Leadership in Government Fellowship

U.S. Programs

Deadline for Applications: June 25, 2017

Program Description

The Open Society Foundations’ U.S. Programs will award individual grants to people who have played a significant role in advancing social change from within government in the United States at the local, state, or federal levels. The individual grant will allow leaders fresh off their time in government to reflect on their public service, expand their network and knowledge, and insert their unique perspectives and expertise into the public dialogue. For the purposes of this solicitation of proposals, we refer to the selected individual grantees as fellows. Fellows will undertake a project of their choosing that will help them both gain and promote a richer and more nuanced understanding of the opportunities for making and implementing change from inside of government and, in turn, give them the chance to promote specific policy ideas beyond their former jurisdictions. U.S. Programs will consider proposals for projects that tackle one of the core issues on which we work¹.

While U.S. Programs devotes a considerable portion of our grant making resources to advocacy and support of non-profit organizations, we are increasingly committed to investing in new voices that can inform and disrupt our collective thinking about advancing open society in the United States. This second year of grants to former government staff and officials will help us find new leaders whose projects have the potential to identify different ideas and strategies for thinking about how reform is not just won, but implemented successfully.

Fellows will be able to take advantage of the considerable intellectual and logistical resources of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and contribute meaningfully to the Foundations’ thinking in return. Fellows will also have opportunities to network with one another as a cohort. This networking and relationship

¹The work of U.S. Programs is organized around four central goals: a more inclusive and accountable American democracy; a fair criminal justice system; full political, economic, and civic participation of communities of color and immigrants; and equitable economic growth. Please see Topic of the Project section for more details.
building will also provide fellows with deeper connections and broader perspectives on social change in the United States.

The Applicant
U.S. Programs seeks fellowship applicants who have served in local, state, or federal government in the United States in a senior-level position. Our ideal candidates are public servants who have recently completed their time in government (within the last two years) or will have completed their term prior to the beginning of their fellowship and have served in the chief executive role or senior management of their agency or office. For example, we have had applicants and fellows with the following titles: Deputy Mayor, Commissioner, Chief of Staff, Sheriff, City Manager, Counsel, Senior Policy Advisor, Legislative Director, or Assistant Undersecretary.

Ideally, applicants see themselves serving as change agents within government in the future or are looking to apply their public service experience to an advocacy career. People of all political parties or ideologies are encouraged to apply, especially those who can challenge our thinking and approach to social change.

Successful applicants will demonstrate the following qualities: a keen interest in reflecting on their government service; a passion for solving problems and implementing policy; the desire to advance ideas beyond their former jurisdictions; and a desire to inject their work into the public dialogue. Applicants should also have an interest in engaging constructively with our grantee network, and in furthering one of the central goals of U.S. Programs, as discussed below.

The fellowship program only accepts individual applications.

The Topic of the Project
OSF works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Among the Foundations' core areas of concern are human rights, government transparency, access to information, access to justice, the promotion of civil society and social inclusion. While the United States has served as a beacon for democracy to many, there are significant and fundamental challenges to the full participation by all who live here in the nation’s civic, political, and economic life. As part of a global network of foundations committed to local knowledge and national expertise, U.S. Programs embraces OSF’s overall mission and is committed to building a vibrant, democratic, inclusive, and a more just society in the United States.

The work of U.S. Programs is organized around four central goals:

1. Justice: We seek a society whose justice systems are fair and equitable for all, especially those who are most vulnerable, and whose public policies and institutions promote individual and community health and safety
2. Democratic Practice: We seek to strengthen the quality and resilience of American democracy through inclusive and informed civic and political participation, and through accountable and effective institutions that adhere to and further the rule of law and human rights.
3. Equality: We seek to counteract the distortions of racial and ethnic discrimination by increasing the individual and organizational capacity of immigrants and people of color to access opportunity.
4. Economic Advancement: We seek to advance an economic system that provides full and equal economic opportunity for all, especially for marginalized and excluded individuals, by augmenting their participation in the economy and transforming the economic system in which that participation takes place.

