

GUIDELINES

Open Society Fellowship

The Open Society Fellowship supports individuals seeking innovative and unconventional approaches to fundamental open society challenges. The fellowship funds work that will enrich public understanding of those challenges and stimulate far-reaching and probing conversations within the Open Society Foundations and in the world.

The Open Society Fellowship only accepts applications relevant to specific propositions (which can be found on the grants page). New propositions will be announced periodically. Applicants are invited to dispute, substantiate, or otherwise engage with the propositions in their proposals. Once chosen, fellows will work on projects of their own design and passion. At the same time, they are expected to take advantage of the considerable intellectual and logistical resources of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and contribute meaningfully to the Foundations' thinking. Fellows will also have opportunities to collaborate with one another as a cohort. It is hoped that the fellowship will not only nurture theoretical debate but also bring about policy change and reform.

The Applicant

The Open Society Fellowship chooses its [fellows](#) from a diverse pool of applicants that includes journalists, activists, academics, and practitioners in a variety of fields. The fellowship program considers applicants from all parts of the world. Applicants should possess and be able to demonstrate a deep understanding of the major themes embedded within the proposition for which they wish to apply and be willing to serve in a cohort of fellows with diverse occupational, geographic, and ideological profiles. The fellowship seeks “idea entrepreneurs” from across the world who are ready to challenge conventional wisdom. Successful applicants will be eager to exploit the many resources offered by the Open Society Foundations and be prepared to engage constructively with our global network. Ideal fellows are specialists who can see beyond the parochialisms of their field and possess the tenacity to complete a project of exceptional merit. The fellowship program only accepts individual applications.

The Work Product

Successful projects should push the boundaries of current thinking and carry lessons that can be applied to a variety of settings. Applicants should carefully consider the impact they want their work to have and the audiences they wish to reach. They should then

think creatively about the activities and work products that will reach these audiences most effectively.

Open Society fellows produce work outputs of their own choosing, such as a book, journalistic or academic articles, art projects, a series of convenings, etc. In addition, fellowship cohorts may develop a joint work product of some sort. Fellowship staff will assist cohorts in brainstorming possible outputs.

The fellowship will not fund the production of a documentary film from the project budget. However, projects involving pre-production research and development and post-production advocacy and outreach efforts conducted by a single person will be considered. For all cultural projects, including documentary film, the proposal must also demonstrate rigorous and original thinking about how cultural expression can address the challenges embedded in the given proposition.

Application and Selection

Letters of Inquiry

Applicants are first required to submit a one- to two page, single-spaced, letter of inquiry that outlines the topic of the project, proposed work product, and relevance to the proposition. A CV should accompany the letter of inquiry.

Letters of inquiry should address the following questions:

- What is the central argument of your proposed project as it relates to the proposition?
- How does your project advance or challenge current thinking?
- Who is/are the intended audience/s?
- What are the potential work products?

The letter of inquiry should be submitted [here](#). Letters of inquiry will be reviewed within 6 weeks. Inquiries showing promise will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Unfortunately, we do not have the staff capacity to provide specific feedback on all inquiries. In general, we strongly discourage re-submitting unsuccessful letters of inquiry.

Full Proposals

Once a letter of inquiry has been reviewed, the applicant may be invited to submit a full proposal. Those invited to apply may receive some feedback before being asked to submit a full proposal.

At this stage, applicants are required to submit only a preliminary project budget that broadly describes the types of activities to be undertaken and the kinds of support required to complete a proposed project. Upon selection, fellowship program staff work with fellows to complete a final project budget.

The program strongly encourages applicants to submit supporting materials electronically, via the provided application link. However, if applicants have hard copy materials that they feel are essential to the evaluation of their project, they can list these at the end of the project proposal. Full proposals may be submitted in a language other than English as

long as they are accompanied by an English translation. Certified translations are strongly recommended.

Program staff evaluate applications in consultation with Foundation colleagues and outside experts. Reviewers consider whether the applicant's background, track record, and depth of expertise give reason to believe that the project will be successfully completed and whether the applicant offers persuasive evidence that the fellowship project will significantly inform and challenge the Open Society network.

Fellowship Expectations

At the heart of the fellowship are the Open Society Foundations themselves. Fellows are invited to join the rich and diverse Foundations network, a global network of activists and institutions dedicated to defending civil society and improving the lives of the world's most vulnerable citizens.

Fellows are expected to take full advantage of the Foundations' expansive reach and work to bring new people and fresh ideas into the organization's ambit. Fellows are not required to take up residency in an OSF office, although that option is offered; fellows are, however, expected to spend a portion of their term visiting one or more of the organization's main offices or at a national and regional foundation. While in residence or visiting, they are strongly encouraged to organize and participate in conferences and program events. Ultimately, fellows should sharpen the organization's thinking, question its assumptions, and broaden its understanding of the pivotal political and social problems posed by a given proposition. In order to facilitate these interactions, proficiency in spoken English is required.

Fellowship Placement and Term

A small number of full proposals will be selected as finalists. These finalists are considered by an outside selection committee. Fellowships are awarded for one year. Fellowship program staff will work with fellows selected around a given proposition to coordinate interactions, convenings, and potential joint outputs as a cohort.

A fellowship term can begin up to a year after selection, in consultation with program staff. The program encourages submissions from applicants from a range of personal circumstances - including those with families - and will work with fellows to devise a schedule that meets their needs and the program's expectations.

Fellows who wish to work on their project in a country in which they do not have citizenship must satisfy and comply with applicable visa requirements. The program will help fellows obtain necessary visas and will cover all associated costs.

Fellowship Support

Fellows will receive a stipend of \$80,000 or \$100,000, depending on work experience, seniority, and current income. The stipend does not necessarily equal the applicant's current salary.

In most cases, the program will advise fellows on ways to communicate their work to a

broader audience and influence current debates. Staff also work to integrate fellows into the networks of OSF's individual and organizational partners and grantees and with other members of the fellowship cohort.

In addition to the stipend, fellows will receive a project budget. That budget may include expenses such as travel (including airfare and hotel), visa costs, part-time research assistance, conference fees and health insurance. Fellowship expenses should not include operational or programmatic costs, such as employees and physical infrastructure. The purpose of the fellowship is to support individual fellows; therefore the program will cover mainly individual expenses.

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

Please note that under federal tax rules applicable to U.S. private foundations, the Open Society Foundations cannot support lobbying activities so projects that include lobbying activities will not be funded.

The fellowship program considers applications subject to funding availability.

Contact Information

For more information please contact: OSFellows@opensocietyfoundations.org.