



Columbia
Law School

PI/PS

*Office of Public Interest/
Public Service Law and Careers*

Postgraduate Fellowship Toolkit

A Job Search Tool from Columbia Law School's Office of
Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers

2023-2024 Edition

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OF COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This toolkit is intended to guide Columbia Law School students and alumni who are applying to postgraduate fellowship positions. **Use of this toolkit does not guarantee that an applicant will obtain a fellowship position.**

We recommend that you begin by reading the entire toolkit to gain a full picture. After, you may return to the sections that are most relevant to where you are in the process.

For additional information, please contact the [Office for Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers \(the PI/PS Office\)](#).

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FELLOWSHIPS OVERVIEW

Postgraduate fellowships are a critical component of the job search strategy for all public interest students. Fellowships serve as an entry to a public interest career and provide access to many public interest jobs. Fellowships afford new lawyers with opportunities to do social justice work in settings that match their passions. Fellowships enable these lawyers to launch themselves, obtain invaluable experiences, perform meaningful work, and forge contacts and relationships that will serve them throughout their careers. As a general matter, fellowship funding is provided for a fixed period (usually one to two years). Fellows may have the opportunity to stay on at the organization as a staff attorney, however. Regardless, fellowships are valuable opportunities that open many doors.

Types of Fellowships¹

There are many different types of fellowships. Fellowships fall into five general categories, which are outlined below. Note that the first two categories (organization-based fellowships and project-based fellowships) are the most common.

Organization-Based Fellowships

Some nonprofit organizations administer their own fellowships. Essentially, these are junior attorney positions within a legal organization that last for a finite time. Fellows receive a stipend directly from the organization, and the organization determines the fellow's salary and benefits and the duration and scope of the work. The fellowships vary as to eligibility and advantage—some prefer recent graduates or judicial clerks, while others welcome applications from 3Ls. These are the most common types of fellowships.

To apply, candidates go through a formal process directly with the organization. Deadlines fall throughout the year. Potential applicants should begin checking postings on [PSJD](#) (the Public Service Jobs Directory) in the spring of 2L year and should set up email alerts for new postings. Many fellowships are also on [Symblicity](#). The Office for Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers (PI/PS Office) also lists fellowships in our [organization-based fellowship tracker](#). And of course, organizations also post fellowships directly on their websites. We recommend you regularly monitor each of these resources.

¹ Please be aware that not all fellowships qualify for Columbia Law School's Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP). For example, fellowships for non-legal work and academic fellowships that do not include substantial law teaching may not qualify. If you plan to apply for LRAP, check with the Office of Financial Aid before accepting a fellowship.

Examples:

- Center for Appellate Litigation Fellowship (criminal defense appeals)
- Center for Reproductive Rights Fellowship (women's rights)
- Equal Justice Initiative Fellowship (capital defense, mass incarceration, racial justice)
- George N. Lindsay Fellowship at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (voting rights, employment, criminal justice, education, housing, community development)
- Human Rights Watch Fellowship (international human rights)
- Karpatkin Fellowship at the ACLU National Legal Office (racial justice)

Project-Based Fellowships

Some foundations provide fellowships for applicants to partner with a “host” nonprofit organization of their choice to work on a specific project. The project is developed in partnership with the host organization. Thus, the applicant will secure a host organization first (more on that later), and then apply to the funder with the project they have identified with their host. In addition to evaluating the applicant, the funder assesses the host, the project idea, and how well these pieces fit together. These fellowships usually are open to current 3Ls and judicial clerks but also vary as to whether they prefer/allow 3Ls, clerks, or recent graduates to apply.

The term of the fellowship is finite (usually one to two years), and the funder generally disburses the stipend to the host organization, which in turn pays the fellow. Different funders have different rules as to whether the funder or the host organization provides benefits to the fellow.

Funders typically have limits on the types of projects they will fund—for example, funding may be limited to certain issues or approaches (like direct legal service poverty work) or to work taking place in a specific location. Applicants must evaluate their projects against these restrictions.

An applicant may present a host with their own project idea if it is in line with the organization's mission. Many organizations, however, have their own project ideas and are looking for candidates to carry them out. Ideally, projects are developed with input from both the candidate and the host organization. Be aware that organizations may have a formal application process for selecting a candidate to host. Check [PSJD](#), [Symplicity](#), and the organization's website for that information.

