

2010 Soros Justice Fellowships Program Advocacy Fellowship Guidelines

Application Deadline: Wednesday, October 14, 2009 (11:59pm EST)

General

Overview. The Soros Justice Fellowships Program's Advocacy Fellowships fund outstanding individuals—including lawyers, advocates, grassroots organizers, activist academics, and others with unique perspectives—to initiate innovative policy advocacy projects at the local, state, and national levels that will have a measurable impact on one or more of the Open Society Institute's U.S. criminal justice reform priorities. Projects may range from litigation to public education to coalition-building to grassroots mobilization to action research. Advocacy Fellowships are 18 months in duration, may be implemented in conjunction with a host organization, and can begin in either April or September of 2010.

Individuals with projects that propose, as their primary purpose, the completion of books, print or radio journalism, documentary film or video, or other similar media should apply for the [Soros Justice Media Fellowships](#).

Note: Please be aware that the Soros Justice Fellowships Program is separate and distinct from the [Open Society Fellowship](#), an OSI program that supports individuals seeking innovative and unconventional approaches to fundamental open society challenges. While both fellowship programs share a common interest in open society issues generally, the Soros Justice Fellowships have an express focus on U.S. criminal justice issues.

Advocacy Fellowship Tracks. There are two Advocacy Fellowship tracks: Advocacy Track I, designed for new and emerging leaders; and Advocacy Track II, aimed at individuals with a demonstrated record of achievement and expertise in their fields.

Fellowship Projects

The Soros Justice Fellowships Program is part of the [Criminal Justice Fund](#), housed within the Open Society Institute's [U.S. Programs](#). All Advocacy Fellowship projects must reflect one or more of the Criminal Justice Fund's priorities (see "Criminal Justice Fund Priorities" below).

The Problem: Mass Incarceration, Harsh Punishment, and Unequal Justice. The Criminal Justice Fund seeks to promote open society values by reducing the destructive impact of current criminal justice policies on the lives of individuals, families and communities in the United States. In the U.S., 1.6 million people are in prison. Another 723,000 people are in local jails. In a nation of 230 million adults, this means that one in every 99 people is behind bars. The number of adults on probation or parole exceeds five million.

These statistics paint a disturbing picture. This country's over-reliance on incarceration and correctional control is driven by a culture of punishment that includes heavy-handed law enforcement practices, lack of adequate legal assistance, and the criminalization of immigration status. Harsh and excessive sentences, including the death penalty and life without the possibility of parole, are among the drivers of this problem. Well-documented, too, is the fact that the costs of these policies are borne most heavily by individuals and communities already pushed to the margins of American life—residents of low-income communities, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals suffering from mental illness and drug dependency.

Criminal Justice Fund Priorities. The Criminal Justice Fund takes aim at these problems by pursuing three broad but interrelated goals: reducing mass incarceration, eliminating harsh punishment, and eliminating racial disparities and securing a fair and equitable system of justice. In support of these goals, the Criminal Justice Fund prioritizes efforts to:

- Attack the excessive and economically destructive costs of incarceration
- Eliminate harsh and unjust sentencing practices
- Reform parole and probation policies and practices



- Foster new approaches to drug policy
- Combat the criminalization of marginalized populations, e.g. people with mental illness, homeless individuals
- End punitive school disciplinary policies
- Eliminate unreasonable barriers to the reintegration of people returning from prison, as well as challenge the stigmatization of people with criminal records
- End the treatment of children as adults in prosecution and sentencing
- Abolish the death penalty
- Reform policies that criminalize immigrants
- Reform police and prosecution practices
- Improve indigent defense services and systems

Strategies Supported by the Soros Justice Advocacy Fellowships. Applicants may propose employing, either alone or in combination, any number of strategies to achieve the goals set forth in their projects. These strategies include, but are not limited to: litigation, public education, strategic communications, policy advocacy, coalition-building, grassroots organizing and mobilization, and action research.

A few important considerations to keep in mind:

- Regardless of the strategy employed or the issue addressed, all Advocacy Fellowship projects must specify a clear policy goal.
- As a general rule, the program does not fund projects that either wholly or substantially involve direct service delivery or individual representation. There are three principal exceptions to this general rule: the project has a clearly-defined policy goal beyond obtaining specific results for individual clients who are receiving the services; the project involves new and innovative methods for providing direct services or individual representation, and aims to serve as a model to others in the field; or the project targets previously unserved constituencies, communities or individuals, thereby bringing to light an unmet need.
- The Advocacy Fellowship cannot support lobbying activities (see “Basic Eligibility”—“Lobbying” below).

Intersectional Projects. We strongly encourage applications for projects that emphasize the intersection of the above priorities with the particular needs of the following specific constituencies: low-income communities; communities of color; immigrants; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people; and women and children.

Directly Affected Individuals. We in particular encourage applications from individuals directly affected by, or with significant direct personal experience with, the issues their projects seek to address.