The topic of the project should align with one or more of U.S. Programs’ goals. Project themes can focus on a particular issue or cut across these broad areas of interest. Applicants are encouraged to explore our website to acquaint themselves with the goals and grant making portfolios of U.S. Programs.

A project might identify a problem in the implementation of policy that has yet to be fully recognized or discussed, offer new strategies on how to work with government and advocate for policy change, or highlight a different approach for legislative or executive action. Projects should not include lobbying, as discussed in detail below.

The Project Deliverable
Applicants should carefully consider the impact they want their project to have and the audiences they wish to reach. They should then think creatively about the activities and project deliverable that will reach these audiences most effectively. We do not dictate the deliverables that applicants propose. Instead, we leave it to the applicants to determine the content and scope of the project deliverables and make a convincing case that the work is sufficiently ambitious. Deliverables may include, but are not limited to, a book, report, blog, white paper, implementation guide, or a public education project. The intention is that these deliverables will be made available to a wide audience.

Fellows will want to provide in-depth analysis of the issue and meet with organizations and actors both familiar and unfamiliar to them as part of their project, on all sides of the issue. In addition, fellows may want to use their grant to engage in activities such as participating in panel discussions, traveling to conferences, participating in policy debates, and promoting their ideas in other public venues. OSF will also encourage and support fellows to produce op-eds, develop quotes for the media, and do public appearances related to their fellowship project.

Open Society Foundations Network
Fellows are invited to join the rich and diverse OSF community. Fellows are encouraged to take advantage of the Foundations' expansive reach and to bring new people and fresh ideas into the organization's domain. The program anticipates that most fellows will work from their home-base of operations, but will be invited, on occasion, to participate in activities at the organization's main offices in New York and in other places around the United States. Fellows are encouraged to participate in conferences and program events, as well as seminars involving Foundations’ staff and outside colleagues. In most cases, U.S. Programs will advise fellows on ways to communicate their work to a broader audience and influence current debates. OSF staff will also work to integrate fellows into the networks of individual and organizational partners and grantees.

Fellowship Term
U.S. Programs will consider applicants from all parts of the United States and its territories. Though most fellowship terms are for one year, the program will consider requests for projects lasting up to eighteen
months. The expectation is that fellows will spend sixty to eighty percent of their time over the course of the fellowship devoted to their project. Once selected, U.S. Programs and the fellow will negotiate the terms of the individual grant agreement. U.S. Programs will inform applicants of their selection as fellows in September 2017 and award grants in January 2018. Work can begin in January 2018, with a possibility to start the fellowship earlier on a case by case basis.

**Fellowship Award**
Fellows will receive a stipend in a general range of $90,000 - $130,000 depending on work experience, seniority, fellowship term, and percentage of time committed to the project. The stipend will not necessarily equal the applicant's current salary. As with the fellowship term, fellowship stipend amounts are negotiated and determined on a case by case basis.

In addition to the stipend, fellows will receive a small project budget. That budget may include expenses such as travel (including airfare and hotel), conference fees and health insurance. Fellowship expenses cannot include operational or programmatic costs, such as employees, physical infrastructure, office space, or computers. The purpose of the fellowship is to support individual fellows; therefore the program will only cover individual expenses.

The fellowship does not fund enrollment for degree or non-degree study at academic institutions, including dissertation research.

Please note grants to fellows are considered public information and the fellow’s name and project description will be included in OSF’s tax returns, as per IRS regulations.

**Lobbying**
Projects that include lobbying activities will not be funded. Please carefully review the [Tax Law Lobbying Rules](https://www.osf.org/en-US/lobbying/) before submitting an application. If awarded a fellowship, applicants are required to attend a training session on the tax law lobbying rules, conducted by the OSF General Counsel’s Office; and must agree to refrain from engaging in restricted lobbying activities during the term of the fellowship.