Note that applications for project-based fellowships require several steps, and some have early deadlines (for example, in September). We strongly encourage interested students to meet with

the PI/PS Office during the spring of 2L year and attend relevant information sessions. We will work with you throughout the summer. Contact the PI/PS Office's [director of public interest professional development](#) if you intend to apply for project-based fellowships.

Examples:

- David W. Leebron Human Rights Fellowship
- Equal Justice Works (EJW) Fellowship
- Kirkland & Ellis Fellowship
- Skadden Fellowship
- Soros Justice Fellowship
- Justice Catalyst Fellowship

Law Firm-Hosted Fellowships (Not Project-Based)

Some law firms offer fellowships in which they pay the fellow to work in the public interest.

Public Interest Law Firms

A fellow may be hired by a public interest law firm to work for a limited term directly on its docket, which is usually made up of civil rights-related cases.

Examples:

- Neufeld Scheck & Brustin, LLP
- Cochran Fellowship
- Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP Fellowship
- Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC Fellowship

Corporate Law Firm with a Public Interest Docket

A corporate law firm may hire a fellow for a limited term to work on its pro bono docket.

Examples:

- Gibbons Law Firm John J. Gibbons Fellowship in Public Interest and Constitutional Law
- Hunton & Williams Pro Bono Fellowship

Law Firm-Funded Public Interest Fellowship

A fellow may be hired to work for a limited time as a staff attorney at a public interest organization but be paid by a firm. The fellow may also be expected to work for the firm for a period.

Examples:

- BLBG Fellowship
- Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson/NAACP LDF, MALDEF Fellowship
- Norton Rose Fulbright Fellowship at The Door Legal Services Center

Academic Fellowships

Academic fellowships assist candidates seeking graduate degrees or pursuing scholarly or research-oriented projects. Some include a stipend and tuition for the fellow to obtain an LL.M. degree, and some provide teaching experience—in most cases, clinical teaching experience.

Examples:

- Fulbright Scholar Program
- Georgetown University Law Center Fellowships
- Yale Law School Robert M. Cover Fellowship

In addition, many law school clinics throughout the country will hire a “staff attorney” or “clinical fellow” to assist with handling cases and supervising students. Generally, these opportunities require some post-law school experience in the practice area.

Entrepreneurial Grants

Graduates can fund their own projects by starting an organization with seed money, or by applying directly for grants, the way many nonprofit organizations do. Because of limitations on grant-giving to individuals, you may need to find a nonprofit to submit the proposal as your host. To apply directly for grants, see the [Candid \(formerly known as the Foundation Center\) website](#).

Examples:

- Ashoka Fellowship
- The Echoing Green Fellowship

Planning and Timing

Fellowship applications take varying amounts of time to complete, and deadlines fall throughout the year. It is important that give yourself enough time to identify the fellowships of interest,

note deadlines and application requirements, and ready all the pieces you will need to apply. Always double-check an application deadline by looking on the organization's website or by calling to confirm.

Project-based applications are due beginning in September of the year before the fellowship is to begin (although, as the timelines contained in this guide demonstrate, work on these applications should begin in the late spring). Project-based applications involve advance preparation, generally requiring a project description, personal essays, and several letters of recommendation—all this after securing a host organization and identifying and developing a project. If you are planning to apply for a project-based fellowship, it is *strongly* recommended that you start early. Please consult the “Getting Started To-Do List” and “Securing a Host Organization/Networking” sections in this toolkit for more information. Note that Columbia Law School offers several project-based fellowships with deadlines in the late fall and winter, thus allowing you to develop a project and apply after other project-based fellowship applications are due.

If you are exploring project-based fellowships, be sure to contact the PI/PS Office's [director of public interest professional development](#) as soon as possible. They will serve as your primary fellowship adviser throughout the summer.

You do not have to apply for a project-based fellowship. The process is not for everyone.

Organization-based fellowships, which are numerous, have more straightforward applications. These require the typical job application materials: cover letter, resume, transcript, and references, making the application process more familiar. You can apply for as many of these positions as you like throughout the year.

Beginning the Search

Because each fellowship has different application requirements and deadlines, you will want to start your research early and get organized. Beginning in late spring, monitor [PSJD](#) and [Symplectix](#) for fellowship postings. The PI/PS Office also shares fellowship opportunities by email.