Projects that Seize Upon a “Transformational Moment.” By all accounts, we are living through a period of tremendous economic, social, and political change. While the Fellowship Program will continue to support projects that address long-standing, deeply entrenched problems in our criminal justice system, the program is also keen to receive applications that seek to capitalize on this transformational moment. To that end, we encourage projects that are explicitly attuned to, and concern themselves with, opportunities and challenges associated with the current environment (e.g. the economic crisis, the changing political and policy landscape, the “post-race” frame emerging from Obama’s election).

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 Fellowship Program guidelines may submit an email inquiry before proceeding with the full online application process. The email should provide a brief (no more than 500 words) description of the proposed project, as well as some background information on the applicant, and should be sent to: sorosjusticefellowships@sorosny.org. Our response will not address whether we feel a proposed project is strong or weak; only whether it technically fits within the guidelines. Please note that the Fellowship Program will do its best to respond to all email inquiries within a week of their receipt; however, 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 program guidelines.

Awards

Advocacy Track I:

- Stipend of \$75,000 (\$50,000 for the first year; \$25,000 for the remaining six months);



- Up to \$6,000 for graduate student loan repayment;
- \$3,750 for health insurance;
- \$1,000 for professional development;
- Funds to attend fellowship-related gatherings; and
- Access to ongoing technical assistance resources.

Advocacy Track II:

- Stipend of \$105,000 (\$70,000 for the first year, \$35,000 for the remaining six months);
- \$3,750 for health insurance;
- Funds to attend fellowship-related gatherings; and
- Access to ongoing technical assistance resources.

Basic Eligibility

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, all eligibility requirements apply to both Advocacy Tracks.

Experience. Advocacy Track I applicants must have at least two (2) years of relevant advocacy experience, which may include full-time and part-time employment, paid or unpaid internships, longer-term experience working with nonprofits, or other pertinent experience (e.g. advocacy while incarcerated). Advocacy Track II applicants must have a minimum of ten (10) years of relevant experience in their fields.

Education. Applicants must have at least a high school diploma or equivalent.

Time Commitment. Fellowships are 18 months in duration and should begin in either April or September of 2010. Applicants must be able to devote at least 35 hours per week to the project if awarded a fellowship; and the fellowship project must be the applicant's full-time work during the course of the fellowship. Also, if awarded a fellowship, applicants must be available to attend two fellowship-related gatherings: the New Fellows meeting (tentatively set for March 2010 in New York City; exact date to be announced) and the annual Soros Justice Fellowships conference (tentatively set for June 2010; exact date and location to be announced).

Host Organization. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to secure a host organization. Applicants must demonstrate that the project does not duplicate the host organization's existing efforts and that the fellowship funding would not be used to replace, supplant or supplement funding for activities or projects that are already being carried out by the host organization.

Advisory Board. Advocacy Fellowship applicants must assemble an advisory board for the project. The advisory board must be comprised of a minimum of three (3) individuals who can lend strategic guidance and substantive expertise to the project.

Joint Applications. Under the Advocacy tracks, the Fellowship Program no longer allows multiple individuals to apply jointly for a single Advocacy Fellowship.

Enrollment in an Academic Institution. The Fellowship Program does not fund enrollment for degree or non-degree study at academic institutions, including dissertation research.

Past Soros Justice Fellowship Recipients. Past Soros Justice Fellowship recipients are not eligible to apply.

Lobbying. Under the federal tax rules applicable to U.S. private foundations, the Open Society Institute cannot support lobbying activities. Projects that include lobbying activities will not be funded. Please 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 OSI's General Counsel's Office.

Host Organizations and Advisory Boards

Host Organization. As noted above, Advocacy Fellowship applicants are encouraged, but not required, to secure a host organization. Host organizations—which must be duly incorporated non-profits—can provide access to resources such as space, technology, and networks, as well as mentoring and guidance. They can also enhance the

credibility of the project. The Open Society Institute 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 foundation does not provide the host organization with supplemental funds. Applicants choosing not to partner with a host organization must convincingly articulate how they will achieve the project goals without the infrastructure and support of an established organization.

If awarded a fellowship, applicants with host organizations can choose to receive grant payments directly or have some (or all) of the grant payments passed through the host. Under the latter arrangement, the host must agree that (a) all grant payments are made to the host on the fellow's behalf, and (b) the full amount of the fellowship stipend, minus any necessary tax withholdings, will be made to the fellow.

Advisory Board. Regardless of whether they partner with a host organization, Advocacy Fellowship applicants must assemble an advisory board for the project. The advisory board must be comprised of a minimum of three (3) individuals who can lend strategic guidance and substantive expertise to the project.

Selection Criteria and Process

Applications will be evaluated on the extent to which the applicant possesses the vision, drive, and skills required to create and sustain a project that will advance the goals of one or more of the Open Society Institute's U.S. criminal justice reform priorities. A reading committee consisting of foundation staff and outside experts in the field will review proposals and nominate finalists. Finalists will be invited to interview with a selection committee consisting of foundation staff and outside experts in the field.

Note: OSI reserves the right, at any point in the selection process, to request that applicants have their applications considered under a different fellowship category (e.g. Media vs. Advocacy) or track (Advocacy Track I vs. Advocacy Track II).

