

## GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

# 2017 ADVOCACY FELLOWSHIPS GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

## Soros Justice Fellowships

The Soros Justice Fellowships seek applicants for its Advocacy Fellowships. Letters of Intent (LOIs) are due on **October 12, 2016** (11:59 p.m. EST) and must be submitted online at <http://sorosjusticefellowships.submittable.com/submit> (the online system will begin accepting LOIs on September 9, 2016). This document contains the eligibility guidelines (Part I, pages 2 – 5) and application information (Part II, page 6).

### General

The Soros Justice Advocacy Fellowships support outstanding individuals — including lawyers, advocates, grassroots organizers, researchers, and others with unique perspectives — to undertake U.S. criminal justice reform projects at the local, state, and national levels. Projects may range from litigation to public education to coalition-building to grassroots mobilization to policy-driven research. Advocacy Fellowships are 18 months in duration, may be undertaken with the support of a host organization, and can begin in the spring or fall of 2017.

Individuals with projects that propose, as their primary purpose, the completion of books, print or radio journalism, documentary film or video, or other similar media should apply for the [Soros Justice Media Fellowships](#).

There are two Advocacy Fellowship tracks: Track I, which is for people in the earlier stages of their careers in the field of criminal justice reform and who demonstrate the potential to develop into leaders in the field; and Track II, which is for more experienced individuals with a proven record of achievement and expertise in the field, and who are proposing new, risky, untested, or unconventional but promising ideas and approaches. Advocacy Track I comes with an award of \$85,750 over 18 months. Advocacy Track II comes with an award of \$110,250 over 18 months.

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# PART I: GUIDELINES

## Fellowship Projects

### Project Focus

We will consider projects that focus on one or more of our broad criminal justice reform goals: reducing mass incarceration, challenging extreme punishment, and promoting fairness and accountability in the justice system the United States. In our view, there are a number of things that can be done to advance these broad goals — for example, challenging the extremely long prison terms that have become the accepted norm as a response to serious and violent crimes; ending the punishment and harsh treatment of youth in the justice system; promoting police accountability; combatting prosecutors’ orientation toward harsh charging and sentencing practices; and fostering health-informed responses to drug use.

However, for the fellowships we don’t have a defined list of topics or issues that we’ll consider. Instead, we expect applicants themselves to make the case that their projects have the potential to contribute something valuable to efforts to reduce mass incarceration, challenge extreme punishment, and promote fairness and accountability in the justice system. In this way, the fellowships are designed to be flexible and open — a space for projects that build effectively on work that has come before, that explore new and creative ways of doing things, that take risks, that offer new insights and perspectives on what we thought we knew, and that teach us about what we don’t know but should.

### Who and What We Are Looking For: Emerging Leaders or New Ways of Doing Things

Beyond the basic threshold that projects focus on one or more of our broad criminal justice reform goals, we’re looking for applications that reflect one of two things: among Advocacy Track I candidates, strong evidence that the applicant has the capacity to become a leader in the field of criminal justice reform; and among Advocacy Track II candidates (and, where applicable, Advocacy Track I candidates, see “Eligibility — Advocacy Track I” below), strong evidence that the applicant puts forward a new, risky, untested, or unconventional but promising idea or approach.

Our interest in emerging leaders stems from our view that the fellowships — as demonstrated by the kinds of people we have funded over the last two decades — can be an important vehicle for seeding and supporting the work of individuals who will have a lasting ability to get others to listen, to follow, and to take action; and who will become part of a growing network of fellows working on the full spectrum of issues that most directly implicate open society values.

Our interest in new, risky and unconventional ways of doing things is based on our belief that the fellowships can be a useful platform for supporting people whose work experiments and pushes boundaries, challenges convention, elaborates novel ways of approaching deeply entrenched and intractable problems, anticipates emerging issues, or seizes upon particular opportunities in creative ways; and that if these things are done well, people supported through the fellowships can exert some influence on the broader field of criminal justice reform.

### Strategies Supported by the Soros Justice Advocacy Fellowships and “Reform” Requirement

Applicants may employ, either alone or in combination, any number of strategies to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in their projects. These strategies include but are not limited to: impact litigation, public education, strategic communications, policy advocacy, coalition-building, grassroots organizing and mobilization, and policy-driven research and analysis.