PSJD (Public Service Jobs Directory)

[PSJD](#) offers the most comprehensive list of organization-based fellowships and project-based fellowship funders. A good number of organizations seeking to host a fellow for a project-based fellowship also post there.

Finding Fellowship Postings

Select the “Search Jobs” tab, and then, under the “Refine Search” sidebar on the right, “Job Qualities.” Under “Job Type,” you will find the following categories of postgraduate fellowships:

- Organizational (Fellowships administered and funded by the same organization)
- Project-Based (Fellowship funders as well as host organizations seeking candidates with whom to develop a project proposal)
- Clinical/Academic (Fellowships with a teaching component)

To save this search, click the bell icon. We recommend that you opt to receive email alerts!

Other Resources on PSJD

If you select the tab “Explore Advice” and then “Postgraduate Fellowships,” you can access helpful resources, including a calendar of application deadlines. You can also get to the calendar while searching postings—simply click the calendar icon that appears once you’ve chosen fellowships as the job type.

Symplcity

Any notice that is sent to anyone within PI/PS Office is posted on [Symplcity](#).

Organization Websites

Organizations offering fellowships will usually have information and instructions on their website. Organizations seeking to host a fellow may have a posting on their website, but many do not. Finally, funders’ websites (e.g., Skadden, EJW) have a lot of useful information about their fellowships, as well as lists of former fellows, organizations, and project areas.

People

Do not underestimate the value of talking with people, even at the early stages. Alumni, current and former fellows, faculty members, former internship supervisors, and PI/PS Office advisers are all valuable resources available to you. They can connect you with practitioners in your interest areas and help you identify and evaluate organizations and fellowships and develop project ideas.

Questions to Ask

As you conduct research, you will be asking such questions as:

What work do I want to do? Where do I want to be? What kind of project excites me? What are the funder's priorities? What kind of work can I anticipate doing over the course of the fellowship? What level of supervision do I want?

In evaluating a potential host organization, you will want to ask:

Do I like the work of this organization? Can I see myself working there? Are its values and goals compatible with mine? How familiar is the organization with the project-based fellowship application process? Does the organization have specific project ideas? What kinds of projects does the organization have the capacity to support and supervise? Will there be someone to work with me on the application? Is the organization hosting more than one candidate?

And in the process of developing project ideas, you will be asking:

What population or community do I want to work with? What are their current needs? What can I do that will address unmet needs and fit with my skills, experiences, and interests? Will this project help launch the career I hope to have?

Columbia Law School Fellowships

Columbia Law School offers [several fellowships](#) to its students and graduates. It also partners with fellowship funders that designate spots for our students and graduates. They fall into several of the categories described above.

David W. Leebron Human Rights Fellowship

This fellowship enables a J.D. or LL.M. graduate to spend one year working in human rights, either in the United States or abroad, in pursuit of a career in human rights law.

Global Public Service Fellowship

This twelve-month fellowship, available to graduating J.D. and LL.M. students and to alumni who completed their degree within the past two years, supports work with a public service organization, intergovernmental agency, national supreme court, or international court host abroad. Preference is given to organizations based in the Pan-Asia region who are engaged in issues of international law and global consequence. Applications involving environmental work in Asia will be given special consideration.

Herbert and Nell Singer Social Justice Fellowship

A two-year fellowship for a J.D. graduate who demonstrates the commitment, ability, and preparation to make a difference as a public interest lawyer. The fellow may propose a project or serve as a staff attorney at a U.S. nonprofit.

Kirkland & Ellis New York City Public Service Fellowship

This fellowship provides one Columbia J.D. graduate the opportunity for a year of postgraduate public service that meets serious human needs in New York City.

LL.M. Public Interest and Government Fellowships

For LL.M. graduates who demonstrate commitment to, and preparation for, careers in public interest, government, or human rights. Recipients work at a host in the U.S. or abroad.

Mark Haas Public Interest Fellowship

This fellowship supports one to two graduating J.D. or LL.M. students from China to pursue public interest legal work in the U.S. for three to five months.

Millstein Fellowships

These include a fellowship to fund to a recent Columbia Law School J.D. graduate to do legal work on issues related to financial regulation within the U.S. Congress or an Executive Branch agency and another fellowship to fund work on Capitol Hill.

