

The Class of 2026 Equal Justice Works Design-Your-Own Fellowship Application

/ Frequently Asked Questions

Please review the [Applicant Guide](#), [Host Organization Guide](#), and other resources on our [application page](#).

GENERAL INFORMATION

When do applications close for the Class of 2026 Fellowship cycle?

Applications for the 2026 Design-Your-Own Fellowship are open until **11:59 pm Eastern Time on September 18, 2025**. All components of the application must be completed in the application in the online platform, and the application officially submitted in the platform, by this time.

What kind of projects are you looking for in the Class of 2026?

Eligible projects are those that propose to serve underserved, disenfranchised communities and/or populations and/or tackle issues not adequately addressed in our legal system. Projects may include components such as direct representation, legal education, legal training, advocacy, community organizing, transactional work, policy work, litigation, administrative representation, or a combination of these strategies...and more!

Projects should be innovative, discrete, distinctive from the work of a staff attorney at the Host Organization and have ambitious yet feasible SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound) goals for the 24-month duration of the Fellowship (September 2026-September 2028).

Sponsor interest and preferences vary by issue area and geography. Please see [here](#) for a regularly updated sponsor preference list. This is a non-exhaustive list based on preferences as they are known to us at this time. However, please note that projects outside these stated preferences are very often funded. Equal Justice Works encourages applications from across issue areas and geographies, including those not listed in the sponsor preference document.

Please visit the [Meet Our Fellows page](#) to see an archive of current and past Fellows, host organizations and Fellowship projects for examples of successful projects that address an unmet legal need for an underserved population.

ELIGIBILITY

Review basic eligibility information in the [Applicant Guide](#) and [Host Organization Guide](#).

Can candidates apply after a bridge fellowship or clerkship?

Yes. Applicants who begin their fellowship following a bridge/gap fellowships of one year or less are eligible. However, 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.

Applicants who would begin their fellowship following a judicial clerkship of two years or less are also eligible.

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

If I held a permanent, full-time public interest attorney position before can I apply for the EJW Design-Your-Own Fellowship?

No. Candidates are ineligible if they have previously held a full-time (30+ hours/week), permanent public interest attorney position. 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.

To remain eligible for a Fellowship, candidates must maintain eligibility up until the time the Fellowship begins.

Do I have to take the bar exam in order to be eligible for a Fellowship?

Yes. For candidates to be eligible for a Fellowship, they should take the bar exam at earliest possible sitting, generally in July, before the start of the Fellowship. Candidates should plan to be admitted to practice in the jurisdiction(s) relevant to their proposed project.

Can a candidate apply with more than one project in a cycle?

No. Applicants may submit only one application per Fellowship Cycle.

May my project application have more than one host organization?

No. All project applications must have one host organization. There is a section in the application on collaboration where you can explain how you will collaborate and work with other organizations/entities throughout your project.

Can a host organization apply even if they have never hosted a fellow before? Can a host organization apply even if they are very small or have only a small legal staff?

Yes. Host organizations new to Equal Justice Works should use the space provided in the application to demonstrate their suitability to host the proposed candidate and project. Very small host organizations or host organizations with a small legal staff should carefully consider whether and how they will be able to support a Fellow across the two years of the proposed project. The application asks organizations to describe how they will train and supervise a Fellow, who will be an early career attorney launching an independent project.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND MATERIALS

Where do I submit my application?

Applications are entirely online at [this link](#). Please create and log in to familiarize yourself with the application questions and word/character limits for each question's response. This information is also contained in the Word document available [here](#); please note that the Word document is for informational purposes only - only applications submitted via the online platform (Submittable) will be accepted.

Does Equal Justice Works match up applicants and host organizations?

No. Applicants and host organizations need to identify each other, and develop the application in collaboration. Applications should reflect background, skills, and strengths of an individual candidate in complement to the expertise, mission, and fit with the proposed host organization.

Do you need my GPA and/or transcripts?

No. Transcripts and GPA are not required for the application. Please do not include this information in your application. Applicants will be asked to provide a resume and a personal statement describing the candidate's interest in the program.

How long should my résumé be?

Please limit your résumé to two pages (if printed, one page double-sided) in PDF format unless additional information is necessary.

Who should be my reference?

The reference must be a professional or academic reference and cannot be from your proposed host organization. It must be a different person than either of your letter of recommendation writers. You will be asked to provide the references' organization name, city and state of the organization, the time in which the work was performed and the name, phone number, and email address of the person serving as the reference.

Should the two letters of recommendation be from different people than the person listed as the reference?

Yes. The two letters of recommendation should be from different people than the person listed as the reference. Different individuals from the same organization may serve as letter recommenders and references, respectively.

Who should write the letters of recommendation, and how/where do they attach to the application?

Two letters of recommendation in PDF format are required. Letters of recommendation may come from people you know from your legal, volunteer, job, or academic experience, and should come from people who can speak to your work product. If you have previously worked at your Host Organization, it is acceptable for one letter to come from a person at the Host Organization.

Please address the letters to the “Fellowship Committee” and submit letters of recommendation on the recommenders' organizational letterhead if possible. Each letter should include contact information (phone number and email) of the recommender.

Letters may be submitted in one of two ways. Once logged into the application in Submittable, candidates may upload the letters. Candidates can also send their recommenders a link to upload their letters of recommendation. Those selected to upload letters of recommendation will receive an email with instructions, and the uploaded letter will be stored within the application. The applicant must ensure that

the letters are uploaded in time to click to submit the application no later than 11:59PM Eastern on September 18, 2025.

When can candidates expect to receive an interview or offer?

Applicants may be selected by sponsors to interview throughout the Interviews are facilitated by Equal Justice Works staff between November to April, on a rolling basis. Candidates are typically notified of their selection on the same day, or within a few days of the interview.

OTHER

Are there other opportunities to become an Equal Justice Works Fellow or to host an Equal Justice Works Fellow?

Yes!

In addition to the Design-Your-Own Fellowships program, Equal Justice Works offers several “cohort” Fellowship programs that focus on specific issue areas, which multiple Fellows placed at legal services organizations aim to address via their respective projects. You can find all our Fellowship opportunities [here](#).

Both the [Disaster Resilience Program](#) and [Financial Empowerment Project](#) mobilize lawyers (Attorney Fellows), and we anticipate open Fellow positions to be posted and interviews to be conducted for interested Fellow applicants between August and October 2026.

My question hasn't been answered here. Where can I get more information?

We strongly encourage you to closely review the Applicant guide [here](#) and Host Organization guide [here](#). Sign up [here](#) to receive emails on the application process. Review our webinar recordings [here](#).

If your questions are not addressed in Equal Justice Works' publicly available resources, consider attending an upcoming “Office Hours”:

- Tuesday, July 29th at 4:00pm ET [REGISTER](#)
- Thursday, August 14th at 4:00pm ET [REGISTER](#)
- Wednesday, August 20th at 4:00pm ET [REGISTER](#)
- Wednesday, August 27th at 4:00pm ET [REGISTER](#)

You may also reach out to the Equal Justice Works Fellowships Team at fellowships@equaljusticeworks.org. We will do our best to respond to you in a timely manner with the information requested.