).

Where project-based fellowships are concerned, the situation is a bit more complicated. The timing for responses from the project-based fellowship funders ranges. The Skadden Fellowship, for example, notifies all applicants on a same day, and that date is announced beforehand. On the other hand, Equal Justice Works continues to recruit funders and match them with candidates over a period of months, meaning some applicants will receive a response as early as November or December, while others may not hear anything until the spring. This leaves room for an EJW candidate to receive another offer before hearing back from EJW. These situations need to be handled thoughtfully. Not only do you have an application pending with the funder, but your host organization has selected you over other applicants. This means that the host organization is depending on you to do what you can to get the fellowship. Unless you inform the host otherwise, it is normally assumed this fellowship is your first choice. Therefore, turning down or withdrawing your application from a project-based fellowship has a direct impact on an organization that is relying on you. Moreover, this organization is certainly one that is in your field of interest, and with whom you want to maintain a good relationship. In the rare case where you receive another offer and must respond before you hear from a project-based fellowship funder, we strongly recommend you speak with your fellowship advisor. Your advisor may be able to obtain useful information about the status of your application from the funder and otherwise help you navigate the situation, make a decision and inform all parties in an appropriate manner. If you need to withdraw your application from a project-based fellowship funder, a well-considered conversation with your host organization is

essential. In general, we recommend you keep your host organization informed and be candid throughout the process.

Finally, if you do accept a fellowship, PLEASE let your recommenders know and thank them for their support. AND don't forget to let you advisor know!

## **PART 2: Project-based Fellowships**

***PART TWO: Project -based Fellowships***

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## **VIII. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT-BASED FELLOWSHIPS**

Project-based fellowships are funded by foundations that support a recent law school graduate to carry out a project in conjunction with an existing nonprofit organization (often referred to as the “host organization”). The project is ultimately developed by the applicant and the host organization together – blending the applicant’s interests, skills and experiences with the host organization’s priorities, capacity, and knowledge. In addition to evaluating the applicant, the funder assesses the host, the project, and how well these three pieces fit together.

Each funder has its own criteria governing the types of projects it will support and the eligibility of the applicants and host organizations. Not every proposal will be appropriate for every funder, though (ideally) you may be able to submit the same proposal – with some modification – to more than one funder.

The fellowship funder will determine the fellow’s salary, which will be stated clearly in the posting. The funds may come to you from the funder directly, or through your host organization. Benefits will likely be funded by the host organization. As a general rule, salary and benefits are not negotiable. Such things as hours, vacation and sick days, and remote work are all within the discretion of the host organization.

Project-based fellowship applications are due in the fall of the year before the fellowship begins; both Equal Justice Works and Skadden applications are due in early September. While each funder has its own requirements and priorities, all applications must include a commitment by a host organization (often including the host’s obligation to pay for benefits, which may require time-consuming internal authorization by the organization) and a project proposal. Because of this, there is significant preparatory work to be done in advance of the application deadline.

The following sections offer more detailed guidance and advice for putting together a project-based fellowship application.

## **a. Basic Timeline**

Applications for the project-based fellowships are due as early as the beginning of September of the year before the fellowship begins. Usually this means that you are submitting applications early in your 3L or 4LE year, or early in the year you are clerking. Because these applications involve significant advance work, we recommend you start the process in the late spring. For most of you, this will be the late spring of you 2L/3LE year. We are available to work with you throughout the summer.