Sandler/Human Rights Watch Fellowship

The Sandler Fellow, a J.D. graduate, spends one year at Human Rights Watch in New York or Washington, DC, monitoring human rights developments in various countries, conducting onsite investigations, drafting reports, and engaging in advocacy to publicize and curtail human rights violations.

Fellowships with Designated Spots for Columbia Law School Graduates:

- **BLBG Fellowship**

This fellowship provides J.D. graduates the opportunity to work in a litigation role at a public interest organization for two years before joining the firm's world class investor-side litigation practice.

- **Excelsior Service Fellowship Program**

This two-year fellowship supports J.D. graduates to work in New York State government alongside senior members of the administration.

- **J.D. Public Interest and Government Fellowships**

J.D. graduates who demonstrate serious commitment to and preparation for careers as public interest lawyers are eligible for these one-year fellowships, which are designed to

allow graduates to gain experience and skills and to provide talented new lawyers to nonprofit organizations and government agencies confronting great demand and diminished resources.

- **Norton Rose Fulbright Fellowship at the Door Legal Services Center**

This fellowship is awarded to one Columbia Law School or NYU graduating J.D. to work at The Door, New York's premier youth development agency, for 16 months.

- **Social Justice Legal Foundation Hueston Hennigan Fellowship**

Hueston Hennigan Fellows, who are J.D. graduates, work for the foundation for two years, receive top caliber training in trial and appellate advocacy from a professional legal team and private law firm mentors, and gain meaningful hands-on trial experience litigating impactful cases with the entrepreneurial spirit and resources of a top law firm.

View additional fellowships on [our fellowships page](#).

Conclusion

Whether you are developing a project-based fellowship, applying to other fellowships, or both, remember to get assistance from the PI/PS Office. We can help you research organizations, contact former fellows and graduates, and organize and edit applications. Please contact the PI/PS Office's [director of public interest professional development](#) for more information.

GETTING STARTED TO-DO LIST

This schedule is geared to 2Ls, but most target dates will apply to other applicants. This is an idealized timeline for planning your project-based fellowship applications. The recommended dates in this timeline are based around the earliest project-based fellowships (Skadden and Equal Justice Works).

2L Spring: Explore and Prepare

- ☐ Meet with the PI/PS Office (but keep in touch with us throughout!) (March/April)
 - ☐ Review the Postgraduate Fellowship Toolkit (March/April)
 - ☐ Research fellowship opportunities. Review fellowship websites, including the [Columbia post-graduate fellowship page](#), network, attend talks, have informational conversations. Draft preliminary list of target fellowships. (May-June)
 - ☐ Research host organizations. Network, attend talks, have informational conversations. Draft preliminary list of potential hosts. See our [tips on how to approach these conversations](#). (May-June)
 - Helpful resources include past employers, faculty suggestions, [PSJD](#), fellow archives on the Skadden and EJW websites, Symplicity, and organization websites.
 - Note formal vs. informal application processes and **any early host deadlines**. Prepare for interviews/meetings.
 - ☐ Review the applications of students who've received fellowships in the past. Contact the PI/PS Office for access. (May-June)
-

2L Summer: Put the Pieces Together

- ☐ Explore current/prior employers as potential hosts (June/July)
- ☐ Brainstorm project proposal(s) (July/early August)
- ☐ Confirm host organization(s) (July/early August)
- ☐ Finalize project proposal(s) (August)
- ☐ Finalize list of early fellowships (Skadden, EJW, etc.) you will apply to (July/August)
- ☐ Line up references. These can include internship supervisors, clinic instructors, and professors. (Early August)

- ☐ Draft application essays (August). *Allow time for review and feedback from PI/PS Office adviser and host!*
 - ☐ Update resume (August)
-

3L Fall: Finalize and Apply

- ☐ Collect reference letters (Late August/early September)
- ☐ Collect host letter(s) (Late August/early September)
- ☐ Finalize application essays (Early September)
- ☐ Finalize all application materials (Early September) *
- ☐ **Submit applications for early fellowships!** (e.g., Skadden, EJW, Justice Catalyst) (September-October)
- ☐ Await feedback and interviews (September-spring)
- ☐ Explore additional project-based fellowships (e.g., Singer, Kirkland & Ellis, Justice Catalyst) and organization-based fellowships (ongoing)

*Typical application materials include:

- Cover letter
- Resume
- Transcript
- Writing sample
- Recommendation letters/reference list
- Personal statement
- Project description
- Host letter

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

You are encouraged to fill out this questionnaire because you have expressed interest in fellowships. It will help you and your fellowship adviser think about whether this is a good option for you and which fellowships would be a good fit. If you are interested in project-based fellowships, the questions will help you think about hosts and projects. Don't worry if you do not have an answer to every question!

