



EQUAL
JUSTICE
WORKS

FELLOWSHIP APPLICANT GUIDE

Application Period

May 10 – September 12, 2023

Your Project, Your Community

The Equal Justice Works Design-Your-Own Fellowship program serves a dual purpose: to jump-start the careers of aspiring public interest lawyers, and to build crucial capacity at nonprofit organizations nationwide.

Fellows join a prestigious network of leaders empowered to pursue the issues they are passionate about, to work with and expand upon the mission of their host organization.

Equal Justice Works provides a blueprint for lawyers to turn their passions into public interest careers that are truly their own. With the support of their host organizations, sponsors, and Equal Justice Works, Fellows pursue projects of their own creation, allowing them to think beyond general staff attorney positions.

Candidates and prospective host organizations collaborate closely to design a project and apply for the Fellowship. This guide will show you how best to identify a host organization to support your vision, design an innovative legal project, and submit a competitive application.

Equal Justice Works is committed to building a community of staff, board members, Fellows, law students, and public service community whose behaviors align with our mission regarding diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice. We believe that harnessing the power of our differences and breaking down barriers to opportunities are critical in ensuring that these values remain at the forefront of our work.

QUESTIONS?



Fellowships@equaljusticeworks.org



202.466.3686



equaljusticeworks.org

ABOUT EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS /

Equal Justice Works is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is the nation's largest facilitator of opportunities in public interest law. Equal Justice Works brings together an extensive network of law students, lawyers, legal services organizations, and supporters to promote a lifelong commitment to public service and equal justice. The organization believes that a community of lawyers committed to public service can fulfill our nation's promise of equal justice for all. Following their Fellowships, more than 85% of Equal Justice Works Fellows remain in public service positions, continuing to pursue equal justice for underserved communities.

Why Become a Fellow?

Forge Your Path

As a Fellow, you will engage directly with the issues and communities you care about the most. **Where would you like to work? What would you like to accomplish, and for whom?** With questions like these in mind, you can tailor your project to suit your interests, passions, lived experiences, and personal and professional goals. Equal Justice Works encourages applicants to consider the unique needs of their own communities when preparing their application, and places significant weight on projects to which a Fellow has a strong connection.

Explore New Territory

Equal Justice Works does not fund general staff attorney positions. Instead, this Fellowship program creates positions at nonprofit organizations through which Fellows can spearhead new and innovative projects. By becoming a Fellow, you will have the opportunity to leverage your unique skills to address an unmet legal need for an underserved community.

Grow Your Network

The Fellowship program could not exist without the generous support of the law firms, corporations, private foundations, and individuals that fund each project. Beyond contributing financially, sponsors are also encouraged to participate in the selection process, often seeking out projects that align with their institutional values, philanthropic goals, and pro bono priorities. Nearly all Fellowship sponsors are interested in being involved in some manner and remain connected with the Fellow throughout their project. Sponsor involvement comes in many forms, such as litigation support or staffing a clinic with the sponsor's pro bono attorneys. Through collaboration with their sponsors, Fellows are able to forge valuable relationships with the legal community at large.

INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS

Fellowship candidates are encouraged to register for an informational webinar session prior to completing their application. Whether or not you are able to attend live, you will still receive a recording via email after the session ends.

Visit equaljusticeworks.org/events to register, and for the most up-to-date information on webinars for all audiences.



Benefits

Equal Justice Works aims to break down the barriers that prevent talented candidates from pursuing careers in the public sector. Throughout the two-year project term, Fellows receive the support they need to focus on their professional goals.

Salary

As an employee of the host organization, each Fellow's salary is determined by their organization and will be equivalent to that of a similarly qualified and experienced lawyer at the organization. Equal Justice Works provides each host organization with up to \$62,000 annually toward each Fellow's salary. If the Fellow's annual salary exceeds Equal Justice Works' contribution, the host organization must cover the difference.

Fringe Benefits

Fellows receive the same health insurance and fringe benefits provided to other lawyers at their host organization.