During spring and early summer:

- Meet with a. public interest advisor (and continue to work with advisor throughout)
- Conduct self-assessment
- Become familiar with resources
- Identify some people to meet with for preliminary conversations
- Review funder websites and any information videos/sessions
- Research potential host organizations
- Identify possible project ideas or client needs

Early summer:

- Apply to host organizations
- Secure recommenders

By mid-end of July

- Finalize host organization
- Begin developing project details with host organization
- Decide on fellowships to apply for

Mid-August

- Complete first draft of project proposal
- Have draft reviewed
- Work on personal statement and other application questions
- Check in with recommenders



Mid-August to early September

Collect host materials

Continue to draft and redraft proposal, personal statement and essays

Finalize drafts

Early September

Application deadline for some project-based fellowships

### **b. Typical Application Materials**

In one form or another, applications for project-based fellowships will ask for:

Cover letter

Personal statement / essays

Project description

Resume

Host letter and other materials

Letters of recommendation

All of these pieces should fit together to provide information and support for the following:

- The project is consistent with the funder's goals and priorities
- There is a significant need that can be addressed by your project
- You have a connection to the work/community/issues involved in your project and a palpable passion for it
- Your project proposes a feasible way to meet the need
- You have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to carry out the project
- The project has support within the community/from existing organizations
- Your project is different from the work of a staff attorney (though attention to this issue varies by funder)
- Your host organization has the capacity to provide good supervision and support for

your project

- The fellowship period will provide enough time for your project to succeed and have an impact
- Optimally, the project will continue in some form after the fellowship ends

The preparation of these applications takes time, and your essays will surely go through several drafts at least. Keep that in mind as you set your schedule. We address these pieces later on; for now, we offer a few preliminary words.

Project description: Your goal is to draft a description of your project that includes enough detail that the reader believes it has been well thought through, addresses a need not otherwise adequately met, and will actually work. Ultimately, the details will need to be developed along with the host organization.

Statement of need: The funder will want to be convinced that the need you have identified is important, and that implementation of your project will have an impact. Sometimes this is its own prompt, though it should (also) be incorporated into your project description.

Personal statement: Applications will ask for some sort of personal statement, and sometimes pose specific questions for you to answer in essay form. Essentially the questions go to who you are, how you came to this project, why you are compelled by this work and these issues, and what will you be able to bring to this project. Everyone has their own unique story to tell. Many applicants find this part the most challenging to write, so give yourself plenty of time.

Anti-racism statement: There may be a prompt asking how your work will help dismantle systemic racism.

Resume: Your resume for these purposes should be full. Don't skimp, and don't be limited by the one-page rule.

Host materials: Part of your application will come from the host organization, and should address their areas of expertise, the need for your project, the feasibility of the project, how

you will be supervised, why they will be an effective host and why they believe you are the right person to carry out the project.

Letters of recommendation: Most often, applications will ask for two letters: one from a faculty member (clinical, including LAWR, or doctrinal), and one from a supervisor. It is important that the recommender knows you and can speak specifically and enthusiastically to your ability to carry out your project. Thus, you want to build in time for conversations with your recommenders. Remember, it will be your responsibility to ensure that the letter is submitted to the proper place and on time.

## **IX. IDENTIFYING A HOST AND DEVELOPING A PROJECT**

### **a. First Steps**

It is not unusual to be intimidated initially by the project-based fellowship process. You may be wondering:

- Which comes first: finding the organization or developing a project?
- How am I supposed to think of a project?
- How am I supposed to decide on an organization?
- How do I get started?

These steps are interrelated. Starting out, you are likely going to be exploring both organizations and project ideas at the same time, and engaging in some preliminary conversations.

Some students begin this process with a specific project idea—usually growing out of work done with a clinic or externship, or during a summer job—and some students do not. If you can identify the population you are interested in serving, or an area of law in which you have been

and want to continue working, you can get started. **It is most important to remember that you are not expected to do all of this alone.**

As you conduct your research, and speak with people, you will be:

- Learning about different organizations engaged in work that interests you, and getting recommendations for organizations that might serve as good hosts; and
- Learning about unmet legal needs or current issues which will help you think about project ideas.

The beginning steps for all fellowships, set out in Part I of this Guide, are entirely applicable here, and we suggest you review them. You want to undertake a self-assessment, and become familiar with available resources.