Regardless of the strategy employed, all Advocacy Fellowship projects must, during the term of the fellowship itself, actively seek some measure of reform. We generally define “reform” as a change to a

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policy or practice, whether formalized by law or not, that has a particular effect on individuals, families, or communities. Reform can promote or create good policies or practices, as well as change or lessen the harmful effects of bad ones. Moreover, reform should involve more than simply achieving a specific result for a specific person; instead, groups of people defined by certain characteristics or circumstances should benefit from achieving a particular change.

### **Intersectional Projects**

We recognize that criminal justice reform issues are exceptionally complex and involve an array of interrelated social, economic, political, and historical dynamics. We therefore encourage applications that demonstrate a clear understanding of the intersection of criminal justice issues with the particular needs of low-income communities; communities of color; immigrants; LGBTQ people; women and children; and those otherwise disproportionately affected by harsh or unfair criminal justice policies. We also welcome projects that cut across various criminal justice fields and related sectors, such as education, health and mental health, housing, and employment.

### **Directly Affected Individuals**

We in particular welcome applications from individuals directly affected by, or with significant direct personal experience with, the policies, practices, and systems their projects seek to address. This includes but is not limited to applicants who have themselves been incarcerated; applicants who have a family member or loved one who has been incarcerated and whose fellowship project emerges from that experience; and applicants who are survivors of violence and crime. It also includes people with deep ties and connections to the communities or constituencies that are the focus of their projects.

### **Not Sure if Your Project Fits? Submit an Email Inquiry**

Applicants who are uncertain whether some aspect of their proposed project fits within the parameters of the fellowships guidelines or whether the project is otherwise likely to be of interest may submit an email inquiry. The email should provide a brief (no more than 200 words) description of the proposed project, as well as some background information on the applicant, and should be sent to:

[SorosJusticeFellowships@OpenSocietyFoundations.org](mailto: SorosJusticeFellowships@OpenSocietyFoundations.org). We will do our best to respond to all email inquiries within a week of their receipt. Those who submit email inquiries but do not receive a timely response will have to make their own determination of whether the proposed project fits within the guidelines.

An email inquiry does not constitute an application. To apply, individuals must submit a Letter of Intent and resume or bio via our online application system (see page 6 below).

## **Awards**

Individuals can apply for one of two awards, depending on the applicant's level of experience. Advocacy Track I comes with an award of \$85,750 over 18 months. Advocacy Track II comes with an award of \$110,250 over 18 months.

## **Eligibility**

### **Advocacy Track I**

Advocacy Track I applicants must have at least two (2) years of relevant experience, which may include: full-time and part-time employment; paid or unpaid internships; sustained volunteer work; or other pertinent experience (e.g. advocacy while incarcerated). Advocacy Track I is for people at a range of phases in their careers, including but not limited to: people just entering the field following post-graduate education; advocates with a few years of work experience; and those beginning to work on criminal justice reform

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issues after a career in another field or after some other life experience. Individuals with fewer than two years' experience should consider applying for the Soros Justice Youth Activist Fellowships.

Advocacy Track I projects can — but are not required to — involve an idea or approach that is “new, risky, untested, or unconventional” (which is a requirement for Track II projects).

## **Advocacy Track II**

Advocacy Track II applicants must have at least ten (10) years of relevant advocacy experience. Advocacy Track II is for seasoned, established, and accomplished leaders and experts in the field — ideally people who have distinguished themselves on a local, state or national level; and who have the kind of stature, experience, and capacity necessary to have a meaningful impact on an important criminal justice reform issue.

Advocacy Track II applicants must put forth projects that represent a new, risky, untested, or unconventional but promising idea or approach. Their work should experiment and push boundaries, challenge convention, elaborate novel ways of approaching deeply entrenched and intractable problems, anticipate emerging issues, or seize upon particular opportunities in creative ways.

## **Education**

All applicants must have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent.

## **Time Commitment**

Fellowships are 18 months in duration and should begin in the spring or fall of 2017. Applicants must be able to devote at least 35 hours per week to the project if awarded a fellowship; and the project must be the applicant's only full-time work during the course of the fellowship. Fellows cannot be full-time students during their fellowships.

## **Joint Applications**

Under the Advocacy Fellowship category, the fellowships do not allow multiple individuals to apply jointly for a single Advocacy Fellowship.

## **Enrollment in an Academic Institution**

The fellowships do not fund enrollment for degree or non-degree study at academic institutions, including dissertation research. Also, as indicated above (see “Time Commitment”), fellows cannot be full-time students during their fellowships.

## **Past Soros Justice Fellowship Recipients**

Past recipients of a Soros Justice Fellowship are not eligible to apply.