Loan Repayment Assistance

Equal Justice Works provides loan repayment assistance to Fellows who qualify through a Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) for both years of the Fellowship. Eligible Fellows qualify for up to \$5,000 in LRAP assistance per Fellowship year. The LRAP includes both federal undergraduate and graduate educational debt.

Learning & Networking Events

Each fall, Equal Justice Works brings together new and second-year Fellows for three days of

Leadership Development Training with experts in the field. The training equips Fellows with necessary practical leadership and management skills to help them succeed in their Fellowships. The training also offers an opportunity to build long-term peer networks that will last throughout the Fellow's public interest career.

Equal Justice Works also organizes multiple learning sessions for Fellows with Fellowship alumni or other experts in their field, as well as peer-to-peer Fellow networking experiences.

Ongoing Guidance and Support From Equal Justice Works

Equal Justice Works provides Fellows with program support and assistance through skills-based webinars, check-ins, and dedicated staff who are ready to help you navigate your Fellowship. Equal Justice Works also facilitates and manages the relationship between a Fellow and their sponsor(s).

For more information on managing your student debt and taking advantage of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, please visit equaljusticeworks.org/law-students/student-debt-resources/



Eligibility Requirements

As part of the application process, each candidate must identify and collaborate with an organization to propose a project that merges the candidate's passions with the organization's mission and work.

Candidates

You must have graduated from an **Equal Justice Works Member Law School** before September 2024 with a J.D. or LL.M. You must not have previously held a full-time (more than 30 hours/week), permanent, public interest lawyer position, though applicants coming from bridge/gap fellowships or clerkships are eligible. Experienced private sector lawyers who have demonstrated a commitment to public interest law and have the relevant skills and initiative to carry out the goals of the project are encouraged to apply. Candidates may not have participated previously in any major fellowship program such as the Skadden Fellowship Program, Echoing Green Fellowship, Soros Justice Fellowship, Justice Catalyst Fellowship and Immigrant Justice Corps Fellowship.

NOTE: Those currently or previously involved in other Equal Justice Works programs are eligible to apply for the Design-Your-Own Fellowship.

Organizations

The host organization must be a nonprofit legal services organization—or an organization able to provide legal supervision—in the United States or its territories that will commit to serve as your employer during the entire term

of the two-year Fellowship. The organization must provide supervision, a workspace, employee health and fringe benefits, and resources (computer, internet access, phone, etc.) needed to successfully complete your project. Organizations must be able to provide legal supervision for your project. Finally, if the Fellow's salary will exceed the \$62,000 provided by Equal Justice Works annually, the organization must commit to paying the difference.

Projects

Eligible projects are those that propose to serve disenfranchised individuals, groups, or issues not adequately represented in our legal system. Projects may include direct representation, legal education, legal training, community organizing, transactional work, policy work, litigation, administrative representation, or a combination of these strategies. Equal Justice Works will consider projects in any issue area except international work or standard criminal defense. Equal Justice Works Fellowships aim to create new public interest positions and therefore may not be used to fund general staff attorney positions within existing organizations. Instead, they should provide Fellows with the opportunity to exercise leadership on a distinct project. Candidates and organizations work together to generate project proposals.

