

Lewis & Clark Law School

POST-GRADUATE PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIPS HANDBOOK

2007 - 2008

A helpful guide with tips on researching post-graduate fellowships and putting together persuasive applications.



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I. Introduction / FAQ's

A. What are fellowships?

A fellowship is a broad term that can describe a number of different programs. In its most basic sense, a fellowship is money that is granted to you to work on a specific project or for a specific organization. Fellowships typically are granted for short-term work (one to two years). Due to the scarcity and competitive nature of full-time public interest positions, a fellowship can be a great resource for a new attorney wanting to gain entry into an organization. A fellowship is also a great resource for graduates who have a specific project (for an unmet legal need) they would like to tackle.

B. Why apply for a fellowship?

A fellowship is a chance to develop your "dream job." It is an opportunity to work on cutting-edge or developing legal issues, and is an avenue into paid public interest work.

C. What is typically funded and for what duration?

Fellowships differ, depending upon the sponsoring organization or funding source. Some fellowships offer a salary or living stipend, loan repayment, and additional funding for benefits much like a "regular" position. Others offer minimal remuneration or a token stipend award. Fellowships may last as little as three months, or as long as two years.

D. Who is eligible to receive fellowship funding?

Fellowship funding is available for law school graduates. Depending on the nature of the funding and the job/project being applied for, you may also need to have passed the bar exam.

E. When should fellowship funding be applied for?

Deadlines can vary broadly depending on the funding source. That being said, the majority of fellowships have deadlines in the early fall. For example, if you were to graduate in May 2007 and wanted to begin fellowship work in September 2007, the deadline for that funding would be September 2006. This means that deadlines will be coming up around the first few weeks of fall semester of your third year of school. The ideal time to be doing fellowship research and application preparation therefore, is during the Spring and Summer before your third year of school.

F. What is involved in the application process?

As with any other job, the application process will differ from funder to funder. However, most fellowships do not fund existing positions. Instead, they fund new, innovative projects

or ideas for a limited duration of time. Many grantors have a list of current interest areas that they will fund. Therefore, it is important to develop an understanding of the current status of the law; the “hot” topics within an area of the law; the community need within that area of law; and the type of project that would address the identified need in this area of law. It’s also important to determine what efforts are already being undertaken by other organizations or individuals so you are not proposing a project that duplicates or competes with another project. Many funders want individuals to work under the supervision of a non-profit organization and rely on the individual to find the organization once funding is provided - others provide funding to an organization and rely on the organization to hire the person best suited to carry out the project objectives. In either case, you will need to identify the key organizations providing services in your legal area of interest and work cooperatively with them throughout the application process.

G. Is applying for fellowship funding a competitive process?

Yes - very. This is not said to dissuade you from applying for fellowship funding, but rather to highlight how important it is to take the time to put together a quality application. The competitive nature of fellowships makes them very prestigious. Receiving a fellowship will open many doors in the public interest law field. The care and effort you put into your application(s) will be time well spent.

II. How to get started

A. Types of fellowships

Before beginning your research, it is helpful to know what types of fellowship opportunities exist. Knowing this will help you determine what funding sources are appropriate for you to apply for.

1. Organization Based Fellowships

Many non-profits (typically large national organizations) have their own fellowships. With this type of fellowship, the organization itself determines the scope of the work that will be done, salary, length of service, etc. Applicants apply directly with the organization for these types of fellowships. The process is similar to your typical job application.

2. Project Based Fellowships

This is the “classic” fellowship type. With project based fellowships, applicants request funding from foundations to complete a specific project with a sponsoring organization. When reviewing these applications, funders are evaluating the qualifications of the applicant, as well as the qualifications of the sponsoring organization, and the merits of the project itself.

3. Firm Sponsored Fellowships

Some law firms (typically very large ones) have their own fellowship funding opportunities. The firm hires the fellow and places them with a cooperating public interest organization, or in-house working on firm pro bono matters. Often, at the end of the fellowship term, the fellow works for the firm as an associate.

