

# **New York City Social Justice Fellowship**

**2006-2007**

## **Program Guidelines and Application**

**DEADLINE: MONDAY, MAY 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 by 12 Noon E.S.T.**

### **Background**

The New York City Social Justice Fellowship originates from the NYC Community Fellows Program founded in 1998 by the Open Society Institute. In early 2006, the program was transferred to the Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University.

The Social Justice Fellowship supports work in a wide range of social change activities including organizing, service delivery, and advocacy. Since the program's inception, projects of the nearly 80 fellows have been in such diverse areas as health, the arts, workers' and immigrants' rights, civic participation, education, and economic justice. The fellowship is aimed at supporting projects that seek to impact not only immediate "direct service" needs but structural, policy changes vital to empowering disadvantaged, marginalized communities. Furthermore, fellows serve as role models in their communities, highlighting the importance of careers in public service and social change; and they become part of a growing city-wide network of progressive, community-based leaders exchanging ideas and resources to effect change.

### **Research Center for Leadership in Action**

Launched in 2003 with NYU's Wagner School of Public Service, RCLA is a hub where people from multiple sectors and disciplines, undertaking critical public challenges, come together to explore the complexities of their work, find creative ways to address them, and build new knowledge about leadership. The Center's current programs – most notably the Next Generation Leadership Alumni Network, Leadership for a Changing World, Leadership in Action, and Leading Large Scale Change in the Public Sector – encompass over 300 public service leaders. This rich and diverse body of experience is enabling RCLA to build an understanding of leadership from the ground up – rooted in the experience and observations of practitioners working in the public and nonprofit sectors.

### **Fellowship Network**

Each fellow in the Social Justice Fellowship is important to the development of our network of community activists. The fellowship network is made up of current and previously funded fellows who share resources and ideas on developing communities and sustaining their public interest projects. All fellows become members of the network and are eligible to attend conferences and various technical assistance workshops. The network continues to grow by enhancing the social capital of emerging leaders through informal peer-to-peer exchanges and program-supported workshops.

## Social Justice Fellowship Core Components

- Stipend in the amount of \$42,500 over 15 months.
- Project support in the amount of \$2,000.
- Contribution towards health insurance and tuition reimbursement up to \$13,000, depending on demonstrated need.
- Personal and professional development plan - to enhance the growth of both the fellow and their project.
- Technical assistance workshops.
- Support from RCLA staff and its network of faculty and citywide partners.
- A listserv providing regular information on resources and events.
- Participation in a growing network of program alumni.
- Exposure to different approaches to 'reflective practice' aimed at helping fellows learn from their experiences and those of their peers.
- Access to space and resources at the Wagner School, as scheduling and resources permit.

## Who Should Apply

The NYC Social Justice Fellowship seeks applicants from diverse backgrounds and at all stages of life who wish to employ their skills in creating innovative public interest projects aimed at transforming and empowering communities. The program takes a special interest in supporting people from disadvantaged communities and communities of color. Applicants should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Deep connections with community stakeholders and supportive networks;
- Commitment to core values of social justice work – including respect for local experience and wisdom; inclusive, participatory practice; end-goal of structural, systemic change; and empowerment and self-sufficiency of those most affected;
- Creativity and resourcefulness – bringing new perspectives and innovation; and leveraging greater financial and human resources to address meaningfully the depth and complexity of problems facing communities;
- Enthusiasm for sharing and learning – through other program participants, the alumni network and periodic learning opportunities provided by RCLA.

## Program Requirements

The Social Justice Fellowship is open to supporting projects that take different forms and encompass different fields, such as education, law, the arts, public service, or health. If working with a hosting organization (see below), applicants must demonstrate that the project is of an independent nature and that the fellowship award will not be supplanting funding for activities or projects that are already being implemented by the hosting organization or any other group. Projects of a strictly academic or theoretical nature are not appropriate under this program.

Specifically, the program looks for projects that:

- Strengthen social equity for marginalized communities;
- Engage community members in a way that is core to the project's mission and goals (with personal mentors and an advisory committee being encouraged, though not required); and
- Work collaboratively with other organizations to achieve the stated objectives.

