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CHAPTER 1
TYPES OF PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIPS

Fellowships are a gateway for most entry-level public interest jobs. Although many organizations—such as public defender offices; federal, state, and local governments; and most legal services offices—hire entry-level attorneys as a matter of course, a fellowship is often the only path for new attorneys into larger, national nonprofit organizations. In addition, the national fellowships give smaller nonprofit organizations the opportunity to augment their staffs with talented new lawyers and expand services for generally underserved populations. These awards also provide new lawyers with valuable legal training, practical experience in particular areas of practice, and often direct exposure to clients and diverse communities.

The term “fellowship” covers a broad range of programs. This guide focuses on public interest fellowship programs that are intended to fulfill a specific purpose and provide a specified sum, which is awarded after law school graduation for a fixed time period, usually one or two years. The majority of fellowships are intended for applicants who have just graduated, often including those who are completing a clerkship, and sometimes including other recent graduates who have been out of school for a few years. There are also some fellowships that will only consider applicants who have a minimum amount of postgraduate legal experience, most frequently two or more years. In applying for fellowships, it is important to check the eligibility criteria carefully.

Below is an overview of the different types of fellowships and examples of each. In addition to the fellowships mentioned in this chapter, there are many others that may be found on the Public Service Jobs Directory (PSJD), which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1. Organization-Based Fellowships

A number of nonprofit organizations administer their own fellowships. The organization determines the salary, duration of the fellowship, and the scope of the fellow’s work within the organization. Candidates apply directly to the organization, and the organization usually chooses the fellow without outside assistance. The fellowship is basically a term-limited job with the organization, typically designed for new law graduates or attorneys with little experience in the practice area. There is no expectation that the fellow will continue working with the organization when the fellowship ends. Indeed, unless a staff position opens or the organization is able to find additional funding to increase its staff, the fellow is unlikely to remain.

There are dozens of organization-based fellowships, for which you rarely need more than a cover letter, resume, and references. Although the fellowships are quite competitive, the application process for them is relatively straightforward and familiar. You do not have to develop your own project for organization-based fellowships; instead the focus is on your commitment to the work the organization already does.

Examples:

- **Zubrow Fellowship in Children’s Law** (select About Us, then Working with Us): The Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia offers a two-year fellowship for a recent law school graduate to engage in a wide variety of advocacy efforts on behalf of children in delinquency and
dependency systems including training, legislative efforts, litigation, policy work, and some
direct representation. The deadline is October 2, 2017, 5 p.m. EDT.

• **Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Fellowship**: The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area has a fellowship working in the areas of impact litigation, policy advocacy, and direct services in the area of racial justice and possibly immigrant justice. This fellowship is designed for an attorney who has practiced for a minimum of two years, which may include one year of a postgraduate fellowship, and has a demonstrated commitment to civil rights law. (Two-year fellowship offered every other year. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis beginning Spring/Summer 2017 for a September 2018 start).

• **Polikoff-Gautreaux Fellowship**: Business & Professional People for the Public Interest, in Chicago, offers a one-year fellowship that is renewable for a second year. The fellow works on matters such as transforming segregated public housing, improving public education, and increasing the availability of affordable housing. This fellowship is open to recent law or policy school graduates. The deadline is October 13, 2017.

• **American Civil Liberties Union Fellowships** ([www.aclu.org/careers](http://www.aclu.org/careers)): The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has funded a number of fellowships including:
  
  • **Brennan Fellowship**: This is a one-year fellowship at the ACLU’s national legal department in New York City. The fellow focuses on First Amendment cases. For updated information on this fellowship, please see [www.aclu.org/careers](http://www.aclu.org/careers). A job announcement is also usually posted in CMS with applications due October 1.

  • **Karpatkin Fellowship**: This is a one-year fellowship at the ACLU’s national legal department in New York City. The fellow works on a range of civil liberties issues with a primary focus on racial justice. For updated information on this fellowship, please see [www.aclu.org/careers](http://www.aclu.org/careers). A job announcement is also usually posted in CMS with applications due October 1.

2. **Project-Based Fellowships**

Some foundations fund fellowships for applicants who develop a specific project in conjunction with a sponsoring nonprofit organization. Funders commonly impose some limitations on the kinds of projects that they will fund or express preference for particular issues or types of projects. Fellowships have a finite term. If the fellow and the organization wish to continue the project, they will be responsible for finding additional funding. The funders consider the individual applicant’s qualifications; the qualification of the sponsoring organization to house and supervise the project; and the feasibility and benefit of the project.

Developing a fellowship project may seem a difficult task, but you do not have to have a well-developed project in mind before you approach the organization. Even if you just have a general sense of the type of work you would like to do, you can find organizations and people in that field and ask them about project ideas. Many organizations have great project ideas and are looking for a fellow who matches the project. Other organizations are willing to work with an applicant’s preliminary thoughts to develop a project that serves the needs of their client population.

It can be time-consuming, and sometimes competitive, to secure an organizational sponsor, but remember that there are plenty of excellent public interest law offices that are responsive to having a fellow as a way
of obtaining talented new staff that they could not otherwise afford. Many students seek sponsorships from organizations that they worked for as 1Ls or 2Ls. Other students submit their resumes to nonprofit organizations that work in their fields of interest. There are also organizations that list themselves on national and school sites as willing to sponsor a fellow. CDO, for example, lists potential sponsoring organizations and their application deadlines on CMS as well as the Public Interest Fellowship Organization site. PSJD (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) includes a “fellowship sponsor” category in its job postings, which is specifically designed for organizations to identify candidates to sponsor for project-based fellowships.

Examples:

- **Skadden Fellowships**: The Skadden Fellowship Foundation funds approximately 25 fellowships every year to provide civil legal services to underserved groups in the United States. This is a two-year fellowship. Applicants must be completing law school or a judicial clerkship. Fellows are selected based upon their demonstrated commitment to the public interest, the quality of their project, and their academic performance. The application deadline is September 18, 2017; final selections are made in November.