Piecing Together a Fellowship

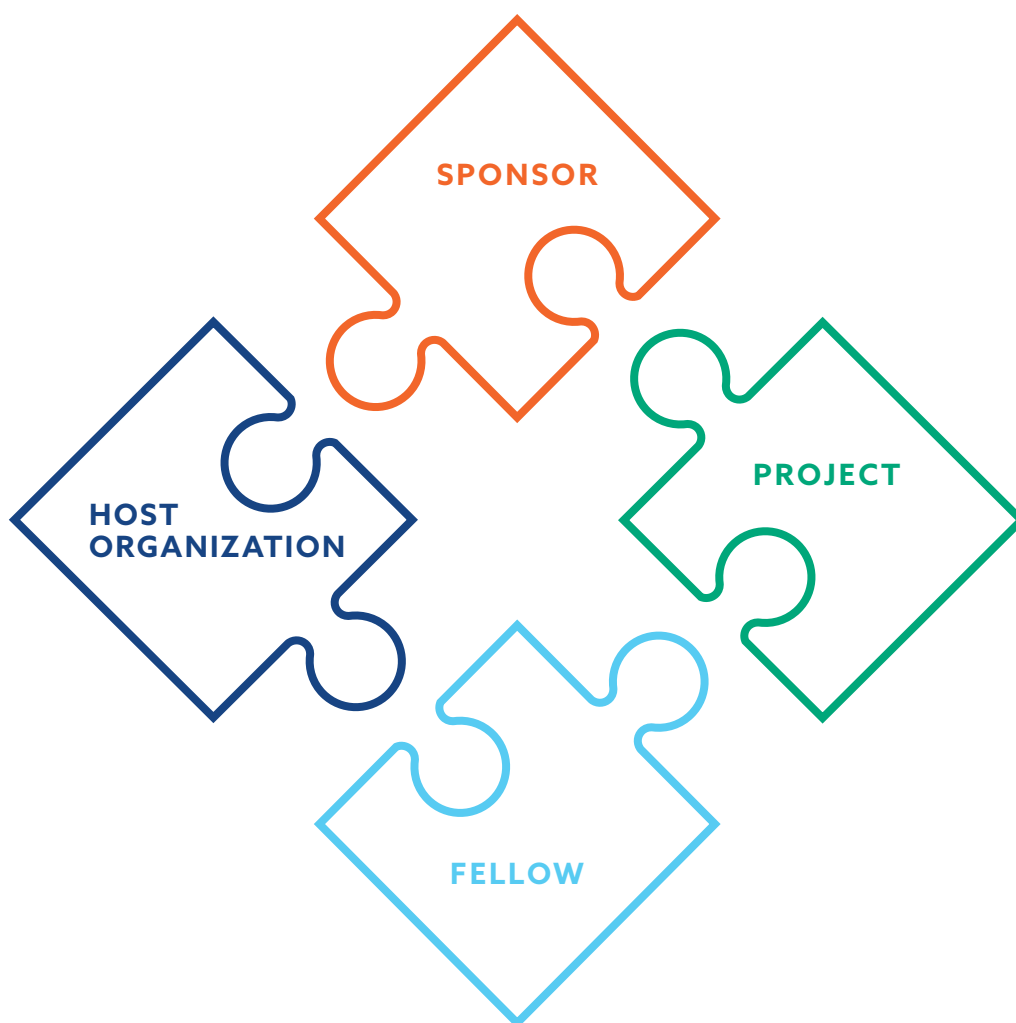
The **Fellow** is the passionate public interest lawyer whose work on behalf of underserved communities is facilitated by Equal Justice Works.

The **host organization** is the nonprofit organization at which the Fellow completes their two-year term.

Together, the Fellow and the host organization design a **project**—one that leverages the

Fellow's passions and hones their skills, and builds upon the organization's existing mission, allowing them to expand their services and initiatives. The ultimate goal is to provide legal services to communities that need them.

The **sponsor** is the law firm, corporation, foundation, or individual that funds the work. Sponsors often specify which issue areas and geographic preferences they will fund.



Design Your Own Fellowship

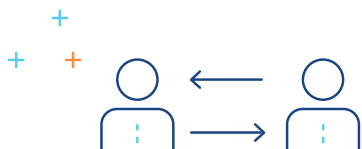
1

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

Candidates for an Equal Justice Works Fellowship have the opportunity to design their own Fellowship to address an unmet legal need and underserved community. Consider the legal issues that resonate with your passions and/or lived experiences, as well as the needs of the community you want to serve.



2



FIND YOUR HOST ORGANIZATION

Connect with a legal services organization that wants to host you for the duration of your Fellowship.

3

DESIGN THE PROJECT

Work with your host organization to design your Fellowship. Successful applications leverage innovative ideas to increase access to justice for underserved communities, merging the candidate's passions with the host organization's mission and work.