If you already know which fellowships interest you, please list them here:

Goals and Values

If you could do anything after graduation, what would it be?

What are your short- and long-term career goals?

General Interests and Experience

How have you spent your time in law school (including summers)? Please list specific activities within each category or write N/A.

1L summer

2L summer

Term-time internships or pro bono projects

Clinics

Externships

Journals

Student organizations

Work for professors

Favorite classes

Moot court

Other

Outside of law school, what hobbies and activities have you been drawn to?

Do you have any relevant work experience prior to law school?

Specific Interests: Legal Area and Population

What substantive area(s) and/or legal issue(s) interest you the most? Why?

What population do you want to serve?

Have you worked with this population prior to or during law school (including summers)?

Advocacy Methods

Which advocacy methods interest you? Check all that apply.

☐ Direct legal services

☐ Grassroots advocacy/community organizing

☐ Impact litigation

☐ Legislative/regulatory work

☐ Policy

☐ Media

Other:

Have you used any of these tools in your prior work experience? How and where?

Location

What geographic regions are you open to working in? Check all that apply.

☐ Specific city/state/country/region:

☐ Domestic

☐ International

☐ Urban

☐ Rural

☐ Other:

Type of Organization/Work Environment

What qualities are important to you?

How do you want to spend your time on a day-to-day basis? Check all that apply.

☐ Research and writing

☐ Investigative reporting, documentation

☐ Interviewing and representing clients

☐ Oral advocacy

☐ Drafting legal educational materials/policy manuals

☐ Organizing grassroots efforts

Other:

Do you have experience with any of these activities? Where?

Would you be interested in returning to any of the organizations at which you previously worked, either for a project-based or an organization-based fellowship? If so, which organization(s)?

What other organizations interest you?

Next Steps

The following people might be helpful for me to speak with:

I want to find out more about:

:

THE APPLICATION

All fellowship applications are different, and so careful attention must be paid to the specific goals of each fellowship and the requirements and components of each application. In addition to reading the application instructions, it is helpful to speak with the PI/PS Office and former fellows to gather other useful information. Overall, think about your application as a piece of advocacy: its purpose is to convey why you are the right person for this project or work and, if you are proposing a project, that the project addresses an important need and is realistic within the time frame given.

Some Preliminary Considerations

Are You Qualified?

This is an essential question asked in all fellowship applications, but different funders set different qualifications, and emphasize them differently. Some fellowships value grades and other indicia of academic success; some even prefer that a candidate complete a clerkship first. Others put greater emphasis on relevant experience and demonstrated commitment to the issue or client population. Again, conversations with the PI/PS Office and former fellows are helpful in assessing how your qualifications are likely to be viewed, and what you should highlight.

Are You Committed to the Work and the Goals of the Organization?

All fellowship funders look for commitment. But what exactly is commitment? Essentially it is a demonstration of deep caring for the issues and goals of the fellowship, as well as a thoughtful articulation of why you want the fellowship and how you have developed the necessary skills and knowledge to carry it out. Prior work with the fellowship organization, experience with the legal issues and/or client population through clinics, externships, coursework, summers, pro bono and even pre-law school involvements are good ways to demonstrate this commitment. Some connection or familiarity with the community you wish to serve is often extremely valuable. Your cover letter or personal statements will pull together your experiences (which may be personal, academic, and work-related) to present a cohesive “journey” and compelling narrative.

Components of an Application Package

Different fellowship funders may request different materials, and applicants are expected to follow the instructions precisely. Many organization-based fellowships require the same materials as job applications: cover letter, resume, law school transcript, writing sample, and recommendation letters or a reference list. Project-based fellowships require additional materials such as: a

personal statement(s), a project description, and a letter from your host organization. The PI/PS Office has past sample application packages available for you to review.

Note that it is extremely important that your materials be free of errors and conform to application requirements and restrictions. Your materials and those from your recommenders and hosts must be consistent and relevant and address the priorities of the funder. It is always the case that putting the application package together takes more time than anticipated.