- **Equal Justice Works Fellowships**: Equal Justice Works (EJW) funds several dozen two-year fellowships annually, with the goal of providing legal services to underserved groups in the United States. Applicants must be students or alumni of schools that are EJW members, which includes Yale. Applicants must have a commitment to public interest law as well as the skills and initiative to carry out the goals of their project. The application deadline is September 27, 2017, and fellowships are awarded on a rolling basis until the end of the spring semester.

- **Soros Justice Advocacy Fellowships**: Open Society Foundation offers 18-month fellowships for projects that address criminal justice issues at local, state and national levels. The projects may be implemented in conjunction with large or small nonprofit organizations. The deadline for applications is generally in October.

- **Yale Law School Fellowships**: See section 5 below.

### 3. Academic/Clinical Fellowships

Law schools host a number of one or two year fellowships geared toward a combination of teaching, research, and writing. Some provide clinical teaching experience while others are geared toward specialized areas of law teaching. For additional information, please see the Entering the Law Teaching Market guide.

### 4. Firm-Sponsored Fellowships

Law firms have developed a variety of public interest fellowship models. In all of them, the fellow is paid by the firm for a period of time while he or she engages in public interest work. The models are: 1) a law firm places a fellow with a designated public interest organization for a fixed period of time, with or without a commitment to work with the sponsoring law firm; 2) a law firm has the fellow work within the firm exclusively on pro bono matters; and 3) a public interest law firm hires a fellow to work essentially as an entry-level associate for a specific term.
Examples:

Model 1—Law Firm Places Fellow with a Public Interest Organization:

- **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson Fellowship** (select About Us then Fellowships):
  The fellow works as a litigation associate at the New York firm for two years. Then, the fellow serves as a staff attorney at the Mexican-American Legal Defense & Education Fund (MALDEF) in Los Angeles or the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) in New York for two years. Fellows are encouraged to interview to return to Fried Frank and, in some cases, they may continue on the staff of their civil rights organization. The sponsoring organizations for the fellowship alternate years with LDF being the sponsor for 2018-2019.

Model 2—Law Firm Hires Fellow To Work Exclusively on Public Interest Matters at the Firm:

- **John J. Gibbons Fellowship in Public Interest and Constitutional Law** (select Job Listings): Gibbons hires one fellow each year for this program, which is centered in Newark, NJ. As associates of the firm, fellows work on public interest and constitutional law projects and litigation. At the end of this two-year fellowship, fellows have the option to remain at the firm with full seniority and follow through on projects begun during the fellowship. There is no obligation to continue with the firm.

- **Hunton & Williams Pro Bono Fellowship** (select About, Pro Bono, Neighborhood Offices, Fellowships and Awards): Hunton & Williams has two fellowship positions for attorneys whose time is devoted only to pro bono work. Each fellowship lasts for two years. One fellowship is based in Richmond, VA (and recruits on even-numbered years), and the other is in Atlanta, GA (and recruits on odd-numbered years).

Model 3—Public Interest Law Firm Hires Fellow:

- **Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger Fellowship**: This San Francisco law firm focuses on environmental and land use law and offers a three-year fellowship in which the fellow works as a junior associate on a variety of cases. Applications must be submitted by Labor Day for fellowships beginning the following fall.

5. Yale Law School Public Interest Fellowships and Travel Reimbursement Program

Yale Law School offers a wide variety of public interest fellowship programs. The stipend for the Bernstein, Gruber, Heyman, Liman, Robina, SFALP, YPIF, and YLJ fellowships is $47,500 with up to $5,000 for health insurance. In prior years, applications and deadlines for YLS-funded public interest fellowships have varied from fellowship to fellowship. At this time, YLS is contemplating a common application and deadline for every YLS-funded fellowship. As soon as that decision is made, each program’s fellowship page and application will be updated accordingly. Application deadlines will not be before December 1, 2017 and will likely be in January or February 2018. Interested candidates should check each program’s fellowship page or the YLS Public Interest Fellowships site for updated information.

There are also Yale University online resources that list sources of funding: the Student Grants and Fellowships Database; the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale; and the Fellowships Programs Office. To the extent possible, applicants are encouraged to apply for
all the fellowships that meet their interests, including those offered by YLS and the University as well as those offered by other institutions or foundations, as well as for permanent positions.

a. Fellowships Open Only to Yale Law School and Yale University Graduates and Students

- **The Robert L. Bernstein Fellowship in International Human Rights**
The Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights awards Bernstein Fellowships annually to enable two or three YLS graduates to devote a year to full-time human rights advocacy work. YLS alumni are eligible for the fellowship for five years after graduation. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Schell Center as they explore project possibilities and prepare their proposals. For further information, see the Bernstein Fellowships page or contact schell.law@yale.edu.

- **Gruber Fellowship in Global Justice and Women’s Rights**
These post-graduate fellowships allow recent graduates of Yale graduate and professional schools to spend a year working on issues of relevance to the fields of global justice and/or women’s rights. YLS alumni are eligible for the fellowship for three years after graduation. Placements may be with a host organization anywhere in the world. In addition to the stipend and funding for health coverage, Gruber also provides up to $2,000 for airfare related to international placements. All interested candidates should attend an information session and meet individually as early as possible with Mindy Jane Roseman, Director of the Gruber Program. To schedule a meeting, please contact Aleksandra.Kopacz@yale.edu. For full application details, go to the Gruber Fellowships page.

- **Heyman Federal Public Service Fellowship Program**
The Heyman Fellowships allow recent Yale Law graduates up to three years after graduation to work closely with high-level leaders in the federal government for one year. Appropriate positions include high-level, substantive work with a sponsoring office, agency, or commission. Positions that are not considered include judicial clerkships, entry-level positions, and work for political campaigns. Two to three fellowships are awarded each year. **PLEASE NOTE:** If you are considering applying for a fellowship, please contact CDO Public Interest Director Norma D’Apolito at (203) 436-2580 or norma.dapolito@yale.edu. If you are interested in a Heyman Fellowship with the Department of Defense, it is advisable to discuss your plans with Norma well in advance as there are some additional considerations. For full application details, go to the YLS Public Interest Fellowships page.

