

Soros Justice Advocacy Fellowships: The Inside Scoop

NALP Conference, April 2011

Overview	Current Trends	Counseling Tips	Application Tips	Add'l Insights
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/uscholarships/focus/justice/programs/justice_fellows	Favors projects with constituencies that should be served by sectors other than the criminal justice system (youth, disabled, LGBT, homeless, etc.)	Most students won't have necessary expertise to be competitive--set realistic expectations	Project should clearly originate from student's background and interests	Highly competitive and time consuming application
Criminal justice projects only; term is 18 months; 15-10 fellowships awarded annually	Favors projects outside of major metro areas (but few are)	Ideal applicant: significant work/personal connection with issue, relationships with past fellows & host orgs, articulate & writes well, independent, has a clear vision, the project fits with their own personal and professional goals	Students should assemble Advisory Board as early as possible	"Audience of Experts"
Award includes loan repayment grant, professional development funds, health insurance stipend, other perks	Favors projects based in South or Midwest, even in major metro areas	Projects should be a clear evolution over existing projects, not derivative	Students must talk to past Soros fellows as part of their research	Applicants with work experience at past host organizations tend to do well
Deadline in late Oct or early Nov; interviews usually in Nov & applicants notified in Nov & Dec	Favors intersectional projects (projects that serve multiple priority constituencies)	Project should clearly originate from student's background and interests rather than from host's needs	Students must show they are familiar with existing similar work and be able to clearly show their project is an evolution in the field	Goals should be clear, measurable, and realistic
Not intended primarily for law students--most fellows are already in the field	Favors applicants who have direct experience with criminal justice system (ex-prisoners, family members of prisoners, etc.)	Quality of candidate extremely important, almost more so than the project	Although host organizations not required, high recommended for law student applicants	All projects should have an evaluation plan & a timeline
Projects must align with Open Society Institute's Criminal Justice Fund priorities (in flux for 2012-13)	Favors applicants with pre-law school connection to project issue area	2 tracks: applicants with 10+ yrs experience not competing with law students w/less experience	Goals should be concrete, clear, and realistic	Host org must be fully committed to goals of OSI, but need not be OSI grantees
Distinct from "Open Society Fellowships"			Model applications on past successful applications	
Decisions made by committees made up of past Fellows and other leading figures in CJ reform field			Projects should meaningfully integrate constituency members (i.e. not just as "clients")	
Will not fund projects that are entirely or substantially direct services			Projects that combine community organizing with legal strategies tend to do well	
All projects must have clear policy goal(s)				
Host orgs must be nonprofits but hosts are optional				
Extremely valuable network of leaders in criminal justice field				

Post-Graduate Public Interest Fellowships: the Inside Scoop on Project-Based Fellowships

2011 NALP Annual Education Conference: Palm Springs, CA