For project-based fellowship applications, your application should provide information and support for the following:

- The project is consistent with the funder's goals and priorities.
- There is a significant need that can be addressed by your project.
- You have a connection to the work/community/issues involved in your project
- Your project proposes a feasible way to meet the need.
- You have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to carry out the project.
- The project has support within the community/from existing organizations.
- Your project is different from the work of a staff attorney.
- Your host organization has the capacity to provide good supervision and support for your project.
- The fellowship period will provide enough time for your project to succeed and have an impact.

ESSAYS, PERSONAL STATEMENTS, AND COVER LETTERS

You may be asked to provide a personal statement. If not, you will certainly write a cover letter. These are opportunities to highlight and explain your commitment and abilities to the work you will do as a fellow. This can be difficult, and it is often helpful to talk through your ideas with your fellowship adviser. The key is to articulate why you are committed to this work, and how your experiences, skills, knowledge, abilities, and commitment will enable you to excel as a fellow. What has motivated YOU to do this work? Think about a personal narrative that pulls together your experiences and how they have impacted you. Sometimes a personal anecdote or story can be effective in expressing why you care about an issue or community.

For project-based fellowships, your project proposal is central. Whether you begin by identifying an organization you are interested in, an issue you want to address, or a community you want to work with, the details of the project itself will be developed by collaboration between you and your host organization. The proposal itself will need to convey a lot of information in a concise way. This requires spending a good amount of time developing the project and working on details with your host organization, seeking guidance, information, and ideas from former fellows and relevant experts, and going through several written drafts.

APPLICATION ATTACHMENT CHECKLIST

The required submissions for fellowship applications vary. Each will clearly state the required components, and you will need to make sure to comply strictly. In addition to essays and, for project-based fellowships, a project proposal and materials from the host organization, most fellowships also require resumes, references, and transcripts. Below are some helpful tips for these parts of the application.

Resumes

- You should use the [Public Interest Job Search Toolkit](#) for general guidance on resumes.² We have included a resume “checklist” and sample resumes for reference in this guide.
- Make sure to update your resume to include your 2L summer internship, as well as 2L and 3L (done or certain to be done, not speculative) clinics, externships, pro bono work, student group leadership positions, and so forth. In other words, add any experiences (including non-legal work) relevant to the work you are applying to do and that you may have omitted from earlier versions of your resume (but be clear in indicating timeframes).
- Focus on the descriptions of your public interest work and community service activities. You want to give a detailed picture of your commitment, your experience with and knowledge of the work you are proposing to do, the skills you will use, and the community you propose to work with. Make sure you have highlighted the experience and skills more relevant to your proposed project and the priorities of the funder.
- Make sure your international experience is framed in terms that will appeal to domestic employers (or vice versa).
- For fellowships, it is generally fine if your resume goes beyond the typical one page, but we recommend that you consult with your adviser.
- Make sure that there are no typos!

Transcripts

- Some applications require transcripts. Official copies can be obtained through University Registration Services, but some applications will allow you to use an unofficial copy.
- Some funders care about grades; others want to see the classes you took.

Letters of Recommendation/References

- Most fellowships require letters of recommendation. Some funders also contact references by phone.

² Available on our job search tools page, law.columbia.edu/careers/public-interest/job-search-tools.

- Applications may require that at least one recommender be an employer; others want at least one law professor. If this is not specified, aim for a mix of law school professors (preferably from clinics or externships) and legal employers (such as a summer job or pro bono supervisor). Make sure your references know you well and have a good sense of your experience, goals, and skills. It is better to use a recommender who knows you well than one who has a fancy title or a high profile in the field but does not know you as well.
- Make sure your references are willing to serve as (and will be good) references. This includes being someone who will submit the letter before the deadline.
- Be clear whether you need written references, or oral references, or both.
- Discuss with your recommender the fellowship you are applying for, the work you will be doing, and why you are eager to do it. Provide references with a copy of your resume. Follow up, IN WRITING, with the name and details of the fellowship and your project and host organization if applicable. Remind them of the work you did for them; prepare key points (a bulleted, easy-to-read list) that you would like them to highlight in the reference.
- For written references, give clear instructions about where and when the letters should be sent. Some fellowships require electronic submission of references, while others want hard copies. Some require that the letters be submitted with the rest of the application materials.
- Give plenty of lead time—do not wait until the last minute.
- Some references will ask you to draft a letter that they will edit. This is a common practice, and you should agree to do it. Use the bulleted list you prepared as your starting point but ask for feedback from a PI/PS Office adviser to be sure you are positive and effusive enough about your accomplishments.

