

2020 SOROS EQUALITY FELLOWSHIP

Deadline: February 13, 2020

Fellowship Overview and Applicant Deadlines

The Open Society Foundations seeks applicants for its Soros Equality Fellowship, which aims to support long-term leaders influencing the racial justice field. The Fellowship award provides individuals with \$100,000 to support the production of an innovative racial justice project over the course of 18 months.

Applications are due on February 13, 2020 (11:59 pm EST) and must be submitted online through the application portal.

General

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Founded by philanthropist George Soros, the Foundations support individuals and organizations across the globe fighting for freedom of expression, transparency, accountable government, and for societies that promote justice and equality.

1. Guidelines

1.1 Fellowship Projects

The Soros Equality Fellowship is based within the Open Society U.S.' Equality Team and seeks to support individuals whom we believe will become long-term innovative leaders influencing the racial justice field. We invite applicants to be bold, innovative, and audacious in their submissions. The aim of the Fellowship is to incubate new ideas, promote risk-taking, and develop different ways of thinking that challenge and expand our existing assumptions. The proposed project must provide considerable value to the racial justice field and inspire new approaches to address issues of structural inequities and discrimination.

We are in unprecedented times. As such, we believe this year's cohort should consider their project within the current social and political moment. Currently, we know toxic narratives, racialized anxiety, economic insecurity, and an outright assault on civil rights protections have reinforced divisions and the systems that perpetuate inequities. It is in this context that we ask applicants to place their project and explain how and why their project is necessary to counter these threats and instead move toward a new and inclusive multi-racial democracy.

There is an entrepreneurial spirit that guides the Open Society Foundations' approach to seemingly intractable problems such as structural racism and xenophobia. Through this Fellowship, Open Society aims to provide promising leaders with the support they need to develop their ideas to more effectively combat racism in all its forms. We seek a



diverse and dynamic cohort of applicants, including but not limited to activists, lawyers, artists, journalists, and organizers with unique perspectives, to produce projects with meaningful impact. We do not have a defined list of topics or issues that we will consider. Instead, the Fellowship is designed to be flexible and open – a space for projects that build effectively on work that has come before, explore new and creative ways of doing things, take risks, and offer new insights and perspectives.

Applicants must demonstrate their project's impact that reflects 18 months' of work. We leave it up to each applicant to determine the scope of the project impact and to make a convincing case that the work is sufficiently ambitious. However, in all cases, impact must aim to reach audiences and seek some measurable impact during the term of the fellowship itself, i.e. the program will not support projects that involve only research, planning, or other activities that simply "lay the groundwork." Film and book projects should be in final stages of production and the applicant must be able to provide some sample of the project within their submission. For advocacy projects, this requirement means that there should be at least the theoretical possibility, based on your activities that the change you want to see will happen during the term of the Fellowship itself. We encourage all applicants to review the lobbying and political activity restrictions section closely.

While each cohort is different, we encourage applicants who are unsure if they or their project is a strong candidate for the Fellowship, to review previous recipients to get a better understanding of the type of individuals and projects we seek to support. Please note, just because we have supported a type of project or individual in the past, does not mean we will, or will not, support a similar applicant in the future.

1.2 Fellowship Grant

Fellows will receive a \$100,000 grant over the 18 month fellowship to support all expenses related to the project including travel, conference fees, living stipend, and health insurance. Over the course of the fellowship, there may be additional Open Society–sponsored opportunities. In addition, Fellows will be given opportunities for global networking and engagement with relevant Open Society Foundations staff and grantees.

The purpose of the fellowship is to support individuals; therefore the program will only cover individual expenses and the project must be the creation of the individual applicant and confer a professional benefit to that individual. These fellowships should not be seen as a proxy for organizational grants. 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 Open Society's audited financial statements, as per IRS regulations.

1.3 Eligibility

Fellowship Term and Time Commitment

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 Fellowship. In addition, if awarded a Fellowship, applicants must be available to attend a set of activities during the Fellowship term: New Fellows Orientation in New York (tentatively set for July 2019); the Soros Equality Fellowship retreat (tentatively set for all of 2020); fellowship class network calls; and a Rockwood Leadership Institute training. Exact dates and location will be confirmed upon Fellowship selection.

Projects Based Outside the United States

Applicants may be based outside the United States, provided their work directly pertains to a U.S. racial justice issue and is able to demonstrate a proficiency in spoken and written English.

Joint Applications

Up to two (2) individuals can apply jointly for a Soros Equality Fellowship. However, joint applications will share a fellowship award of \$100,000 over the 18 months. A joint application should be completed together as a single submission. For joint applicants, the "full-time work" requirement does not apply to each applicant. All other restrictions associated with an individual application still apply. Be sure to explain why this particular partnership is necessary to fulfill the objectives of the project and how responsibilities will be distributed.

Lobbying

Projects that include electioneering, lobbying, or other activity that does not fall within IRS 501c(3) guidelines will not be funded. Please carefully review the [Tax Law Lobbying Rules](#) 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 Open Society Foundations' General Counsel's Office; and must agree to refrain from engaging in restricted lobbying and political activities during the term of the Fellowship.