4

COMPLETE THE APPLICATION

To design your own Fellowship, the application requires a project proposal, personal statement, two letters of recommendation, and a résumé. A candidate and host organization submit a joint application for this Fellowship.



Post-submission: Each application is reviewed and scored by Fellow alumni. High-scoring applicants are interviewed and selected for the Equal Justice Works Fellowship on a rolling basis from November 2023 to April 2024. Fellowships begin September 2024.

1 Identify the Issue

Before seeking an organization to host your project, identify the issues that resonate with your passions, your goals, and the needs of your community.

Common Issue Areas of Interest:

Access to Healthcare

Children & Youth

Civil Rights

Community Economic
Development

Criminal Justice

Domestic Violence & Family Law

Education & Special Education

Housing & Homelessness

Immigration & Trafficking

LGBTQ+ Rights

Medical-Legal Partnerships

Racial Justice

Reproductive Rights

Veterans

Workers' Rights

* Note: Equal Justice Works does not support international projects or standard criminal defense at this time.

Our Impact

2,400+

Fellows who have launched their public interest law careers through Equal Justice Works.

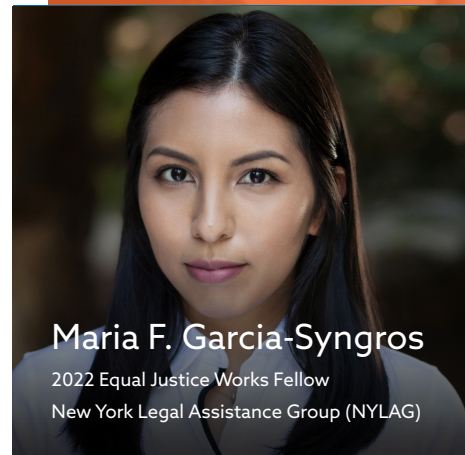
85%

Fellows who remain in public service following their Equal Justice Works Fellowships.

297

The average number of clients served by an Equal Justice Works Fellow over the course of their Fellowship.

“ I am incredibly honored to be an Equal Justice Works Fellow. This Fellowship has allowed me to meet a need in the immigration system that would otherwise go unaddressed.



“ The opportunity to combine my passion for LGBT rights, commitment to serving youth and low-income clients, and my practical experience in domestic violence litigation is honestly a dream come true for me!

Find Your Host Organization

Equal Justice Works does not match Fellows with their host organizations; rather, Fellowship candidates and organizations work together to design the project and complete the application. Candidates may find prospective host organizations in many ways.

Reach out to Your Network

Organizations where you have interned or volunteered, especially if they deal with the same issue or community you plan to address, may already be interested in hosting. You can also consider approaching organizations that are active in your community. Even if you plan to work outside the organization's scope, they likely have useful connections elsewhere.

Know Where to Look

Many organizations interested in hosting Fellows search for candidates through social media, job boards, and their own websites, as well as law school career services offices. These organizations may ask candidates to apply with a résumé, project idea, or writing sample. Make sure your materials align with their vision, and that their scope of work aligns with what you want to do during your Fellowship.

Break the Ice

Know of an organization that would be perfect for the project you are envisioning? A cold call or email never hurts! If the organization has

already hosted, reaching out to Fellows and alumni is a great way to get a foot in the door. Please note that Equal Justice Works is unable to connect applicants with current Fellows, Fellow Alumni, or host organizations.

When approaching an organization about hosting your Fellowship project, it is important to have a vision in mind, and to also demonstrate a willingness to work closely with the organization to develop the specifics of the project. Some candidates find more success when they come prepared with brief project outlines and information about the organization's role in the Fellowship.

Negotiate Salary & Benefits

Your host organization will be your employer for the duration of your fellowship, and you should clarify upfront the proposed salary and benefits. Per the terms of the Fellowship, host organizations are required to offer salary and benefits commensurate with other similarly-situated attorneys in the organization. You may also want to consider whether the organization has a union and if you'd like to negotiate to be part of that union when you join.