Letter from Host Organization

Project-based fellowships applications will invariably call for a letter from your host organizations (sometimes referred to as the employer's letter of support). Some employers will be familiar with crafting this kind of letter, and some will not. You should discuss this letter with those you are working with at your organization to make sure that the letter will contribute all that it can to your application.

Ideally the letter should address—and provide support for—the need for the proposed project, the organization's position and capacity to host the project and supervise you, and why you are exceptionally well-suited both to carry out the project and to work within the organization.

The following is a checklist of details that the employer should include in its letter of support (though not necessarily in this order).

Information About the Employer

- What the organization does (its work, goals, and methods).
- The role of the individual writing the letter within the organization (and the individual's relevant experience).
- If applicable, that the organization has hosted fellows previously.
- Why the organization is the perfect host for this project (the organization's knowledge base, place within the community, history, and expertise).
- That the organization would not otherwise be able to undertake this work.
- The organization's capacity and capability to provide excellent supervision.

Information About You (the Applicant)

- The applicant's history with the organization (if applicable)
- The organization's opinion that you are especially well-suited to carry out this project (and work within this organization) and the basis of this conclusion.

Information About the Project

- The need for the project broadly (What problem will it address? Why is it timely? What will be accomplished within the fellowship period? What impact will it have?)
- A description of how the project will be distinct from or will supplement the work the organization is currently doing. It might also address how the project is distinct from work of other organizations in the same field.
- Clear indication that the applicant and the organization have a full and mutual understanding about the goals and parameters of the project.
- How the fellow (and the project) will be supervised and integrated into the organization.
- If applicable, how the fellow (and the project) will be part of a larger advocacy community and will work in collaboration with community partners.

To produce a strong letter, the writer therefore must be familiar with the project proposal, knowledgeable about why it is needed, and able to articulate why you are the right person to carry it out. The writer may be someone you worked with to develop the project proposal, but sometimes not. Be sure the writer has your resume and has reviewed drafts of the project proposal.

To further assist with the letter, applicants should provide written guidance outlining:

- Information about and key priorities of the funder.
- Key projects that you have worked on for the employer.
- Key items from your resume, work history or personal background that you believe are particularly relevant or would be useful for the employer to mention.
- Other information you think should be referenced in the letter.

RESUME CHECKLIST AND SAMPLE RESUMES

FORMAT

- ☐ The resume is one page in length or, if appropriate, two pages
- ☐ Eleven- or 12-pt font such as Times New Roman or Garamond with generous margins (no smaller than .7 inches all around)
- ☐ NO typos or grammatical errors
- ☐ No underlining or bullet points
- ☐ Format is similar to our samples
- ☐ Resume is not cluttered and is easy to read

CONTENT

- ☐ The resume has a top header and “Education” and “Experience” sections
- ☐ Your contact information is professional and up to date
- ☐ The resume is tailored to the fellowship/host organization you’re applying to
- ☐ All relevant jobs, volunteer work, and activities are included
- ☐ You have included pro bono, internships, externships, clinics, journals, campus organizations, and research for a professor
- ☐ There is no “Interests” section (unless special circumstances exist) or “Objectives” section
- ☐ You have not included computer skills, classes (except clinics), or grades (except honors)
- ☐ High school information has been removed (see a PI/PS Office adviser for special circumstances)
- ☐ You have included “Languages,” “Bar Membership,” and “Publications” if applicable.

Sample 3L Resume

GERALD DAVINGNON

222 West 121st Street, Apt. 3K, New York, NY 10027
(212) 555-6677 • ghd323@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY

J.D., expected May 2022

Honors: *Columbia Law Review*, Senior Editor
Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar (for academic achievement): fall 2019, spring 2020
Activities: Rightslink
Human Rights Internship Program
Capital Appeals Project (death penalty relief trip, March 2020)

Columbia University, New York, NY

B.A., received May 2017

Major: Economics and Political Science
Honors: Dean's List
King's Crown Leadership Award
Activities: Middle East Initiative, Co-founder (Arab-Jewish discussion group)

International School of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

Bilingual International Baccalaureate Diploma, received August 2017

EXPERIENCE

Center for Constitutional Rights, New York, NY Summer 2021

Summer Intern

Researched and wrote memoranda on immigrants' due process rights, governmental infringement of the Fourth Amendment, racial discrimination patterns in law enforcement, and various issues arising out of international human rights litigation in U.S. courts.