- **Self-assessment**

As you research hosts and begin to think about project ideas, you will want to engage in focused self-assessment. In addition to the questions laid out in Part 1, the following questions are particularly useful for starting to think about project-based fellowships:

What populations do you most want to serve?

What is your experience/familiarity with these populations?

What are the legal issues about which you care most deeply?

What skills and experiences have you acquired that will help you to undertake the work you want to do?

At the same time:

What are some unmet needs of clients / communities that you are hoping to work with?

What are some of the cutting-edge issues in your field of interest?

What kind of organization suits you (large/small, policy/direct service, etc.)?

What locations are you willing to consider?

- **Preliminary Research**

*Human contacts are extraordinarily helpful and important.*

In addition to your public interest advisors, think about clinic and doctrinal professors, internship and pro bono supervisors, alums, speakers, current and former fellows and other students who are engaged in work that excites you. Ask to meet with them! Ask them about current issues and trends, unmet needs they see, organizations doing excellent work, and fellowships they know about. These conversations will help you develop and crystalize project ideas. People are usually extremely generous sharing their thoughts to help you become a social justice lawyer! And it is entirely expected that you meet with and learn from others.

*Non-human resources are important as well.*

Set up your account on PSJD to receive announcements of postings from funders and from organizations seeking to serve as hosts.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the most comprehensive collection of postings by organizations looking to host fellows, PSJD houses a database of public interest and government offices that is searchable by practice area and location. This can be a good resource for identifying organizations that may not have a formal posting, but may nonetheless be willing to consider hosting a fellow.

Other Resources on PSJD: If you select the tab “Explore Advice” and then “Postgraduate Fellowships,” you can access helpful resources, including guides and advice from other law schools, a webinar on project-based fellowships, and a calendar of application deadlines. You can also get to the calendar while searching postings—simply click the calendar icon that appears once you’ve chosen fellowships as the job type.

Any job or fellowship notice sent to Rutgers Law School is posted on Symplicity.

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<sup>1</sup> See instructions in Section I.

In addition, the websites of the project-based fellowship funders, such as Skadden and Equal Justice Works are chock full of information:

- What the funders are seeking
- Eligibility of applicant and host
- List of projects funded in the past
- List of organizations that have served as hosts
- Names of past fellows and descriptions of their projects
- Application instructions

Sites may also contain:

- Videotaped information sessions
- Notice of upcoming webinars

Finally, pay attention to any emails from public interest advisors!

**\*\*\*We encourage you to meet with a public interest advisor at this early stage\*\*\***

Together you will develop some initial strategies, likely along these four avenues:

1. Approaching a previous employer or supervisor, or your 2L summer organization. If you are interested in working with them, ask about their fellowship process, and what they might be seeking
2. Monitoring PSJD and Symplicity for postings from organizations looking to host an applicant for a project
3. Identifying other people who might be helpful at this stage (such as alumni, former fellows, clinical professors, and other faculty)
4. Identifying practicing lawyers who work in your area of interest

#### **b. Evaluating Host Organizations**

Even before you meet with an organization, you can begin to evaluate it. From your research you may be able to answer some of the following questions:

- Do I like the work of this organization?
- Are its values and goals compatible with mine?
- Does the organization meet the fellowship funder's eligibility criteria?<sup>2</sup>
- How familiar is the organization with the project-based fellowship application process?
- Does the organization have specific project ideas?
- Does the project idea fit well within the organization's work and goals?
- What kinds of projects does the organization have the capacity to support and supervise?
- Will there be someone at the host organization to work with me on the application?

The important consideration in selecting an organization (after ensuring that the organization meets the fellowship funder's eligibility criteria and has the commitment and capacity to help you implement your project successfully), is that there be a *good fit* among you, your organization, and your proposed project. YOU bring your interests, skills and experiences. The HOST organization brings its interest and priority areas, its capacity for supervision, and knowledge of the community to be served. The PROJECT is one that is appropriate to the host organization, and one you are particularly well-suited to undertake.