JOB BOARDS

YOUR
LAW SCHOOL

PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS
DIRECTORY (PSJD)

www.psjd.org

NATIONAL LEGAL AID &
DEFENDER ASSOCIATION
(NLADA)

www.nlada.org

IDEALIST

www.idealists.org

A photograph of three people in a meeting. On the left, a woman with dark hair tied back is looking towards the center. In the middle, a man with curly hair is looking down. On the right, a man wearing a blue turban and a light-colored shirt is looking towards the center. They appear to be in a collaborative discussion.

Benefits of Hosting a Fellow

When approaching an organization, it is helpful to come prepared with a list of the benefits available to organizations that host a Fellow.

Leverage New Funding

Equal Justice Works will provide up to \$62,000 annually towards a Fellow's salary during their two-year term. That's over \$124,000 the host organization would not have otherwise! In the event that the regular salary of a comparable position exceeds this amount, the host organization will need to make up the difference; however, this potential cost pales in comparison to the value of an additional full-time staff member, particularly one dedicated to an exciting new project.

Foster New Initiatives

Because Equal Justice Works does not fund general staff attorney positions, organizations can use this as an opportunity to consider new directions for their work. By hosting a Fellow, the organization can increase capacity or expand legal services in ways it wouldn't have been

able to do otherwise. The goal of the program is to create solutions that are sustainable beyond each two-year project term, making the Fellowship the perfect opportunity to pilot new projects.

Network, Network, Network

Participating in a Fellowship is a great networking opportunity for Fellows and host organizations alike. The prominent corporations, foundations, and individuals that select and sponsor Fellows are often eager to remain involved in some way, providing organizations the opportunity to form pro bono relationships with sponsors and their legal teams. Such collaborations can lead to additional capacity through clinic volunteers, research assistance, legal drafting, and other services.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When considering an organization to host your project, be sure to ask yourself the following questions in order to determine whether or not they might be the best fit:

- What work, if any, has the organization done to address your proposed project issue?
- How large is the organization? Does it have the capacity to provide support and supervision for your project?
- What is the organization's mission? Are its values and culture aligned with your own?
- Does the organization have experience mentoring recent graduates and emerging public interest leaders?

A blue-tinted photograph of three people in a meeting. Two men and one woman are gathered around a table, looking at documents. The man on the right is pointing at a document. The woman on the left is looking down at the table. The man in the middle is looking at the document the woman is pointing to.

3 Design the Project

Once you have committed to partnering with an organization, you can begin to work on your application. Equal Justice Works encourages applicants to start the application as early as possible, as the process will require careful planning and preparation.

Work Together

Once the organization has agreed to host you, work closely to develop the details of the proposal and identify specific strategies. Keep in mind that the proposed project must fit with, and ideally expand upon, the organization's mission and work. Parts of the proposal will be written by the organization, and should reflect its full support of the project and willingness to work as your partner in implementing it. Whether or not you have previous work experience with the organization, your application must show that you have built a relationship, established a mutual understanding about the goals and parameters of the proposed project, and collaborated to develop the specifics.

Identify Needs for Specific Communities

The application will ask you to describe the need and community to be served by your project. A geographic area, particular population, or cause can be in need of assistance by virtue of the number of people affected, the size and nature of the geographic area, the dearth of legal assistance available to the population, and the timeliness or potential impact of the issue. The key is to paint a picture of the particular problem in the specific community you wish to serve. For example,

general statistics stating that foster youth neglect is a nationwide problem are compelling, but may not be enough to sell the merits of a youth advocacy project specifically based in San Francisco. A stronger proposal would describe the particular crisis facing foster youth in San Francisco, use data to support that assertion, and weave in personal stories to humanize the potential impact.

Obtain Stakeholder Buy-in

A strong application will show that the candidate has a good understanding of the target community. Equal Justice Works places high value on personal ties to the community the proposed project will serve, for example, a formerly undocumented person who plans to work with undocumented immigrant communities. A direct personal connection is not essential, but everyone has a story that informs their passions—candidates are encouraged to dig deep to identify what motivates them. You can strengthen a proposal by showing that you have used innovative ways to lay the groundwork for the project in the community. For instance, consider obtaining a commitment from local community groups to collaborate in a coalition, getting input from local leaders representing the target community, or drawing on a recent needs assessment to identify specific needs and particular strategies that the community wants employed.