- **Arthur Liman Public Interest Fellowship**
This fellowship provides funding for a post-graduate year in public interest law and is open to any graduate of Yale Law School, regardless of year of graduation. One fellowship, designated as the Resnik-Curtis Fellowship, will be awarded for project proposals in the field of criminal justice. For information, contact Anna Van Cleave (anna.van.cleave@yale.edu), Director of the Liman Center, or visit the Liman Center website for more information. Including the 2017-2018 awards, the Liman Program has supported 123 fellows at over 90 public interest organizations around the country.

- **The Mary A. McCarthy Fellowship**
The Mary A. McCarthy Memorial Fund annually awards one or more grants to Yale law students, including graduating students, who wish to pursue public interest positions or projects during the summer or for a short period of time immediately after graduation. Emphasis will be given to projects in the areas of practice that especially interested Mary:
mediation and the rights of women, immigrants, prisoners, and criminal defendants. Applications for other projects will also be welcomed, in keeping with the conviction of those who knew Mary that her interests would have continued to expand. While the committee will consider all generally appropriate applications, it will favor projects emphasizing legal work in direct client-service settings in the United States. The grants may vary in size from $500 to $10,000, depending upon the number and relative suitability of the proposals received. Applications are generally due in March. For information, go to the YLS Fellowships Page, or contact Norma D’Apolito at norma.dapolito@yale.edu.

- **Robina Foundation Human Rights Fellowship**
  The Robina Foundation Fellowships in International Human Rights enable two or three YLS graduates to devote up to a year to full-time human rights work, particularly foreign and international judicial clerkships, internships with international courts and tribunals and intergovernmental or governmental agencies, or independent human rights research. YLS alumni are eligible for the fellowship for five years after graduation. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Schell Center as they explore project possibilities and prepare their proposals. For information, see the Robina Fellowships page.

- **YLS Public Interest Fellowship (YPIF)**
  This fellowship program supports six YLS graduates within three years of graduation for one year of full-time public interest work. Applications are accepted for a wide variety of positions, including legal proposals designed by the applicant in partnership with a sponsoring organization, an existing project with a host organization, a position as a staff attorney at a public interest organization, a position at any level of government, and an unpaid foreign or international court clerkship or international prosecution internship. For information, contact CDO Public Interest Director, Norma D’Apolito at (203) 436-2580 or norma.dapolito@yale.edu. For full application details, go to the YLS Public Interest Fellowships page.

- **Yale Law Journal Fellowships (YLJ)**
  The Yale Law Journal supports three one-year fellowships, which seek to enhance the connections between legal scholarship, practice, and service. The application for the YLJ Fellowship tracks the application process and for the YPIF Fellowship. In addition, the YLJ Fellows, after completing their year in public service, publish reflections on their experience in the Journal’s online component, the Forum, for which they receive an additional $5,000 payment. For information, contact CDO Public Interest Director, Norma D’Apolito at (203) 436-2580 or norma.dapolito@yale.edu. For full application details, go to the YLS Public Interest Fellowships page.

**b. Fellowships Open to Any Law School Graduate**

- **The Initiative for Public Interest Law Fellowship**
  The Initiative for Public Interest Law at Yale provides start-up money for projects that protect the legal rights and interests of inadequately represented groups. The organization generally funds one full-time one-year fellowship but has occasionally provided partial grants for more than one applicant. The amount of the stipend can vary depending upon fundraising results but, last year, the awards was $40,000. The Initiative raises money to fund innovative public interest projects by young attorneys and graduating law students who may have difficulty obtaining money from traditional funding sources due to the unconventional approach or unique population that their projects will serve. The Initiative’s mission is to fund cutting-edge legal projects whose successful execution has the potential to serve as a model for
public interest organizations around the country. For more information, please contact the Initiative at initiativeforpublicinterest@yale.edu. The Initiative especially encourages applications from current YLS 3Ls and YLS alumni. For more information on the Initiative’s grant guidelines and application requirements, please visit the Initiative website.

- **The Yale Law School’s San Francisco Affirmative Litigation Project (SFALP) and Robert M. Cover Fellowship Program:** SFALP offers a post-graduate fellowship for lawyers who are interested in a long-term career in law school clinical teaching or public lawyering. The Fellowship starts during the summer and lasts for one year. One new SFALP Cover Fellow is selected each year. Fellowship responsibilities include running the San Francisco Affirmative Litigation Project at Yale Law School; co-teaching a seminar on local government law with Yale Law School Dean Heather Gerken; supervising student work; and working directly with the San Francisco City Attorney’s Affirmative Litigation Task Force on related litigation. See the SFALP website for additional information.

c. Travel Reimbursement for Interviews in the Public Interest (TRI PI)

In an effort to support our students who are pursuing public interest work, YLS has developed a public interest interview travel reimbursement program. The fund will provide limited travel reimbursements for 2Ls, 3Ls, and LLM students who must travel to conduct a necessary public interest interview, including interviews related to securing a fellowship or fellowship sponsor. The Law School will reimburse reasonable travel expenses, up to a per student maximum of $800 per year. No food expenses will be reimbursed and only one night of lodging is reimbursable. All travel expenses must be economical. Before traveling, please see CDO’s TRI PI page for specifics regarding the requirements for reimbursement.

6. Entrepreneurial Grants

You can also try to fund your public interest project the same way that public interest organizations have been funding projects for decades—by seeking various sources of funding. In formulating your proposal and seeking support, you will want to develop a narrative for potential funders. This includes answering questions about: background or purpose of the project, need fulfilled, intended outcomes, strategies and key personnel.

In seeking these opportunities, keep in mind that support for your project can come from a variety of means: foundations, corporation and foundations associated with corporations, law firms, acquaintances, and friends. There are more sources of funding available if your project is affiliated with an established nonprofit organization. Some foundations face legal limitations in their ability to give grants to individuals. They can give funds for educational purposes and, under certain circumstances, give charitable donations to needy individuals, but, generally, they give grants to nonprofit organizations. If you are applying for project-based fellowships, you may be able to expand your fellowship application with the sponsoring organization to meet grant proposal criteria. Check out the Foundation Center website for helpful tips and resources on identifying organizations and funding.