While it makes sense to choose an organization that has successfully hosted fellows before, it is not necessary. If you want to work with an organization that has not served as a host (or where the individuals who will be working with you on the application are unfamiliar with the fellowship process), you may have to provide more guidance on the materials they are asked to submit. Again, your public interest advisors can help here.

### **c. Identifying and Developing Project Ideas**

In thinking about project ideas, begin by thinking about the work you are passionate about and the community of clients you want to serve. What experiences, skills and knowledge would you be able to bring to a project? What needs did you see or learn about in your clinic, summer internship, externship and/or pro bono experiences?

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<sup>2</sup> Though some funders may not consider projects that propose to provide straight immigration or criminal defense work, most will support projects focusing on related issues or collateral consequences. Also, by thinking creatively, it is sometimes possible to reframe a project to fall within a funder's parameters.

Your research will also help you in this area. Look at fellowship websites for projects that have been funded in the past, consult with clinic professors, supervisors, practicing attorneys, alums and others.

As you do your research, you want to focus on:

What are unmet legal needs in the community you want to serve?

What are cutting edge issues and trends in the field you want to work in?

How can a project serve to meet the needs you have identified better than they are being met now?

What approach(es) will you use?

How are you positioned to develop and launch this project?

Remember that your project idea will be closely tied to your search for a host organization. The project must draw on your passions and abilities, and also be well-placed within the host organization. Some organizations will indicate project areas they are interested in hosting; others will not. In all cases:

- You want to develop a project that is consistent with the mission and capacities of the organization and with your passions and strengths
- You want to develop a project that responds to a need not adequately addressed while situating it within an organization that has the expertise and capacity to support and supervise you.

Ultimately you want to be able to answer clearly the following question: How will your project successfully address the critical unmet legal need you have identified in a viable, innovative way?

#### **d. Reaching Out to Host Organizations**

Before reaching out to host organizations, it is useful to have a general sense of the kind of project you are interested in pursuing. You do not have to have a fully formed idea yet. In fact,



you do not want to be too rigid. Remember that the project needs ultimately to be developed together with your host, and your host will undoubtedly have some very important contributions. At this stage, you will be more competitive as you apply to potential host organizations if you can articulate a project idea(s) in one or two sentences to demonstrate your seriousness of purpose, but indicate flexibility and interest in their clients' needs as the organization prioritizes them.

- **Applications to Host Organizations**

Once you have researched host organizations and developed project ideas, you are ready to prepare to reach out to organizations. You may have already done some informal outreach to organizations you have worked with before, or had other preliminary conversations, but most of you will be sending application materials to organizations in a more formal way.

At the very least, you will be sending a cover letter and current resume. If you are responding to a posting, you will of course follow any specific instructions. The following are tips for crafting each of these documents:

Cover Letter:

In applying to a host organization, your goal is to get a meeting/interview. In your cover letter, you want to show that you would be a strong fellowship applicant when the time comes to apply to a funder. You want to convey your commitment to the work, knowledge of the organization, and ideas for projects that fit within the goals of the organization. Of course, anything you are able to learn in advance of your outreach about the interests and needs of the organization will be helpful.

Your cover letter should do the following:

- Introduce yourself and clearly state the purpose of your email (i.e., that you are looking for a host organization for a fellowship).
- If applicable, mention who referred you or any other mutual acquaintance or relationship. If you already met the person (such as at a law school event), include the context in which you met them.

- If you have not met or spoken with anyone at the organization, explain how you discovered or became interested in the organization.
- Briefly convey your background/experience in the field. You can also consider mentioning any project ideas (if you have any) to show you have thought about them - - but be careful not to sound too wedded to them, as the organization will want to be a part of developing the project.
- Explain that you want to meet or speak with them to discuss fellowship opportunities. Note that meeting in person is generally preferable, while not always possible.