4. Teaching Fellowships

Fellowships offered by law schools for new and recent graduates to work in a teaching clinic.

B. Researching Fellowship Opportunities

1. Know what you want to accomplish

Take a step back and think about the type of work you would like to do and the type of organization you would like to work for. Why do you want fellowship funding? What do you hope to accomplish? How will this fit into your short and long term career goals? Fellowship applications are very detail oriented. Start building the foundation of your application by knowing the, who, what, where, when, why, and how of what you hope to accomplish. This will give you a framework as you research potential funding sources.

As you are thinking about what you want to do, and thus what type of fellowship opportunities you should be looking for, consider the following questions:

- a. Do you have an idea for a project that you need to shop around to organizations willing to sponsor you?
- b. Do you have an organization in mind (but not a specific project) that you can collaborate within creating a project to fund?
- c. Are you looking for an organization that has a developed project and is just looking for a fellow to work on the project?

2. Become an “expert” on the fellowship process

There are many funding sources out there, and many opportunities for creating projects. Before you begin researching sponsoring organizations and funders, have a handle on what it takes to complete a fellowship application. I recommend reading the following resources:

- a. *The Comprehensive Fellowship Guide - The Ultimate Resource for Law Students & Lawyers* - Published by PSLawNet (NALP's Public Service Law Network Worldwide) annually.
- b. *Fellowship Application Tips* - Created by the Yale Law School Career Development Office

(1) Both of these resources can be found in Lewis & Clark Law School's Career Services Office.

3. Begin Researching

There are both print and online resources for researching fellowship opportunities. Make sure to note your source, and to ALWAYS confirm deadlines, application requirements, etc. with the actual funding organization itself.

a. Good Places to Start:

(1) **PSLawNet** - The Public Service Law Network or PSLawNet is the best and most comprehensive place to start your research. PSLawNet is a public interest law employment database run by the National Association for Law Placement (NALP).

- (a) PSLawNet online: <http://www.pslawnet.org/>
- (b) You must be a registered user to access the database and must request a password. Lewis & Clark Law School is a member organization, so you are entitled to free access as both a student and an alumnus.
- (c) PSLawNet print resource: *The Comprehensive Fellowship Guide - The Ultimate Resource for Law Students & Lawyers*
- (d) This guide is published annually. It includes the Yale Law School Career Development Fellowship Guide, along with a 300+ page index of fellowship funding opportunities (organized in a variety of easily accessible ways). This guide can be found in the Career Services Library.

(2) **Equal Justice Works** - www.equaljusticeworks.org

- (a) The Equal Justice Works Fellowships Program creates partnerships among public interest lawyers, nonprofit organizations, law firm/corporate sponsors, and other donors in order to provide more Americans with effective access to the justice system. A list of current fellows, and a description of their projects, is located on the website.

- (3) **Berkeley Law Foundation** - www.boalt.org/BLF
- (a) The Berkeley Law Foundation's mission is to fund new lawyers and innovative public interest law projects that serve disadvantaged communities.
- (4) **Skadden Fellowships** - <http://www.skadden.com/Index.cfm?contentID=23>.
- (a) These fellowships, sponsored by the law firm of Skadden Arps, are made to sponsoring organizations who are 501(c)3 organizations providing legal services to the poor.
- (5) **Echoing Green** - www.echoinggreen.org
- (a) Echoing Green awards two year fellowships to emerging social innovators. Annually, they award Fellowships to individuals with "innovative ideas for creating new models for tackling seemingly unsolvable social challenges. These Fellowships offer them the opportunity to develop and test their ideas. Fellows work in the community. They launch, manage and grow organizations that implement and continually expand their ideas for creating lasting social change."
- (6) **Open Society Institute / Soros Foundation** - www.soros.org/grants
- (a) Founded by millionaire activist, George Soros, the Open Society Institute makes grants to a broad range of initiatives that aim to promote open societies by "shaping government policy and supporting education, media, public health and human and women's rights, as well as social, legal and economic reform."
- (7) **Ford Foundation** - www.fordfound.org
- (a) The Foundation's goals are to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.
- (8) **Career Services Job Postings** - An employer who has received foundation funding (or who wants a successful applicant to apply for funding) may post a job announcement and recruit candidates to fill the position.
- (9) **Specialty Publications / Bulletins** - These specialty publications are usually published on a bi-weekly or monthly basis and contain job postings in specific areas of the law. Some publications that Career Services subscribes to include *the International Career Employment Weekly*, *the Non-Traditional Legal Careers Report*, *the PIES job alert* (public interest jobs) and *Opportunities in Public Affairs*.