The Foundation Center *Grants to Individuals Online* database has resources to seek and identify potential sources of foundation support geared toward an individual grant seeker (see Appendix A for password information).
As an alternative, you can form your own nonprofit organization to apply for grants. Creating and operating a tax-exempt nonprofit organization is a significant responsibility, which you will have to shoulder on top of implementing your project. It may be an option if you have already nurtured this project while a student, have found no suitable sponsoring organizations, and are deeply committed to continuing the project.

Remember that networking matters! It may be helpful to ask faculty members and colleagues for suggestions or to make introductions to contact people.

Examples:

- **Echoing Green Foundation Public Interest Fellowships**: Echoing Green offers two-year fellowships to social innovators who develop an independent and autonomous project in a public service area such as the environment, education, civil and human rights, and community economic development. The proposed project may be domestic or international. The fellowships are not limited to law-related projects.

- **Ashoka Fellowships**: Ashoka offers fellowships around the world to social entrepreneurs who have new ideas to effect social change.

- **Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation**: The Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation funds entrepreneurs and their organizations at the early stages of development focused on lasting solutions to broad social problems.

- **Skoll Foundation**: The Skoll Foundation offers support to social entrepreneurs providing solutions to the world’s most pressing problems.

7. Other Options

In addition to pursuing the options above for funding short-term post-graduate opportunities, think about imaginative ways to seek out funding. The following examples can serve as encouragement for you to consider every possibility, even remote ones, and, most importantly, not feel forced to forego a project that you believe is worthwhile:

- A graduate who started a nonprofit educational organization as a law student was unable to find a single source of funding to cover her project. By combining a fellowship and several smaller grants, she was able to secure sufficient funds.

- Some students have successfully combined their enthusiasm for public interest work with a law firm position, in one case negotiating an agreement with the firm to pursue a public interest project with reduced pay for a year, and in another by negotiating higher percentage of pro bono work at regular salary.
CHAPTER 2
FINDING THE RIGHT FELLOWSHIP FOR YOU

It is important to give yourself enough time to line up all the elements necessary for your fellowship applications, as some of the earliest fellowship deadlines fall soon after classes start in September. Use your second year, particularly spring and summer, to take stock of yourself, learn about nonprofit organizations and fellowships in areas that interest you, and line up recommenders. If you are applying for national project-based fellowships, like Skadden and Equal Justice Works, your 2L summer is the time to develop your project in conjunction with a sponsoring organization.

Investigate summer opportunities, including jobs with public interest organizations and pro bono options with private sector employers. Take particular note of organizations that offer fellowships or are willing to sponsor fellowship candidates. Consider establishing a relationship with one of those organizations by spending all or part of your summer at one of them. If you are interested in organizations where you have not worked, get in touch with them. Be aware that some larger organizations, which regularly sponsor candidates for the national project-based fellowships, solicit resumes and interview potential candidates during the summer, often early in the summer, before the fellowship application deadline.

1. Consider Your Goals

Before you get caught up in researching organizations and designing projects, think about what you want to accomplish and what the experience will mean for you—now and as part of your future career. If you assess your interests, goals, and plans initially, it will be easier to find a fellowship or design a project that is a good match. You will also be prepared to respond to all the “whats,” “hows,” and “whys” awaiting you in the fellowship applications and interviews. The classic investigative formula provides a useful framework for your self-assessment:

**Who**
- will be your clients? Children, immigrants, homeless women?
- will be your coworkers? Law professors, government workers, community organizers? Lawyers?

**What**
- kind of work do you want to do? Counseling, education, advocacy?
- areas of law interest you?
- specific problems or issues would you like to address?
- do you want to accomplish?

**When**
- do you plan to start? Immediately after graduation? After clerking or practicing law?
- do you plan to stop? Is this the beginning of a lifelong devotion to a particular issue or group? Is it the first step in a path toward government service, academia, public policy, or other work in the private sector?

**Where**
- in the world do you want to work?
- do you want to spend your day? In a courtroom, a classroom, an office?
**Why**
are you doing this?
does it interest you?
is a particular organization a good fit for you?

**How**
do you like to work? As part of a team or independently? Juggling multiple projects or focusing on one until completed?
will you make an effective contribution?
can a fellowship help you accomplish your goal(s)?
how does the fellowship fit in with your longer term goals?

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### 2. Research

You are about to make a significant investment of your time, talent, and professional reputation in a fellowship, so it is important for you to make an informed decision. Once you have determined your goals, start gathering information to identify fellowship funders, sponsoring organizations, and project ideas that might fit your interests. Appendix A lists online resources and books that assist in the search for fellowships and grants as well as offers advice for preparing applications; it also lists websites for organizations that offer fellowships.

Fellowship funders and sponsors are similar to other employers. They are looking for a fellow who closely connects with the goals, purpose, and personality of their organization. Do your best to show that the personal goals you articulated through self-assessment fit with the purpose of the fellowship funder you researched and, if it is a project based fellowship, with the mission of the sponsoring organization.

#### a. PSJD

The natural starting point for your research is the online *Public Service Jobs Directory* or PSJD. PSJD is an effective and centralized tool to find information about public interest opportunities. PSJD is made up of a network of more than 200-member law schools across the United States and Canada, including YLS and more than 13,000 law-related public interest organizations around the world. Through their online database, PSJD provides a comprehensive clearinghouse of public interest organizations and opportunities for lawyers and law students. As PSJD members, YLS students can perform customized searches for organizations in which they have an interest and for public interest opportunities, ranging from short-term volunteer and paid internships to post-graduate jobs, fellowships, and pro bono opportunities. The database is available to students and alumni of subscriber law schools, including Yale. Create a personal login in order to use the system.