Resumes:

Submit a comprehensive resume to any potential host organization. Together with your cover letter, your resume ought to give a detailed picture of your commitment, your experience, and your knowledge of the work you are proposing to do, the skills you will use, and the community you offer to work with. Make sure you have highlighted the experience and skills most relevant to your proposed project. Be sure to update your resume to reflect any upcoming clinics, externships, pro bono work, student group leadership positions, and so forth.<sup>3</sup>

### • **Interviews With Host Organizations**

A meeting with a potential host organization could be structured like a formal job interview (for example, if the organization posted a job listing for a fellow) or more informal (for example, in response to your request for a meeting). Sometimes a session can be both formal and informal. It would help if you were prepared for both scenarios.

In both situations, you want to get across your knowledge of the area of law and your familiarity with the population you are proposing to serve. You also want to convey your understanding of the organization's work and interests, and how they align with your experiences, your goals, and so forth. Also, be prepared to explain why you want to do a fellowship and why the organization is a good fit for you (focusing on why you want to devote yourself to the organization's efforts, not why you believe this fellowship will be good for you).

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<sup>3</sup> If the experience has not occurred yet, insert the identification part (name, location, date and your future title) but omit the description section, e.g., do not say: "will research and draft memoranda."

Come ready to offer some potential project ideas and where they come from, and discuss your application plans. You may be asked whether you plan to apply for more than one fellowship and whether you are approaching other organizations to be your host as well: answer honestly.

Additionally, it would help if you came with questions to ask them, such as:

- Have you hosted fellows in the past? What did they work on?
- Are there particular fellowships you are interested in pursuing with an applicant?
- What are you looking for in a fellow?
- Does your organization have needs/goals/projects which could be addressed in a fellowship proposal?
- Who would supervise me here if I were a fellow?
- What kind of training do you offer to new attorneys or fellows?
- Are you anticipating significant changes in the office or your work in the near term?

At the close of the meeting, ask when you can expect to hear from them. Make sure to send a short thank-you note (email is acceptable) within 24 hours after the interview to anyone you met. Keep in contact without being imposing or invasive. Follow up on other potential leads until you hear back from them. If you receive an offer from an organization that is not your first choice, you may contact your first-choice organization immediately, explain the situation, and ask when they will decide (unless they have set a specific date for their decision). In any event, these issues should be discussed with your advisor. If you accept an offer, withdraw any other pending applications under consideration ASAP and thank them again for their time.

#### **e. Selecting a Host Organization**

Committing to a host organization should be done after research. Where you are proposing to situate your project is a key factor in your application. Of course, you need to make sure that the organization (and project) fall within the funder's criteria. And, importantly, you and your funder want to be sure of the following:

- The organization does high quality work
- The organization will provide excellent supervision
- The organization is a good match for the project you are proposing

## f. Crafting Project Details

Remember, the funder wants to see a good “fit” between you, your organization and your project. It is therefore essential that project details be developed with the applicant and the host working together.



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For a project to be successful, the applicant and the host must be in sync about such things as:

- who will supervise you
- how potential clients will come to you
- how you will select your clients
- how your project will fit within the rest of the organization
- where (in what arena or court) will you be doing your advocacy
- and even where you will sit (physically)

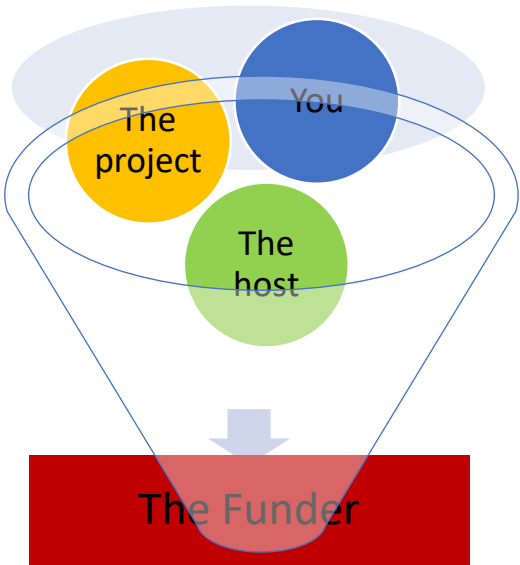
Of course, ideas for how the project can run successfully can (and should) come from your research, including discussions with former fellows who have developed similar projects,

experts in the field, advisors and professors. Project details can appear in your project description and in your host organization’s letter. Funders look carefully at whether you and your organization are “on the same page” and whether the details indicate collaboration and likelihood of success.