Propose Realistic Strategies

Your project's goals should be ambitious, yet feasible. Consider whether the project will make a real difference in the issue area. *Do the proposed strategies make sense? Do the goals and timetable reflect good judgment and realistic assessment of how the project will be accomplished?* We encourage applicants to employ a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) goal framework.

Additionally, keep in mind that strategies must make sense in light of your chosen organization. For instance, if you propose to file a class action lawsuit on behalf of migrant farmworkers, the proposal should demonstrate that your organization has the resources to litigate class actions, the experience to provide adequate supervision, and a history of or interest in working on farmworker rights. Finally, your strategies must make sense for the community you propose to serve. Research which strategies have already been employed, consider how to take the communities' views and needs into account, and determine which successful models have been used elsewhere.

Demonstrate Sustainability

Equal Justice Works seeks projects designed to impact a large number of people through the implementation of an innovative program, or the replication of a model that has been used successfully in another community. It is very important to show that the proposed project will have a lasting impact, and that you and your host organization are committed to preserving the impact of the project beyond the two-year term. Sustainability can take many forms, such as partnering organizations continuing a clinic or coalition that was established, the host organization refilling the Fellow's position as a staff attorney who will continue the work, creating resources that will outlast the project, or the Fellow staying on after the Fellowship to continue to lead the project.



Use the Application as Your Guide

Striking a balance between your own passions and the organization's strategic goals is paramount to success.

Pay particular attention to opportunities for pro bono involvement from sponsors, ongoing sustainability of the project, connections to the community, and the needs of the community being served. A well-designed proposal addresses each of these considerations and many more.

The application, to be completed online, is divided into three distinct expository sections, with required answers ranging from 200-1,000 words. As you and your prospective host organization develop the project proposal, it can be helpful to use the descriptions below as your guide.

You can also view PDFs of previous years' application on our website.

1. Project Description

This part should be a collaborative effort between the prospective host organization and the candidate. Work together with the organization and start getting your plans down on paper. You should be prepared to provide:

- A one-sentence description of the project and the population it seeks to help
- A statement of need describing the issues to be addressed and the reasons the project is timely
- The goals of the project, including strategies, anticipated outcomes, and plans for sustainability beyond the two-year term
- A timeline of the Fellowship project, broken down into six-month increments, through the entire two years of the Fellowship
- A description of potential sponsor involvement—how can the sponsor be involved in your project?
- An acknowledgment of similar services within the community, with a description of what distinguishes your project, and ways in which collaboration may be possible
- An example of prior experience coordinating pro bono activities and/or working with pro bono attorneys, if any

2. Candidate Background

This section should be completed by the candidate and reviewed by the prospective host organization. In this section, you will describe the ways in which your personal background and experiences make you uniquely qualified to serve the identified community. As you prepare this section, be mindful of how these materials connect with the organization's stated mission. Your potential host organization should review this section prior to submission. Be prepared to provide:

- A personal statement detailing your connection to the community with which you will work
- A PDF version of your résumé. Don't forget to tailor your résumé to your application. Please do not include GPA or class rank on your resume or in your application.
- One professional reference other than those writing your recommendation letters. Be prepared to provide the name and location of the organization, the length of your time there, and the contact information of someone who can speak about your work history
- PDF versions of two letters of recommendation from supervisors, professors, etc. If you interned at your proposed host organization previously, you may use them as a reference or recommendation letter writer

3. Host Organization Background

This section should be completed by the prospective host organization with input from the candidate. In the final section of the application, the organization will describe how a candidate will make a unique and significant difference to the operation of the organization. Additionally, the organization will be asked to provide details about the supervision that will be offered to the Fellow. The organization should be prepared to provide:

- A description of how the project will be distinct from the work of staff attorneys or previous Fellows, if any
- The candidate's history at the organization, if any
- Information about previous Fellows hosted by the organization, if any
- Details about the organization's pro bono activities
- Details about the proposed supervisor:
 - Relevant issue area experience
 - Supervision and management experience
 - The proposed level of interaction with the Fellow
- A description of the technology and resources that will be available to the Fellow; whether the Fellow is working in-person, remotely or in a hybrid manner
- Information about the candidate's salary and benefits

SHOW COMMITMENT TO THE WORK

The application will ask for detailed candidate information. When completing this section, you should show how you have developed the experience that makes you the right person to carry out the project you propose. Your fit with the subject matter of your application as well as with your host organization is key.

Equal Justice Works also seeks candidates with a demonstrated commitment to public service—whether before, during, or after law school. Should you have been prevented from pursuing public service activities in a formalized manner (e.g.,

internships) due to factors such as supporting a family, etc., we encourage candidates to note that in the application.

- Do you have the substantive knowledge necessary to pursue the project goals or can you explain how it will be obtained?
- Do you have experience with the target community, whether by working on the specific issue or in the geographic or cultural community?
- Do you have a personal relationship with the community to be served?

4 Complete the Application

The application period begins **May 10, 2023**, and closes on **September 12, 2023, at 12 p.m. ET.**

Tips for a Smooth Submission

- Create an online profile beginning on May 10, to ensure that you are gathering the necessary information to plan the project.
- Don't jeopardize your hard work by forgetting to proofread! As you plan for the application process at the beginning of the summer, be sure to build in ample time for final review and editing.
- We encourage candidates to have their application reviewed by at least three different people prior to submission—because of its length, it requires far more than just a quick read to ensure high quality work.
- In addition to working closely with your host organization, consider seeking feedback from law school professors, public interest career counselors at your school, practitioners, employers, organizations, and especially current Fellows and alumni. Ask them to pose tough questions to help you identify potential ways to strengthen your proposal.
- If you are pasting content into the online application from a different program, like Microsoft Word, make sure to give the application a final review in case of formatting errors.

After You Apply

After you submit your application, it will be reviewed by Equal Justice Works Fellow Alumni. High-scoring applications are selected to interview with sponsors between November and April. Fellowships are awarded on a rolling basis throughout this period.

Fellowship Interviews

You will be notified if you are selected to interview for a Fellowship. Equal Justice Works provides guidance to semifinalists on how best to prepare for interviews.

Equal Justice Works recommends that each interviewee practice in a mock interview, for example, with your law school career services. Sponsors often participate in the interviews, along with Equal Justice Works staff. In an effort to provide candidates with maximum opportunities to be selected, candidates may have several interviews over the course of the winter and spring.

Fellowship Offers

Equal Justice Works recognizes that Fellowship candidates may receive offers for other employment opportunities during the course

of the selection process. We also realize that there are multiple stakeholders involved in this process, including the organization. In an effort to accommodate these realities:

- We require that candidates accept or reject Fellowship offers within 48 business hours of receiving the offer. Those accepting offers must immediately withdraw any outstanding applications for clerkships or other opportunities.
- We conduct Equal Justice Works Fellowship interviews and selection after all Skadden Fellows have been selected. Therefore, candidates who apply to both fellowship programs will know the result of their Skadden Fellowship Program application before Equal Justice Works interviews begin.
- We request candidates notify Equal Justice Works immediately if they intend to accept or have accepted another position. Candidates should also notify their law schools and organizations if they intend to accept another opportunity.
- Equal Justice Works does not defer Fellowship offers. Eligible candidates may reapply again the following year.

POST-APPLICATION TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

Applications due by 12:00 p.m. ET

OCTOBER 2023

Fellow alumni review & score applications

NOVEMBER 2023 - APRIL 2024

Select candidates interviewed by sponsors

NOVEMBER 2023 - APRIL 2024

Candidates selected for Fellowships on a rolling basis

SEPTEMBER 2024

Fellowships begin

GET ANSWERS

 Fellowships@equaljusticeworks.org

 202.466.3686

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