In the database, click on “Search Jobs and Employers” then the “Advanced Search” tab for additional options. Click on the “Search for Job Postings” radio button to pull up various categories. This search tool enables you to search by employer profiles or by job postings. When searching by job posting, PSJD includes three searchable fellowship categories under “Job Type”:

- **Fellowship-Legal: Organizational** lists fellowships sponsored and hosted by organizations (internally-funded).
- **Fellowship-Legal: Clinical/Academic** is for fellowships with a teaching component.
- **Fellowship-Legal: Project-Based** will show fellowships where the applicant works with a sponsoring organization to propose a capacity building project to a third party funder (such as Skadden).
You can tailor your search by various criteria:

- **Location** allows you to search by city, state, country, or metropolitan region.
- **Practice Area** allows you to limit your search to specific legal topics, listed alphabetically. Keep in mind that the person inputting the fellowship information may not have exactly the same idea about practice areas as you do, which means that you could miss opportunities if you start with a narrow search.
- **Keyword** gives you the chance to search the text for specific words, which can be helpful in adding flexibility to a “Practice Area” search.

Use the *My Email Alerts* under *My Account* to receive emails when opportunities matching your criteria are posted.

Keep in mind that you can also find basic information about organizations by clicking on “Search Jobs & Employers.” In their “Employer Profiles,” organizations can put a link to their website.

On the publicly available portion of the website, you will see a link to the Resource Center. The Resource Center includes a section on Postgraduate Fellowships, which allows you to search directly for information and opportunities regarding fellowships. In addition, the section contains:

- **Application Deadline Calendar** is a list of deadlines for fellowships, along with application deadlines for organizations seeking candidates to sponsor for project-based fellowships.
- **Background Information** includes a post-graduate fellowship primer of the different types of available fellowship opportunities as well as links to additional resources.

### b. People Resources

Talk with people who might be familiar with the fellowship funders, organization based fellowships, or the sponsoring organization you are considering for your project. These resources can include current and former fellows, former applicants, faculty members, CDO’s public interest counselor or other counselors, and individuals in government or other organizations who work on the same or related issues. Your fellow law students and YLS alumni can be terrific, convenient resources. For alumni, search YLS Career Connections and see Appendix B, which lists fellowships obtained by YLS graduates. You can also build on your YLS network by seeking out people in the field who have different academic affiliations. They share your enthusiasm for this work and are likely to be glad to help.

Not all fellowship directors are easily accessible to applicants, but many are. It can be very helpful to contact the director of a fellowship program and the current staff members at the organization. In addition to helping you get in touch with former fellows, they can be excellent sources of information about the fellowship application process, qualifications for applicants, and characteristics of previously successful proposals. By making a strong favorable impression at the earliest stage, you could cultivate support for your candidacy through the process.

The directors of YLS fellowship programs all welcome questions from applicants. In fact, it is considered essential that you meet with the director of any YLS fellowship you are seeking to discuss your application and proposal. Requesting such a meeting can show how seriously you take the process and meeting with the director can help identify the strengths of your proposal and any weaknesses or issues that need to be addressed.
c. Additional Resources

CDO maintains a job posting system called the Career Management System (CMS) that you can check for listings of fellowships and sponsoring organizations. You can access the system through the CDO website, or directly through the link above. In addition to the search function, you can also receive emails regarding listings that meet criteria that you set up in the system.

CDO also offers the Public Interest Fellowship Organization site. Second- and third-year students are automatically enrolled in the Fellowship Organization, which appears as a link in the Organization Sites section of the YLS Inside page. The site contains an updated calendar of fellowship deadlines, links to applications, biographies and announcements from past fellows. It is a good idea to check it on a regular basis, starting this spring and throughout the fellowship application process.

After you identify organizations that interest you, whether you are applying for an organization-based fellowship or looking for an organization to sponsor your project, read everything you can find about them. Check each organization’s website and look for its recent annual reports and newsletters to get a sense of its current focus and work. Use Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, or a web search engine to find newspaper and magazine articles about the organization or its staff members. To read a variety of recent successful fellowship applications, see Volume II of this guide, Public Interest Fellowships: Sample Applications. You can also see more EJW samples by clicking here.

d. Assess Potential Organizations

As you talk with people and read, be sure to elicit information that answers these questions:

- Is the organization well run? Will you be able to do the work you want with adequate supervision?
- Is the organization financially stable?
- Is the organization appropriately staffed? Will the people you meet now still be there to mentor you in a year or two?
- How well do the organization’s values and goals match your own?
- For organization-based fellowships, what is the purpose of the fellowship and what qualifications are they seeking in a fellow?

With respect to sponsoring organizations, find out:

- How familiar is the organization with the project-based fellowship application process?
- Is a staff member available to work with you on the application?
- How closely does your project fit with the organization’s mission and current activities? Does the organization have a specific idea for a project already?
- How enthusiastic is the organization about you and your project? Do they plan to sponsor a number of candidates, and if so, where do you rank?
- Is the organization willing to pursue additional funding alternatives with you?

3. Fellowships and Clerkships

If you are thinking of applying to fellowships and clerkships, your approach will depend on the types of fellowships in which you are interested and the organizations’ policies. Organizations that offer their own fellowships may be less affected by your decision to apply concurrently for a fellowship and clerkship. They can interview more candidates to compensate for some of them accepting clerkships and withdrawing from the fellowship pool. For organizations that sponsor candidates for project-based fellowships, losing a candidate could shut them out of the fellowship cycle. Those organizations may
refuse to support a candidate who is also seeking a clerkship or be inclined to support another candidate more enthusiastically than you.

Talk with potential sponsoring organizations about whether and how you would fit into their plans if you also apply for clerkships. Some organizations may be willing to sponsor a clerkship applicant who has developed her or his own project but less willing to sponsor someone for a project that the organization has developed to meet its core mission. Ask whether the organization will sponsor multiple candidates for similar projects and, if so, how the organization will rank the candidates. Project based funders usually will not support more than one fellow at an organization and it can weaken your candidacy to have another person applying for the same fellowship with the same sponsoring organization. So again, find out how the organization would rank the candidates.

Consider the timing of your applications. Even if you apply to fellowships and clerkships in the same year, you may be able to time your applications based on the hiring schedule of the judge and the fellowship deadlines. For example, you could apply to judges that select clerks early in the clerkship hiring season and, if unsuccessful, apply for fellowships with later deadlines. In the alternative, you could apply to fellowships with early deadlines and, if unsuccessful, apply to judges who hire later in the season, have unexpected openings, or have been recently confirmed.