## **X. DRAFTING A STRONG FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION**

Once you have committed to partnering with an eligible host organization, you can begin to work on your application. We encourage applicants to begin the application as early as possible, as the process will require significant planning and preparation, as well as multiple drafts.

Throughout this process, you have undoubtedly paid careful attention to the requirements, goals and preferences of the different fellowship funders, and you want your application to speak to those things.



As a whole (and within any specific word or character limit) an application should present a proposal consistent with the funder's requirements and priorities, and convey the following:

- you have a strong commitment and a deep connection to the goals and mission of the fellowship
- you have developed a realistic project that is appropriately situated with the host organization
- the organization believes in and supports your project
- your project will serve a real need
- the organization will provide good supervision
- you are the right person to carry out this project successfully

To make sure that your essays actually convey what you intend, and that they capture the elements listed above, we encourage you to think about putting together a team of readers. Your team will certainly include someone at your host organization, and a public interest advisor. A former fellow, an alum and your clinical professor would all be helpful additions. Your team will review drafts of your essays and provide feedback. If you are invited for an interview, your team will also help you prepare for that. You may want to set up a shared drive in which you post editable drafts of your documents for your team to access.

Most fellowships require some form of the following:

#### **a. Project Proposal**

This will be a clear and detailed description of your project, developed and written in collaboration with your host. The description should demonstrate the need for your project and realistic strategies for meeting that need, and provide clear methods of implementation. You want to explain what you will do and why it matters. The proposal should be your road map, job description and action plan for the next two years.

Depending on the fellowship, you might also be thinking about opportunities for pro bono involvement from sponsors (both lawyer and non-lawyer volunteers), ongoing sustainability

of the project, and connection to the community.

First, ensure that your project fits within the parameters of the fellowship funder you are applying to. Remember to evaluate the funder's goals and mission and be sure you are suggesting a project that aligns with them.

Be sure the problems your project proposes to address are concrete and are not too broad. Your plan needs to be realistic, and able to be implemented during the timeframe of the fellowship.

Clearly describe the unmet legal need you propose to address. Specify the community you will work with, offer credible and persuasive information about the unmet need, and consider offering a compelling anecdote that crystalizes the need. Learn what is being done in your area of focus and in your community in order to explain the substantial need for your project.

Clearly establish how your project will work. In addition to being persuaded of the need, the funder needs to believe that your project will operate successfully, and actually make an important difference in people's lives. You want to persuade the funder both to recognize the critical nature of the need and to invest in your proposed response.

#### **b. Personal statement/ essay questions**

Funders really want to know who you are.

Think about describing your commitment to the community and issues served by your project, and your reasons for being drawn to the work you are proposing to do. Everyone has their reasons: a set of personal experiences, influences and motivations. Why are YOU dedicated to this work? It is often helpful to think about a significant experience you had – perhaps with a client - that served to compel you to do the work you propose to do.

If you will be drawing on a personal experience, be careful not to suggest you will pre-judge your client's situation, or that your client's situation is the same as yours. Funders value

personal experiences insofar as they may provide insight, but they will not fund someone they believe will insert their own views and feelings for those of their client.

In addition to relevant personal and professional information, funders look for your understanding of and insights into the issues and/or the community you propose to serve. Funders also want to believe they are investing in someone who plans to use the fellowship to launch a public service career, so if you can, describe a plan for what you want to be doing in the short and longer terms.

