

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

2017 YOUTH ACTIVIST FELLOWSHIPS GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

Soros Justice Fellowships and Youth Exchange

The Soros Justice Fellowships, in partnership with the Open Society Foundations' Youth Exchange, seek applicants for its Youth Activist 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 Youth Activist Fellowships are the result of a partnership between the Soros Justice Fellowships and the Open Society Foundations' Youth Exchange, which aims to support different parts of the Open Society Foundations network to plan for, engage with, and reflect on their work with young activists to advance their broader strategic goals.

The Youth Activist Fellowships will support outstanding individuals aged 18 – 25 to take on projects of their own design that address some aspect of the U.S. criminal justice system. Projects can range from public education and training, to grassroots organizing and policy advocacy, to social media campaigns and other forms of creative communications. Youth Activist Fellowships can be either 12 or 18 months in duration and must be undertaken in partnership with a host organization. Projects can be full-time or part-time, and can begin anytime between May and November 2017. The fellowship comes with an award of \$60,000 for full-time, 18 month projects (this award will be pro-rated for part-time or 12 month projects).

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 in our systems of justice in the United States. Whether it's efforts to hold the police more accountable, end the punishment and harsh treatment of youth in the justice system, dismantle the barriers that people face following a period of incarceration, or challenge harsh and punitive responses to drug use, there are countless ways to advance these broad goals.

However, 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 in our justice system. In this way, the fellowships are designed to be flexible and open — a space for projects that have the potential to build effectively on work that has come before, explore new and creative ways of doing things, take risks, offer new insights and perspectives on what we thought we knew, and teach us about what we don't know but should.

What We Are Looking For: Young People with Potential

Beyond the basic requirement that projects focus on one or more of our broad criminal justice reform goals, we're also looking for young people who: demonstrate a passion for and commitment to social justice but who are at the earliest stages of their careers and are just now learning (and want to learn more) about what it takes to be most effective as an activist in a particular place or on a particular issue; show strong signs that, if given the time, opportunity, and exposure that the fellowships offer, they have the potential to develop into the kind of leader that the field needs; unencumbered by traditional ways of doing things, would bring fresh thinking and fresh perspectives to the work; and would not only benefit from the opportunity that a fellowship would afford, but would also teach us (and the field) some important lessons about how to best identify and support the next generation of activists leaders. In addition, we're looking for candidates who have not had easy access to existing leadership pipelines or other paths to achievement and accomplishment, but who nonetheless have the drive, aptitude, savvy, and tenacity to seize upon an opportunity for growth and development when it presents itself.

Activities Supported by the Soros Justice Youth Activist Fellowships

Applicants may engage in, either alone or in combination, any number of activities to achieve the goals set forth in their projects. These activities include but are not limited to: public education, curriculum development and training, social media campaigns and other strategic and creative forms of public communication, policy advocacy, coalition-building, grassroots organizing and mobilization, and research and analysis. Ultimately, we look to applicants to make the case that the activities they undertake — whatever those activities may be — are the most promising ones for accomplishing their fellowship goals.

Regardless of the activities undertaken, all Youth Activist Fellowship projects must, during the term of the fellowship itself, actively seek some measure of reform. In other words, their projects must, in some way, seek to change the world as it presently is and challenge the status quo.

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. 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

The fellowship comes with an award of \$60,000 for full-time, 18 month projects (this award will be prorated for part-time or 12 month projects). In addition, fellows will have access to funds for travel, project-related support, and health insurance; as well as access to a variety of training, networking, and professional development opportunities.

Eligibility

Experience

The Youth Activist Fellowship is likely a good fit for a range of people at different points in their activist lives, including but not limited to: people just entering the field following post-secondary education; people both working and attending college part-time; people who've had some relevant volunteer or internship experience; and people joining the activist world after some other type of life experience (e.g. post-incarceration). However, the ideal candidate will be someone who isn't already deeply entrenched in a particular body of activist work or obviously in a leadership pipeline or on a clear path to further achievement and accomplishment. And while we don't have a rigid cut off, in terms of the number of years of experience that would make someone "too experienced" for the Youth Activist Fellowships, those with more than two (2) years of full-time experience as an activist or advocate are unlikely to be well suited for

this fellowship. People with more than two years of full-time activism or advocacy experience should consider applying for the [Soros Justice Advocacy Fellowships](#).

Age

Applicants must be between the ages of 18 – 25 at the time of application.

Education

There are no minimum education requirements.

Time Commitment

Fellowships are either 18 or 12 months in duration and can begin anytime between May and November 2017. Projects can be either full-time (minimum of 35 hours/week) or part-time (minimum of 20 hours/week). Fellows cannot be full-time students or have full-time jobs during their fellowships, even if the fellowship is only part-time.

Joint Applications

The fellowships do not allow multiple individuals to apply jointly for a single Youth Activist Fellowship.

Enrollment in an Academic Institution

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

Project Location

Projects must be based in the United States (including U.S. territories).

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.

Host Organizations and Mentors/Supervisors/Champions

Host Organization

Youth Activist Fellowship applicants are 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 — should provide access to resources such as office and meeting space, technology (computer, internet access, phone, etc.) and networks (i.e. connections to other individuals and organizations), as well as supervision, mentoring and guidance.

Prior to submitting an application, applicants and host organizations can develop fellowship projects in any number of ways (e.g. a project may be developed entirely by applicant, developed jointly by applicant and host, or initially developed by host organization but tailored to suit applicant's skills and interests). The main thing is that applicants select host organizations that they feel will be a good fit with the project they

have in mind and that can provide the kind of infrastructure and support they think they'll need throughout the fellowship.

If awarded a fellowship, grant payments must be passed through the host (unless there are compelling reasons to pay the fellow directly), which means that 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 award is made to the host on the fellow's behalf. We do not provide the host organization with supplemental funds.

While applicants can be currently employed or contracted by their proposed host organization, 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.

Mentor/Supervisor/Champion

Applicants are strongly encouraged to identify at least one person who will provide them with advice, guidance, and support on a consistent basis throughout the project – someone who would be considered an applicant's mentor, supervisor, or "champion". This person can, but is not required to be, from the host organization; and can, but is not required to be, the fellow's actual supervisor. This should be someone who is familiar with the applicant's fellowship project and who will be committed to helping them achieve the project's goals and objectives, as well as to supporting the fellow's growth and development as an activist. Also, this person ideally will have deep familiarity with the issue that is the focus of the fellowship project or with the geographic location of the fellowship project work.

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 3 – 5 individuals to receive a Youth Activist Fellowship (this final number of fellowships is contingent on availability of funding).

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY

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 all of 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 identify their 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

Letters of Intent Due:	October 12, 2016 (11:59 p.m. EST)
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