For detailed information on applying to clerkships, visit the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) site. There are also many resources about the clerkship application process on our website.

**CHAPTER 3**

**THE FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION**

If a total stranger asked you for thousands of dollars, what would you want to know before you gave it to him or her? That is the essence of the fellowship application. The format and specific requirements of various fellowship programs differ, but all seek similar information. The art of composing a fellowship application lies in making a compelling presentation of the essential information within the specific restrictions of a given application. As you go through this process, a fellowship administrator or CDO counselor is available to review your application materials.

1. **Information for All Types of Fellowships and Foundation Grants**

   **a. Are you qualified?**

   Funders consider your experience and your academic background. As you might expect, different funders emphasize different types of qualifications. Law firm funders, for example, tend to use the same criteria as they would for associate hiring. Some nonprofit organizations are more interested in practical experience, such as work with a clinic or public interest organization, than in academic credentials. Careful research, including conversations with former fellows and the funder’s staff, can give you some insight into how your qualifications would be viewed and what you must emphasize.

   **b. Are you committed to the organization and the work?**

   One of the easiest ways to demonstrate your commitment is to work with the organization during the summer. It can also be an advantage if you worked with the organization before law school. An
organization that already knows your work and has seen your commitment will be more favorably disposed to fund you or to provide strong support for your project proposal.

Even if you have not worked at the organization, you can demonstrate your interest in the organization’s work through other experience or academic projects related to the same legal issues or client population. Often the most compelling applications show the direct connection between the candidate and the community that they wish to serve. Consider focusing on communities with which you have already had contact, whether through previous work experience, schooling, volunteer experiences, or as you were growing up.

2. Information for Project-Based Fellowships and Foundation Grants

a. Is the project consistent with the funder's purposes and priorities?

Make sure that you apply to funders who support the work you want to do. Organizations must make programmatic decisions about the range of issues and the types of work that they will support. They cannot fund everything. Carefully examine the fellowship materials and learn the funder’s preferences, biases, and project/organization restrictions from former fellows, prior successful fellowship applications, or organization staff. Otherwise, you may be wasting your time.

You must clearly explain the ways in which your project satisfies the funder’s goals and falls within its funding parameters. Use language from the fellowship description or from the organization’s mission statement as a guide. Common project restrictions are: the project must be for civil legal services only; it must be a domestic U.S. project; the project must be located in a specified geographical area; the project must include a specific kind of advocacy method; the sponsor must be tax-exempt under I.R.C. § 501(c)(3); or the project must be limited to certain legal subject matter.

b. Is there a significant need?

You must convince funders that you have identified a genuine problem and that it is a problem you can alleviate. Your description of the need must be realistically limited in scope and focused on the community that you wish to serve. For example, violence in high schools is a significant national problem, and you are not going to solve it during a one- or two-year fellowship. Decreasing violence in a specific high school in Alameda County, California, on the other hand, may actually be feasible during the fellowship term.

Anecdotal evidence of a problem can be compelling. People are more likely to understand and empathize with an individual’s story than a simple assertion of the issue. Studies or statistical data can help establish the magnitude of the challenge, particularly if the data is about the specific community that you seek to serve. For example, if you want to work with Alameda County high schools, citing national statistics about high school violence will not be as persuasive as localized data. Look for information from government agencies, academic or foundation studies, and reports of organizations within the community. Articles from newspapers, magazines, and other journals are also useful.

c. What is your connection to the work/community/advocacy?

You must demonstrate your connection to the community, issue, or type of advocacy you propose. Funders will want to know why this particular project is important to you and why you would be committed to it. A personal connection to the project is an important indicia of commitment. A personal connection is not essential, however. It is important that you demonstrate that you have a full
understanding of the issues and difficulties and that you have thought of ways to overcome them. A simple example is showing that you know the language spoken by the population you wish to serve, if the majority are not English speakers.

d. Does your project offer a feasible way to meet the need?

Funders will examine your plan in relation to your stated project goals. Your plan should include a timeline with descriptions of specific tasks and benchmarks for progress. The timeline and tasks will demonstrate the project’s feasibility. The benchmarks will give the funders a better understanding of how you propose to measure your success and reach the goals.

e. Will the project have support within the community you seek to serve? Does it fit well with other programs?

To ensure participation and improve the likelihood that the project will flourish after the fellowship ends, community organizations and the people that you will serve should favor it. Demonstrate your knowledge of the community and its leadership by identifying supporters. Be able to explain how other groups can support your efforts and your project can complement their work. For example, you may be able to augment educational activities at the local community center by holding a weekly class, or get referrals from a local homeless shelter.

f. Is the project discrete and not duplicative?

Project-based fellows are not intended as substitutes for regular staff. Funders need assurance that you are primarily responsible for and are the principal worker on the project. You must communicate that you are not just another lawyer working on someone else’s cases. Even a sponsor who is willing to fund a staff position wants to know that you are addressing some unmet need for legal services or helping the organization to serve a greater portion of the community.

Your project cannot overlap too greatly with the work of another organization or another part of your sponsoring organization. One aim of the fellowship is to fill a gap in legal services. If the work is already being done, it is hard to justify paying a fellow to replicate it. You don’t need to create a novel project as long as you are building capacity for the organization. For example, an organization focused on domestic violence advocacy may have a need for a benefits specialist in order to continue providing a full range of services to its clients.

g. Are you and the organization capable of pulling this off?

Your sponsoring organization is as critical to the success of the application as you are. Funders will scrutinize the match between your project proposal and the sponsoring organization’s work as well as the organization’s reputation, staffing, financial stability, and effectiveness in advancing its mission. Research multiple organizations in the same field or local community to improve your chances of finding a good match and being able to demonstrate enthusiastic support.

h. Is there a long-term sustainable plan?

It is imperative to demonstrate that you have a plan in place to address the continuity of the project. You may want to implement a training program for certain community members or other attorneys in order to leverage those resources. You could produce training/informational materials or create a website with
information to assist clients or advocates. Be mindful of the fact that funders will want to see that their money is a long-term investment rather than a one-off.