- b. Verify directly at the source

Once you have come up with a list of potential funders and/or list of potential sponsoring organizations on PSLawNet, make sure you visit the web sites of the organizations themselves to verify deadlines, application materials, etc.

- c. Human Capital

It is a good idea to talk to people who are familiar with the funding source and sponsoring organizations you want to work with. Speak with the Public Interest Law Coordinator in the Career Services Office. She can direct you to Lewis & Clark Law School's Fellowship Application Bank Binder, and can direct you to alumni who have been successful in the fellowship application process. It is also recommended that you speak to former fellows (of the specific fellowship you are applying for), and if possible review winning fellowship applications.

- d. Evaluate your research

Once you have your list of funding sources and sponsoring organizations, and as you speak to former fellows and others, make sure that you are gathering information that will help you make a decision on what fellowships to apply for. The Yale Law School Career Development Office Fellowship Guide has a good list of questions you should be eliciting answers to. This list can be found on page 11 of that guide.

III. Tips for Successful Applications

A. More Research

1. Know your funder:

- a. Know what the grant maker is motivated by so you can tailor your fellowship application language to those goals.
- b. Depending on whom you are applying to for fellowship funds - they may or may not be experts in what you are proposing to do. Write your application to EDUCATE them on what you plan to do.

B. Demonstrate that your proposal is well thought out

You must demonstrate to fellowship funders that your project is worthwhile and that you have approached your idea from ALL relevant angles. You can do this by crafting your application in a way that will answer several "big picture questions" that funders often have. Before you begin writing, the individual sections of a fellowship application make sure you can/have answered the following questions:

1. Do you meet the qualifications they are asking for?
2. Are you committed to the mission of the organization or the nature of the work?
 - a. Make a list of all of your relevant experience (both paid and pro bono), including work on boards, student groups, etc., so that you have the information handy as you write your proposal.
3. Is your project consistent with the funder's purposes and priorities?
4. Is your project significant / innovative?
5. Is there a clear impact and benefit to your project?
6. Can you demonstrate a need for your project?
7. Does your project offer a feasible (a.k.a. realistic) way to meet the need?
8. Can you measure the success of your project?
9. Is your project sustainable?
10. Will your project have the support of others in the community?
11. Is your project discrete and not duplicative?

C. Outline & Write

Outline your proposal according to the information requested in the fellowship application. Dissect the application and figure out what information you want to put where. Make sure that your answers to the questions above are encapsulated appropriately in the various sections of the application. Each piece is important and space is limited! Common components of fellowship applications can include:

1. Title
2. Brief summary of project
3. Project description / description of organization (can be one or two sections)
4. Personal narrative
5. Writing Sample
6. Resume
7. Recommendations

Additional Tips:

- a. Avoid repeating yourself in these sections. Fellowship applications typically give space limitations so maximize what space you have.
- b. The description of organization section is often wasted. Do not give a bland and outdated history of the organization you want to work for. This is a great place to talk about need, community support, feasibility of your project, etc.
- c. The title does not need to be the name of the program. It can be catchy and still demonstrate the need for your project.
- d. When describing your project - make sure you are answering the questions from Section B above.
- e. Letters of recommendation are important. Make sure the people writing yours know you and your project well. Take a look at letters of recommendation

from winning fellowship applications if possible. It is appropriate to draft/outline your letter of recommendation to give to the person writing your letter.

** Materials collected from a variety of sources including PSLawNet - "The Comprehensive Fellowship Guide," The Yale Law School Career Development Office, and Equal Justice Works.*