Applicants must:

- perform their fellowship project in New York City, although they need not be from New York City;
- be legally able to work in the United States in order to accept the fellowship offer;
- be able to adhere to the timeline outlined below.

### Hosting Organization

The fellowship is awarded to individuals to employ their vision and skills in creating a project. Since new projects require many forms of community support, the program encourages fellows to secure a hosting organization (although this is *not* a requirement). Working with a hosting organization may enhance local credibility, provide teamwork, reduce isolation, and assist with accessing resources (such as space, technology, and networks). Ideally, hosting organizations may also supplement the fellows' stipend award and provide health or other financial benefits. Attention should be paid to ensuring that the fellow is not treated as a staff-member and can operate with much independence. Therefore, fellows who choose to pursue such arrangements are encouraged to develop with the host organization a memo of understanding ("MOU") that outlines the relationship, the host's contribution, and affirms the ability of the fellow to work with a high degree of autonomy. This letter should be submitted as part of the fellows' application.

### Timeline

Proposal Deadline:	Monday, May 1, 2006 by 12 Noon E.S.T.
Finalists Decisions Announced:	Friday, June 16, 2006
Finalists Interviews:	Monday, June 26 & Tuesday, June 27, 2006
Fellowship Awards Announced:	Early July 2006
Fellowship Start Date:	Monday, September 11, 2006

## **Review and Selection Process**

Proposals will first be reviewed for basic eligibility by RCLA staff. Those eligible will then be reviewed by a reading committee consisting of RCLA staff, community activists, social change practitioners, educators, and members of the nonprofit sector whose experiences reflect the diverse pool of submitted proposals. The reading committee is responsible for nominating 20 finalists who will be invited for in-person interviews with our selection committee.

The selection committee will interview each finalist and nominate up to 7 individuals for fellowship awards. To be considered for a fellowship award, applicants must attend the interview session with the selection committee (June 26 and 27). Selection is based on the applicant's competence and commitment to the community, the need for the proposed project, the responsiveness of the project to the community involved, and the capacity of the individual to implement the project. The project must have a sound implementation and governance plan along with a viable budget for the 15-month fellowship period. The project should either demonstrate long-term sustainability or a meaningful resolution upon conclusion of the fellowship.

## **Structure of the Application**

Applicants must provide an original proposal and four (4) additional copies of all required proposal contents. Proposals must be attached in the upper left corner; please avoid using staples, folders, or plastic covers when assembling the proposal. Faxes, e-mails, or late applications will not be considered. Supportive materials, such as photographs, reports, books, and videos, cannot be reviewed with your proposal.

### **Please assemble the proposal in the following order:**

1. The completed application coversheet
2. A six to ten page, double-spaced proposal in 12-point type with one-inch margins that includes the following information (in order):
  - **Mission Statement:** Prepare a one-paragraph mission statement describing the objectives and goals of the proposed project; please indicate the desired social change you hope to accomplish.
  - **Project Description:** The project should address a specific issue of pressing concern to a specific community (geographic or common identity). Provide a concise description of the project's methods and activities to accomplish the goal of the project. Please provide detailed information on where and whom the project will serve, and how the project will stimulate positive social change. Please provide supportive information (i.e. data, personal narratives) explaining why this work is important to the community.
  - **Community Ties:** Explain in detail your experience with the community to be served and why this work and community is important to you.

- Effectiveness: Describe how you will evaluate the effectiveness of your proposed project. State clearly what the result is that you are seeking to achieve.
  - Timeline: Show within a 15-month timeline your project's activities and expected outcomes.
3. A one-page budget explaining project support including anticipated and confirmed funding.
  4. A one-to-two page resume or CV.
  5. Two letters of recommendation, no more than two pages each. This is not a letter of support from the hosting organization.
  6. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the potential fellow and the hosting organization (if such an arrangement is being proposed) – detailing the relationship and benefits offered by the host, and affirming a high degree of independence for the fellow. Include a letter of incorporation from the sponsoring organization indicating its 501(c)(3) status.

For further information on the NYC Social Justice Fellows Program, please consult our website at <http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/leadership/sjf/>.

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Completed proposals should be sent directly to:

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Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service  
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