Organizations which have successfully sponsored fellows in the past may offer a simpler avenue for finding a sponsor. Their familiarity with the fellowship application process can be helpful. In addition, they have proven their value to funders in the past. Of course, there is no guarantee that previously successful organizations will have the same success with fellowship applicants in the future, but they can be a useful starting point. Fellowship funders have records of previously funded projects, fellows and organizations.

Many, such as the Skadden Fellowship Foundation and the Equal Justice Works Fellowship Program, publish online and paper reports summarizing the fellowships. In addition to indicating the types of projects recently funded, the reports show which organizations have been funded and how often.

First-time sponsoring organizations are selected every year. If you choose a sponsoring organization that has never hosted a fellow, just bear in mind that you must highlight the organization’s accomplishments, stability, and proficiency, such as specific statistics of clients served, project goals met, or special expertise of staff. In addition, you should show that the organization will be able to train and supervise you effectively. Show that you and your sponsoring organization will be an effective team.

3. Components of the Application Package

Different fellowship funders request somewhat different sets of application materials. Many organization-based fellowships require the same materials as any other job application: cover letter, resume, law school transcript, writing sample, and recommendation letters or a reference list. Project-based fellowships and foundation grants require additional documents—a personal narrative and a project description—in which you can use your answers to the questions discussed in the previous section.

Your application materials must be free of errors. The application package must conform to all requirements and restrictions, such as word or page limits. Materials must be clear, complete, and responsive to the fellowship aims. Your documents must be consistent with those submitted by your sponsoring organization; for example, you and your sponsoring organization should describe the goals of your project similarly. Expect to spend more time putting your application package together than you originally estimate, and build a cushion into your schedule.

a. The Personal Narrative

You may be asked to provide an essay about your public interest experience or qualifications. In the absence of a specific request, use your cover letter to highlight your commitment and qualifications. Whatever the format, your primary goal is to convince the funder that you possess the talent, skills, and dedication that define an ideal fellow. Your narrative lets the funders see the person behind the application and get a sense of the energy and commitment behind the credentials.

Focus on your previous experiences in public interest or any other previous work relevant to the substantive mission of the fellowship. Highlight experiences that drew you to your chosen project or community. Consider the broad range of your academic and life experiences beyond law school and legal work. Use those experiences to emphasize your personal skills, such as the ability to listen patiently or careful attention to detail, as well as traditional legal skills. A personal anecdote or story that shows why you care about a particular community or issue can be very effective. If your public interest history is
relatively short, discuss the circumstances that turned your career goals toward the public sector and the reasons this particular work is meaningful to you.

b. Your Resume

Your resume can provide another opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to public service generally and your qualifications for a specific fellowship, particularly if you face a page or word limit on your personal narrative. Be less concerned about the oft-repeated “one-page rule” and concentrate on detailing public interest work and volunteer community service activities, even if it expands your resume to another page. Include relevant college activities and even significant high school service. The more detailed a portrait you can paint of long-standing commitment to aiding vulnerable, underserved groups, the stronger your application will be. Even if you cannot show a long history, you can still show your knowledge and commitment in the description of your activities. Give a full picture of your personal interest and expertise.

c. Recommendations

Many fellowship programs require recommendation letters or letters of support for proposed projects. Others ask for a list of references. Some will specify at least one employer reference, while others will ask for a recommendation from a law professor or both. In each case, the best recommenders can discuss your personal strengths, the quality of your work in detail and with enthusiasm, and highlight specific characteristics or experiences that make you a particularly strong candidate for a given fellowship.

Talk with your references about your decision to apply for the fellowship and its importance to your career. Supply each recommender with a copy of your resume, a description of the fellowship, and an explanation of the type of work you will be doing or, in the case of a project-based fellowship, your project proposal. Let them know if there are any points you believe should be emphasized in their letters. If you have references who are not required to submit letters, give them a copy of your completed application package and let them know if or when they might be contacted. Keep your recommenders updated throughout the application process.

Fellowships requiring a sponsoring organization often request a letter of support from the organization. It is essentially an affirmation that, if you are selected, the organization will assist and support you in the implementation of your project. The support letter provides an excellent opportunity for the sponsoring organization to reinforce some areas of your project proposal or personal narrative. The sponsor can affirm the significance of the problem and emphasize the value of your project in addressing the problem. The sponsor should convey strong support for you, appreciation of how your project complements the mission of the organization, and clear understanding of the work to be performed. Funders evaluate the sponsor’s ability to provide appropriate training and supervision, along with the spirit of cooperation between you and your sponsor. Because recommendation letters are rarely subject to length limitations, they can very helpful in augmenting applications that are subject to a word limit.

d. Project Description for Project-Based Fellowships

For project-based fellowships, a project description or proposal is the heart of the application and it is closely tied to the search for a sponsoring organization. Some students have a good idea of the project that they want to work on; others may have only a general idea of the area or issue that they hope to address during the fellowship. A strong fellowship sponsor can suggest a worthy project or help guide you in defining an effective project as well as assist you in developing the details of a successful proposal. Find an organization that works in your area of interest or with the client group you hope to serve, discuss your
ideas with them, consider their suggestions, and begin to shape a project that sounds worthwhile and interesting to you. You may have to speak to several potential sponsors to find the right fit, but the process of talking to different organizations, like your other research, will help refine your project ideas. The project description is the place to answer most questions and eliminate all doubts. It is a persuasive document, as well as a source of information. It must generate support for the target community, interest in your project, and confidence in you.

- Make the problem concrete. Consider these two statements of purpose: “I propose to work on consumer fraud issues in Los Angeles” versus “I propose to develop new litigation strategies to expose and stop home equity fraud schemes against poor, disabled, and elderly residents in Los Angeles.” Both sentences describe the same project, yet the latter is much more compelling. A vivid project statement of purpose or project summary will stay with readers and interviewers as they consider and discuss your proposal.

- Make the plan realistic. Map out the components of the project and the timeline carefully. Indicate, where appropriate, the resources on which you will draw within the sponsoring organization and in the community.