In evaluating applications, the program will consider:

Project Need:

- Is the need the project proposes to address relevant (i.e. it involves one or more of OSI's U.S. criminal justice priority areas)?
- Is it important (i.e. large numbers of individuals, families or communities are affected by the problem or issue; it involves an issue that is commonly unaddressed; or it is an issue of manifest injustice)?

Project Approach:

- Is the proposed approach innovative (i.e. takes a new approach to the identified problem or builds on existing efforts in a meaningful way)?
- Is it detailed and sound (i.e. clearly and thoroughly maps out the project's activities, and those activities make practical and strategic sense)?
- Is there a good fit with the host organization (i.e. the organization's mission and existing work complement the project; the organization has the resources to supervise and guide the applicant's work; if the applicant does not propose working with a host organization, the applicant makes a compelling case for how he/she will work independently without the support or infrastructure of an organization)?

Project Goals:

- Are the project's goals measurable and realistic (i.e. the applicant will be able to determine if the goals have been accomplished; goals are reasonable, both in terms of the timeline proposed and in terms of the general attainability of the goals)?
- Are they sufficiently "impactful" (i.e. if attained, the project's goals are likely to result in a meaningful qualitative or quantitative impact on one or more specific aspects of criminal justice reform)?

Applicant:

- Does the applicant have the experience, skill and talent to accomplish the project?

- Does the applicant have the leadership ability and vision to carry out this project?
- Will the applicant lend a distinctive and important voice to the criminal justice field?

Application Information

The application deadline is **Wednesday, October 14, 2009 (11:59pm EST)**. Incomplete applications will not be given full consideration.

Fellowship application materials must be submitted online. To submit an online application, go to <http://oas.soros.org/oas/>, where you will have to “Register an Individual Account,” select a user name and password, and provide basic personal information. All communications from the Open Society Institute regarding applications will be sent to the email used to register that account (so please ensure that email communications from the foundation do not end up in your “Junk Mail” folder).

Note: Our online system will begin accepting applications on August 5, 2009.

Complete applications consist of the following:

Completed online:

- **Application form**

Uploaded online (as either PDF or Word documents—but if using Word documents, please do not upload any files with the “.docx” file extension; our online system can presently only read “.doc” files):

- **Resume or CV**
- **Five- to seven-page, single-spaced proposal** in 12-point font with one-inch margins containing the following items in this order (with the headings as listed below, e.g. Project Explanation, Project Goals, etc.):

Project Explanation: A clear, detailed, focused explanation of the project, including the need for the project, its importance to the population reached, and how it connects to existing efforts by others already working on the issue;

Project Goals, Strategies and Effectiveness: An explanation of the long- and short-term goals of the project, the strategies you expect to employ to achieve those goals (including, where applicable, your communications or outreach strategy, i.e. specific audiences you hope to reach and how you intend to influence them), and how you will measure the project's effectiveness;

Host Organization: A specific analysis of how the host organization's mandate and existing work complement your project, and how the host organization will support the project. If you are not proposing to work with a host organization, please explain why the project does not require the infrastructure and support of an established organization and how your project will stand alone;

Advisory Board: A description of the advisory board you will assemble for the project and an explanation of what each member will contribute to your board and your project, as well a description of your plan for drawing upon the support, guidance and expertise of the members;

OSI U.S. Criminal Justice Priorities: An analysis of how the project is expected to advance an issue related to OSI's U.S. criminal justice reform priorities;

Timeline: A timeline that explains the project's specific activities and reflects all phases of the project and the time you will allocate to meet your goals and achieve your expected outcomes.

Time Commitment: If you expect to have non-fellowship work responsibilities (e.g. consulting, hourly project-based work, etc.) or educational commitments (e.g. classes for a post-secondary degree) during the course of your fellowship, please describe what those responsibilities or commitments will be.





- **Two (2) letters of recommendation from supervisors or close colleagues.** The letters should address your talent, professionalism, and demonstrated ability to work independently on long-term, in-depth projects. Letters should not be more than two (2) pages in length. We encourage you to share your proposal narrative and the program's selection criteria with those who write on your behalf.
- **Commitment letter from your host organization** (not applicable if applicant chooses to proceed without a host). The letter should be on the organization's letterhead and written by a senior staff member of the organization. The letter should describe the following: host organization mission and existing work; how proposed project fits with organization's mission and existing work; support provided to applicant, if awarded a fellowship (e.g. supervision, access to networks, guidance, etc.); in-kind contributions provided (e.g. office space; computer, phone and facsimile access; administrative support); and any other resources provided the fellow (e.g. supplemental funds). The letter must also include a confirmation that the proposed project will not duplicate the host organization's existing efforts and that fellowship funding will not be used to replace, supplant or supplement funding for activities or projects already being carried out by the host organization.

Application and Selection Timeline

Application Deadline:	October 14, 2009 (11:59pm EST)
Finalists Notified:	Mid-November 2009
Finalist Interviews:	Mid-December 2009
Selected Fellows Notified:	Late-January 2010
Projects Begin:	April or September 2010

