

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

2017 Community Youth Fellowships Guidelines and Application

The Youth Exchange, in partnership with the Human Rights Initiative, seeks applicants for its Community Youth Fellowships.

The Community Youth Fellowships will support activists aged 18-25 who are at the beginning of their work life and want to learn more about what it takes to be most effective as an activist. There are no minimum education requirements.

This fellowship explicitly recognizes the threats of discrimination to an Open Society and seeks to create a leadership pipeline that promotes young people who have direct experience of the challenges they try to address.

Letters of Intent (LOI) are due on April 21, 2017 (11:59 p.m. EST) and must be submitted [here](#).

This document contains the guidelines, eligibility criteria, and information on how to apply.

GENERAL

The Youth Exchange is based within the Open Society Foundations' Strategy Unit team and seeks to support meaningful engagement with youth across the Open Society network. The Youth Exchange seeks to work with dynamic youth activists who impact change and uplift [the mission and values of an Open Society](#).

The [Human Rights Initiative](#) (HRI) at the Open Society Foundations supports advocates to promote justice, equality, and participation of all. HRI supports some of the largest international human rights organizations, national advocacy organizations, and small and emerging groups working directly with those whose rights have been violated.

PART I: OVERALL GUIDELINES AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Project Focus

Through these fellowships, the Open Society Foundations aim to provide promising leaders with the support they need to develop great ideas that dismantle challenges in their communities and advance the values of an open society. The Community Youth Fellowships will support dynamic activists aged 18-25 who want to implement a project of their own design that takes place in underserved communities anywhere in the U.S. in any area of human rights. This opportunity is specifically for **young persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities**.

Project Approach

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: grassroots organizing and mobilization, public education, strategic communications, policy advocacy, and coalition-building.

Regardless of the strategy employed or the issue addressed, all Community Youth Fellowship projects should aim to make a contribution to a specific challenge in their community. In other words, projects that involve *only* planning, conceptualizing, researching, strategizing, or otherwise “laying the groundwork” during the term of the fellowship are unlikely to fare well in our process.

Community Youth Fellowships do NOT fund:

- **Enrollment in an Academic Institution** for degree or non-degree study, including dissertation research. Also, as indicated in “Time Commitment” below, fellows cannot be full-time students during their fellowships.
- **Lobbying.** Please carefully review our [Tax Law Lobbying Rules](#) before submitting an application. If awarded a fellowship, applicants must agree to refrain from engaging in restricted lobbying activities during the term of the fellowship.

Awards

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

The purpose of the fellowship is to support individual fellows; therefore the program will only cover individual expenses. Please note grants to fellows are considered public information and fellows’ names and project descriptions will be included in the Open Society Foundations’ audited financial statements, as per IRS regulations.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. **Age:** Applicants must be 18-25 years of age or under at the time of application.
2. **Project focus:** Applicants must propose projects that relate to the thematic and geographic areas mentioned above.
3. **Experience:** Applicants must be young persons with intellectual and development disabilities. Effective and meaningful support will be provided to ensure the candidate is successful. This option is open to all candidates with intellectual and developmental disabilities regardless of support required. There are no minimum education requirements and full-time work experience is not necessary. Candidates with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have not typically had access to this type of opportunity are encouraged to apply.
4. **Directly affected individuals:** Applicants directly affected by, or with significant direct personal experience of, the challenges, policies, practices, and systems their projects seek to address are strongly encouraged to apply. This includes, but is not limited, applicants who have an intellectual disability, applicants who have been sex workers or who have been incarcerated, or applicants with family members or loved ones with these direct experiences. It also includes people with deep ties and connections to the communities or constituencies that are the focus of the projects.
5. **Potential and attitude:** Applicants must have the potential to accomplish their project objectives and to benefit from the opportunity and exposure that the fellowships offer. Ideally, applicants will teach us (and the field) important lessons about how to best identify and support the next generation of activists leaders who may come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. We are 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.
6. **Time commitment:** Fellowships are intended to be either 18 or 12 months in duration and can begin between June 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.
7. **Project location and purpose:**

The Community Youth Fellowships will support dynamic activists aged 18-25 who want to implement a project of their own design that takes place in underserved communities anywhere in the U.S. in any area of human rights. **This opportunity is specifically for young persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

8. 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 a host organization (as described below); 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 the fellow 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.

9. Host Organizations

Fellowship applicants for projects that will take place in underserved communities in the U.S. in relation to inclusion and accessibility for persons with intellectual disabilities in any area of human rights are encouraged, but not required, to secure a host organization. The Open Society Foundations can assist fellows in securing a host organization on a case by case basis.

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. The fellowship program encourages host organizations to provide in-kind contributions such as office space and necessary overhead. Host organizations may also augment the stipend award and provide other benefits. The fellowship program does not provide the host organization with supplemental funds. Fellows working with a host organization must submit a letter of commitment from the host organization that details the parameters of the working relationship before beginning any project under this fellowship.

Projects proposed in conjunction with host organizations are evaluated in part on the extent to which the host organization is the right fit for the project and the applicant. However, if awarded a fellowship, the individual applicant ultimately is responsible for the work; and the fellowship “attaches” to the individual, not the host organization. The individual has the right, with the prior approval of the fellowship program, to take the fellowship to another host or choose to do the work without a host organization.

PART II: APPLICATION

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, applicants must:

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- **Complete the form [here](#) by April 21, 2017.** Once registered, applicants will be able to proceed to the application itself.
 - Upload the following documents:
 - **RESUME OR BIO:** no more than TWO (2) pages.
 - **LETTER OF INTENT:** a single-spaced letter of intent (maximum 2 pages) structured according to the template you will find online. The LOI can be submitted instead as a video or sound recording (maximum 4 minutes) covering the same points in the template.

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

From the pool of LOIs, we will select a limited number of applicants to submit full proposals.

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.

Application and Selection Timeline

Letters of Intent Due:	April 21, 2017 (11:59 p.m. EST)
Full Proposals Invited:	late April, 2017 (only those applicants who have been selected to submit a full proposal will be contacted)
Full Proposals Due:	May/June 2017
Finalists Selected:	June, 2017
Finalist Interviews:	June/July, 2017
Selected Fellows Notified:	June/July, 2017
Projects Begin:	No earlier than July 2017

For more information or if you experience technical difficulties with the online application form, please contact the Youth Exchange at youth.exchange@opensocietyfoundations.org