- Make the goals and the plan match. Include short-term and long-term objectives within the plan. If the goals are ill-defined, or are not clearly linked to the plan, then it will be hard to convince a funder to support that plan over others, no matter how significant the need.

4. Strategies for Putting Together the Application Package

Think creatively and strategically about the best way to convey all the important information within the limits imposed by the fellowship application. Experiences that do not fit within your personal essay, for example, might be detailed in your resume or described by one of your recommenders. Details about your project proposal could be included in your sponsoring organization’s letter of support.

A required writing sample could reinforce your expertise in the fellowship subject area, if you can submit a brief, research paper, or other document which you wrote on that subject. Even if you have nothing precisely on point, a writing sample on another topic could still demonstrate related expertise or a commitment to public interest issues. In some cases, you or your sponsoring organization may be permitted to attach additional materials to your submissions, such as newspaper articles about the sponsoring organization, the community to be served, or the specific problem to be addressed. It is worth checking with the director of the fellowship program if the application materials are not explicitly on point.

As crucial as it is to think creatively through the fellowship application process, it is equally important not to go overboard. Make sure every page is relevant as well as supportive. Be sure that you do not pad your application with an excessive amount of material.

5. Interviews

You may go through several rounds of interviews during your fellowship application process. You may have to interview with the organization to assist them with selecting an applicant to sponsor and with the funder to determine whether your project fits within their parameters. You may end up interviewing with these entities more than once. Even though you can expect each interview to be different, the conversation will ultimately focus on your passion for the work, your proposal, and your skill set.
To prepare for these interviews, make sure to: research the organization and/or funder; reread your application, including the resume and cover letter; and research relevant current events which link to your project. In addition, mock interviews can help you focus your narrative. And as they say, practice makes perfect! We encourage you to work with CDO in preparing for these interviews. CDO can assist you with practice interviews and connecting you with former fellows for advice.

6. Deadlines

Fellowship deadlines, particularly the deadlines of high profile fellowships, can be as early as the summer of the year before the start date. Deadlines are scattered throughout the fall and winter, and some fellowship deadlines are as late as April. The deadlines and application requirements can change from year to year. Sometimes the funder will make a change even after the current year’s requirements are announced publicly. Deadlines may also be extended in hopes of attracting more applicants. Do not just rely on a brochure or website, such as the Application Deadline Calendar on PSJD, for accurate information. Recheck the deadlines and requirements with the funder’s website.
Appendix A

Fellowship and Grant Resources
Online Resources

A. Online Advice for Fellowship Applicants

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)–Developing and Writing Grant Proposals
https://www.cfda.gov/?s=main&mode=list&tab=list

Claremont Graduate University (CGU) Writing Center
www.cgu.edu/pages/726.asp

The Chronicle of Higher Education
  • The Buck Starts Here (February, 2005)
  • Words Worth Their Weight in Cash (April, 2005)

Columbia Fellowships
www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/fellowships

Cornell Career Services–Applying for Fellowships
www.career.cornell.edu/paths/fellowships/

Grant Writing Tips
https://www.thoughtco.com/grant-writing-sources-6557

B. Fellowship and Grant Portals on the Web

The Foundation Center
www.fdncenter.org

McMillan Center for International and Area Studies–Graduate & Professional Student Grants
www.yale.edu/macmillan/graduate.htm

Yale Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, McDougal Graduate Student Center
http://gsas.yale.edu/life-yale/mcdougal-graduate-student-center
Yale Fellowship Programs Office  
(formerly the Office of International Education & Fellowship Programs)  
http://yalecollege.yale.edu/

C. Organization Websites Describing Specific Fellowships  
(Not Listed on PSJD)

German Marshall Fund of the United States—Marshall Memorial Fellowship  
www.gmfus.org/leadership/marshall-memorial-fellowship

The Greenlining Institute Fellowship  
http://greenlining.org/leadership-academy/programs/fellowship-program

National Security Education Program (Boren) Fellowships  
www.borenawards.org

New York University School of Education—National Academy of Education/  
Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship  
www.naeducation.org

USAID/Institute of International Education Democracy Fellows and Grants Program  
www.iie.org/en/Programs/USAID-Democracy-Fellows-and-Grants-Program

Books*


Bauer, David G. The “How To” Grants Manual: Successful Grantseeking Techniques for  

Foundation Center. Foundation Fundamentals A Guide for Grantseekers. New York,  
NY: Foundation Center. 2008


* Resource locations are designated as follows:  
Location                  Code  
Career Development Office CDO  
Yale Sterling Memorial Library SML  
Library Shelving Facility LSF  
(request delivery through Orbis online )


Now an online only resource, found at [www.psjd.org](http://www.psjd.org)
Career Development Office

**Norma D'Apolito**  Director
**Juliann Davis**  Assistant Director, Administration
**Marilyn Drees**  Director
**Zoë Y. Gregg**  Student Services Coordinator
**Amanda Hilton**  Administrative Assistant
**Alison Hornstein**  Director
**Haley Kirkland**  Administrative Assistant
**Christine Severson**  Director, Recruitment Programs and Administration
**Kelly Voight**  Assistant Dean

**Telephone:**  (203) 432-1676  
**Fax:**  (203) 432-8423  
**E-mail:**  cdo.law@yale.edu  
**Website:**  www.law.yale.edu/cdo

**Mailing Address:**  Career Development Office, Yale Law School, 127 Wall Street, New Haven, CT 06511

**Physical Address:**  Ruttenberg Hall, Room 184, 133 Wall Street, New Haven, CT 06511

**Office Hours:**  8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**CDO Publications:**  
- Criminal Defense
- Criminal Prosecution
- Entering the Law Teaching Market
- Environmental Law
- International LL.M. Career Planning Guide
- International Public Interest Law
- Introduction to Career Development
- Judicial Clerkships in the U.S.
- Law Firm Practice
- Lawyers in Business
- Opportunities with International Tribunals and Foreign Courts
- Public Interest Careers
- Public Interest Fellowships Vol. I
- Public Interest Fellowships: Sample Applications Vol. II
- The Fall Interview Program
- U.S. Supreme Court Clerkships
- Working on Capitol Hill

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