## **Projects Based Outside the United States**

Applicants may be based outside the United States, as long as their work directly relates to a U.S. criminal justice issue.

## **Lobbying**

Projects that include lobbying activities will not be funded. Please carefully review the [Tax Law Lobbying Rules](#) before applying. If awarded a fellowship, applicants must agree to refrain from engaging in restricted lobbying activities during the term of the fellowship.

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## Host Organizations and Advisory Boards

### Host Organization

Advocacy Fellowship applicants are encouraged, but not required, to secure a host organization. Host organizations — which can be advocacy or community groups, scholarly or research institutions, government agencies, or other nonprofit organizations or associations — can provide access to resources such as space, technology, and networks, as well as mentoring and guidance. They can also enhance the credibility and raise the profile of the project.

If awarded a fellowship, applicants with host organizations can choose to receive grant payments directly or have some (or all) of the grant payments passed through the host. Under the latter arrangement, the host must have the appropriate organizational status, as well as grant management and finance/accounting systems and safeguards, to be able to receive the grant award and make regular payments to the fellow, e.g. 501(c)(3) or supported by a designated fiscal agent; and must agree that the grant payments are made to the host on the fellow's behalf. While we encourage host organizations to provide in-kind contributions such as office space and necessary overhead, as well as to augment the stipend award and provide other benefits, we do not provide the host organization with supplemental funds.

Fellowship projects cannot duplicate the host organization's existing work; and fellowship funding cannot be used to replace, supplant, or supplement funding for activities or projects already being, or reasonably expected to be, carried out by the host organization.

### Advisory Board

Regardless of whether they partner with a host organization, Advocacy Fellowship applicants must assemble an advisory board for the project. The advisory board must be comprised of a minimum of three (3) individuals who can lend guidance and expertise to the project.

## Application and Selection Process

There are four stages to the application and selection process. First, all applicants must submit a brief Letter of Intent (LOI), as well as a resume or bio. Second, from the pool of initial LOIs, we will select a smaller number who'll be invited to submit a full proposal. Third, from the pool of full proposals, we will select a group of finalists, who'll be invited to interview with a selection committee consisting of Open Society Foundations staff and outside experts. And finally, from the pool of finalists, we will select 12 – 15 individuals to receive fellowships (this final number of fellowships — which is contingent on availability of funding — will be a mix of both Advocacy and Media Fellowships).

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY

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## PART II: APPLICATION

### How to Apply

To apply, submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) along with a resume or bio by **October 12, 2016 (11:59 pm EST)**, to our online system: <http://sorosjusticefellowships.submittable.com/submit>. The online system will begin accepting materials on September 9, 2016.

On the online system, applicants will have to provide basic contact information and register with the system. Once registered, applicants will be able to submit a brief LOI (no more than two pages, single spaced) along with a resume or bio (no more than three pages).

Letters of Intent should, at a minimum, answer the following questions: *What is your project, what change do you hope it brings about, and what activities will you undertake to bring about this change? Why is your project needed? Why are you the right person to take on this work?* Applicants will also have to indicate which fellowship track they're applying under and whether they plan on having a host organization. Although LOIs are limited to no more than two pages, applicants should be sure to provide enough information to give us a sufficiently full and detailed description of the proposed project.

From the pool of LOIs, we will select a limited number of applicants to submit full proposals — which is the next step in our selection process (under certain circumstances, fellowships staff may reach out to specific applicants by phone or email to get answers to questions that may help us determine whether to invite a full proposal). Full proposals are accepted by invitation only.

For those invited to submit full proposals, we will provide all necessary details regarding the content and structure of proposals, as well as further information about the fellowships, eligibility, selection criteria, and the next steps in the selection process. Some of this information will be conveyed during an online information session for those who've been invited to submit full proposals.

Applicants can only submit a single LOI for a single proposed project. Those who make multiple submissions or propose several project ideas in a single submission will not be considered.

### Application and Selection Timeline

<b>Letters of Intent Due:</b>	<b>October 12, 2016 (11:59 p.m. EST)</b>
Full Proposals Invited:	Early-November 2016 (all applicants will be notified via email whether they have been selected to submit a full proposal)
Full Proposals Due:	Mid-January 2017
Finalists Selected:	Late-January 2017
Finalist Interviews:	Late-February 2017 (all finalist interviews will be held on the same day, to be determined, at the Open Society Foundations offices in New York City)
Selected Fellows Notified:	March 2017
Projects Begin:	No earlier than May 2017