### **c. Resume**

Your resume should highlight your commitment to public service and to the specific work you seek to do, and convey relevant skills and experiences that will enable you to do the work well. For fellowships, you are not limited to the one-page rule, as your reader will want the full story of your public interest work and commitment, and some insight into your preparation for this work, which may include experiences before law school. Think about how the layout of your resume and your choice of words can communicate your commitment and abilities.

### **d. Letter from the host organization**

Project-based fellowships applications will invariably call for a letter from your host organization (sometimes referred to as the employer's letter of support). Some organizations will be familiar with crafting this kind of letter, and some will not. You should discuss this letter with your contacts at your organization to make sure that the letter will contribute all that it can to your application. Ideally the letter should address—and provide support for—the need for the proposed project, the organization's position and capacity to host the project and supervise you, and why you are exceptionally well-suited both to carry out the project and to work within the organization.

The following is a checklist of details that the employer should include in its letter of support (though not necessarily in this order).



#### Information about the employer

- What the organization does (its work, goals, and methods)
- The role of the individual writing the letter within the organization (and the individual's relevant experience)
- If applicable, that the organization has hosted fellows previously (bonus points if the host organization has hired former fellows as permanent staff)
- Why the organization is suited to host this project (the organization's knowledge base, place within the community, history, and expertise)
- That the organization would not otherwise be able to undertake this work
- The organization's capacity and capability to provide excellent supervision

#### Information about you (the applicant)

- The applicant's history with the organization (if applicable)
- The organization's opinion that you are especially well-suited to carry out this project (and work within this organization) and the basis for this conclusion.

#### Information about the project

- The need for the project broadly (What problem will it address? Why is it timely? What will be accomplished within the fellowship period? What impact will it have?)
- A description of how the project will be distinct from or will supplement the work the organization is currently doing. It might also address how the project is distinct from work of other organizations in the same field
- Clear indication that the applicant and the organization have a full and mutual understanding about the goals and parameters of the project
- How the fellow (and the project) will be supervised and integrated into the organization
- If applicable, how the fellow (and the project) will be part of a larger advocacy community and will work in collaboration with community partners

### **e. Letters of recommendation**

Letters of recommendation are particularly important, and should be written by people who

know you very well. The best recommenders are those who can discuss your personal strengths and the quality of your work in detail, and speak to those skills that are relevant to the fellowship. You want to make it easy for your recommenders to write detailed, powerful letters, so help them: make sure they know what fellowship you are applying for, provide them with access to your application materials, and remind them of the specific work you did that should form the basis for the letter (frequent visits to office hours and discussions, the writing project you did under their supervision or for their class, your contributions to a particular strategy session or series of meetings, your work with clients, your openness to constructive critique, your creative thinking, etc.). Ideally, your recommender will address those skills, capacities and experiences one would need to carry out your project successfully.

## **XI. THE FELLOWSHIP FUNDER INTERVIEW**

Preparing for a fellowship funder interview is essential. Fellowship websites often contain very helpful guidance for interviews, and you should consult those that are applicable to you. Most importantly, we very strongly recommend that you engage in several mock-interviews. Let your advisor know immediately if you are invited for an interview. Your advisor will work with you to set up mock interviews that will be meaningful and helpful.

What are funders looking for? If you are invited for an interview, you can assume your written materials have been evaluated very highly. So, what are funders looking for from the interview? Overall, they are looking for fellows who have the skills, knowledge, insight, and personality to carry out the work or proposed project well. This includes the ability to serve clients compassionately and effectively; to work productively with stakeholders, other organizations, community partners, etc. as needed; and to be organized and able to follow through. Often funders will invite fellows to present their work, and thus poise and the ability to speak about your project are important. Finally, you are an investment, and so funders look for individuals who are deeply committed and likely to engage in the work long-term, and who will learn and grow from the fellowship experience. Generally, this amounts to a

combination of self-confidence and humility, with passion and careful preparedness thrown in.