1.4 Selection Criteria and Process

There are three stages to the application and selection process. First, all applicants must submit a full and completed application by the deadline of February 13, 2020. Secondly, each application will be reviewed for critical need, competitiveness, ability to influence the racial justice field, innovation, and the leadership qualities of the applicant. Applications will be evaluated on the extent to which the applicant possesses the vision, drive, and skills needed to broaden understanding, spur debate, or catalyze change on the issues at the heart of the Open Society

Foundations' racial justice priorities. We will then select a group of finalists who will be invited to interview with a selection committee consisting of Open Society Foundations staff and outside social justice experts in New York City. Finally, after each finalists is interviewed, we will select up to 15 individuals to receive Fellowship awards.

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR APPLICATION

2. Application

2.1 Application Information

The full proposal application deadline is **February 13, 2020 (11:59 p.m. EST)**. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Online Submission

Applications must be submitted online through the [Open Society Foundations web portal](#).

In order to submit, applicants will have to provide basic contact information and register in the system. Once registered, applicants will be able to proceed to the application itself. All communications with applicants will be sent to the email used to register with the online system.

Content of Complete Applications

Complete applications consist of a number of items that must be uploaded to the online application system:

1. Cover Page, Project Proposal, Resume or CV, and short 200-word bio (Please combine as a single attachment)
2. Letters of Recommendation
3. Publisher Letter(s) (book proposals only)
4. Samples of, or links to view previous work (arts, technology, and media projects only)

Cover Page

Each application must include a single-spaced cover page, which includes the following information:

Name:

E-mail Address:

Phone Number:

Mailing Address:

Project Title:

Project Summary (no more than one paragraph):

Project Proposal

Each application must include a single-spaced (12pt Font) proposal of no more than 3,000 words containing full responses to the six (6) sections listed below in order, with the headings as listed below, i.e. Vision and Need, Leadership and Networks, Challenges and Opportunities, Timeline and Impact, Budget, and Commitment.

Section 1 (Vision and Need): *“Provide a vision of the project that describes: the issue your project will address, why this issue is important, your methods for addressing the issue, and how you expect your project will influence and advance the racial justice field. In detail please describe the need for this project in this critical historic moment?”*

Your response to this section should reflect extensive background research on the issue, as well as a sufficient understanding of the work that others have done or are doing on the issue; and should suggest how your project fills a significant gap or otherwise represents an important contribution to, or departure from, similar/related work within the racial justice field.

Section 2 (Challenges and Opportunities): *“Please describe potential challenges or difficulties that you think may impact your ability to advance this project? How do you plan to address these challenges? What are the unique opportunities related to your project and how will it be transformative?”*

Section 3 (Timeline and Impact): *“Provide a timeline that sets forth the project's specific activities and reflects all phases of the project. Please provide a summary of the anticipated impact of your fellowship after the 18-month grant period. What changes or influences will your fellowship have upon communities, the racial justice movement or other members in civil society?”*

Section 4 (Leadership and Networks): *“How have your unique experiences (personal, professional, academic, etc.), skills, and networks prepared you to carry out this particular project? What do you hope to gain from, and contribute to, the Soros Equality Fellowship community? For joint applications, please speak to your relationship to one another and why this particular team is best suited to undertake the project.”*

Section 5 (Budget): *“Briefly outline a budget that shows any project-related expenses, including research and travel costs, supplies, and finishing and distribution costs, as well as expected income from sale of stories or from other funders. The budget does not necessarily need to be tied to the stipend award. An optional template for your budget is available.”*

Question 6 (Commitment): *“Describe any non-fellowship work responsibilities (e.g. freelance work, consulting, teaching commitments, etc.) that you expect to have during the course of your fellowship, including the approximate time to be devoted to these commitments.”*

Letters of Recommendation

Each individual application must include two (2) letters of recommendation. The letters should address your talent, professionalism, and demonstrated ability to work independently to complete long-term, in-depth projects; as well as any other matter that you or your letter writers deem relevant to our assessment of you or your project. Letters should not be more than two (2) pages in length. If applying jointly, please submit three (3) letters – one for each applicant and one from a person who can speak directly to your partnership.

Publisher Letters (for book projects only)

If proposing a book project, completed applications must include a letter from at least one publisher that has expressed interest in the book. Letters should not be more than two (2) pages in length.

Samples of Work (for arts, media, and technology projects only)

If proposing an art, media, or technology project, complete applications must include up to two (2) samples (or relevant links) of your work. Video/audio samples should be uploaded online and should be no longer than five minutes. If you link to a longer piece, provide a time stamp indicating where reviewers should begin watching/listening. For print journalism, each sample should be no more than ten pages.

2.2 Application and Selection Timeline

Application Process Open	December 16, 2019
Application Deadline:	February 13, 2020 (11:59 p.m. EST)
Finalists Notified:	April 2020
Finalist Interviews:	May 19-20, 2020 (all finalist interviews will be conducted at the Open Society Foundations' office in New York City)
Selected Fellows Notified:	July 2020
Projects Begin:	Summer/Fall 2020

** Please note, dates subject to change.*