Remember that interviews start even before you board the elevator. That is, you don't know who is in the elevator or waiting room, or who is at the reception desk or welcoming you in. Consider yourself being interviewed from the moment you start an email correspondence with the funder, and certainly once you enter the building for your interview. Be kind, courteous and respectful to everyone. Fellowship interviews are often done by committee, so you are most likely to be interviewed by more than one person at the same time.

For project-based fellowship interviews, the funder selection committee is often comprised of individuals with different levels of knowledge about your project and the legal issues that will be involved in your work. You will need to keep this in mind as you present your project and answer questions. Often answering a question with a personal story or anecdote can work well to help you avoid too many generalities and convey your personal qualities and thoughtfulness.

Finally, think about connecting with your interviewers. A good handshake and eye contact go a long way. Being human is good, as is demonstrating your ability to relate to clients and others with whom you will be working. Think confidently and be enthusiastic, but don't forget the value of self-awareness and humility. You are not expected to have all the answers or to have finished your learning.

If you are interviewing with a funder for a project-based fellowship, consider the following common questions:

How did you pick your project?

Why did you pick this topic (e.g., access to reproductive healthcare for teens with developmental disabilities, rent relief for domestic violence survivors in a particular immigrant community)?

What is it about your host organization that makes you want to work with them?

What kind of impact do you expect to have?

How will you measure success?

Why are you the right person to do this project?

Where do you see yourself 10 (five, 20) years from now?

What was the toughest situation you found yourself in, and how did you resolve it?

What are your career plans if you do not get this fellowship?

Describe the supervision you will be given if you are a fellow.

Who exactly will be your clients? How will they find you?

Where did you grow up? What was your life like?

Why did you decide to go to law school?

How are you going to manage the emotional stress of working with clients with such difficult lives and issues?

How will you involve community partners?

## **XII. THE WAITING**

It is useful to keep in mind that not all fellowships have pre-set decision dates. This can be dependent on how the fellowships are managed. And one end of the spectrum is the Skadden Fellowship, which sets out in advance what date decisions will be made, and applicants notified. The Skadden Foundation controls the application, interview, funding and selection process. The other end is Equal Justice Works, which operates in large part as a matchmaker. EJW seeks commitments (and funding) from law firms and corporations, which is rolling. Of the fellowship applications received, EJW makes an initial “cut”. Then, it presents to a funder a “slate” of applications that they believe the funder will be interested in, the funder decides if they want to interview anyone, and after an interview will make the final decision to offer a fellowship or not. As such, some applicants receive interview invitations – and even fellowships - in the fall, and others will not hear until the spring.

As all applicants for project-based fellowships will be applying to other fellowships and jobs, timing may sometimes present issues. In the world of project-based fellowships, it is uniformly expected (by both your host organization and the fellowship funder) that you will accept the fellowship if offered, and the timeline for committing is short. In cases where you

receive another offer before hearing from a fellowship, notify your advisor. Your advisor is often able to find out where you are in the selection process, and information about the strength of your application. Withdrawing a project-based fellowship application is particularly delicate, because the host organization selected you as a partner, and is relying on you. In fact, it is likely that your host made sure early on in your discussions that a fellowship with them was your first choice.

### **XIII. CONCLUSION**

Project-based public interest fellowships are attractive for several reasons. They allow graduates to pursue their passions and interests creatively, and obtain the training and experience necessary to pursue a permanent public interest position. Fellowships also provide networking opportunities, and opportunities for mentorship and strong professional contacts in your field. Most project-based fellowships facilitate your connections with your class of fellows, as well as the community of former fellows.

It is true that the application process can be time-consuming and challenging, but beneficial and rewarding too. Even when your applications for a project-based fellowship are not successful, you will have thought deeply and spoken about the work you want to do, met with experts in your field of interests, learned about different organizations and produced well-crafted materials that you can draw on for other applications.