National Coalition for Haitian Rights, Port-au-Prince, Haiti Summer 2020

Summer Intern

Assisted activists and lawyers in monitoring the judiciary, police, and other governmental institutions. Organized basic legal and human rights education seminars for members of grassroots organizations. Investigated abuses of Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican Republic.

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, New York, NY/ Beirut, Lebanon 2019-2020

Intern

Trained youths in the use of video equipment and interviewing techniques at the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon for *Witness*, a LCHR film project. Helped gather testimony.

U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, Switzerland Summer 2017

Intern

Researched and wrote on North-South inter-firm cooperation in the construction industry and its effects on technology transfer and development.

LANGUAGES Fluent in Arabic and French.

Sample 3L Resume

J. Collins

2 Prospect Place, # 8, Brooklyn, NY 11217 • (555) 555-5555 • jc3232@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY

J.D., expected May 2022

Activities: Environmental Law Moot Court
Harlem Tutorial Program
Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, Chicago, IL

M.A. in Social Sciences, received May 2013

HARVARD COLLEGE, Cambridge, MA

B.A., *cum laude*, in Social Studies, received May 2012

Activities: Director of Operations, Harvard Square Homeless Shelter

EXPERIENCE

IMMIGRATION CLINIC

Student Participant

New York, NY

Fall 2021

MFY LEGAL SERVICES

Intern

New York, NY

Summer 2021

Conducted intake interviews, staffed weekly clinic at supported housing sites. Assisted attorneys in civil matters, including housing, public benefits, and workers' compensation claims. Drafted portions of brief in suit claiming insufficient services in federally funded nursing home.

FUND FOR MODERN COURTS

Intern

New York, NY

Summer 2020

Assist in lobbying and coalition-building efforts for structural reform of New York's judicial system. Wrote a report identifying areas in which that court failed to comply with New York court regulations.

PROFESSOR RICHARD BRIFFAULT, COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Research Assistant

New York, NY

Summer 2020

Researched state-level campaign finance and lobbying regulations.

LAMP COMMUNITY

Development Consultant

Los Angeles, CA

Summer 2016-Winter 2017

Coordinated fundraising efforts for a non-profit corporation in the Skid Row area of downtown Los Angeles providing housing and supportive services to mentally ill homeless people.

SRO HOUSING CORPORATION

Case Manager

Los Angeles, CA

Fall 2013-Spring 2015

Assisted homeless and very low-income senior citizens in their efforts to secure permanent housing and access social services. Generated and submitted reports documenting aid provided.

Sample 3L Resume

DOUGLAS POVINELLI

22 West 102nd Street, Apartment 4C, New York, NY 10025
(917) 677-7777 • douglas.povinelli@law.columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia University School of Law, New York, NY

J.D., expected May 2022

Honors: James Kent Scholar 2019-2020 (for outstanding academic achievement)
Emil Schlesinger Labor Prize (for student most proficient in the subject of labor law)
Class of 1912 Prize (for first-year student most proficient in the subject of contracts)
Activities: Unemployment Action Center

Columbia University, Columbia College, New York, NY

B.A., summa cum laude, received May 2018

Honors: Phi Beta Kappa, inducted junior year (for the top two percent of the graduating class)
Dean's List, all semesters
Columbia University Named Scholarship
Activities: Columbia University Student Health Outreach, Coordinator

EXPERIENCE

Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP, New York, NY

Summer Associate, May-July 2021

Conducted research and wrote memos on a variety of tax law questions, with a particular focus on the taxation of real estate and real estate transactions. Wrote a report on proposed Treasury Regulations for the NYS Bar Association. Conducted research for a matter litigated before Tax Court.

South Brooklyn Legal Services, Foreclosure Prevention Project, Brooklyn, NY

Summer Intern, June-August 2020

Drafted motions on behalf of foreclosure defendants. Conducted research and wrote memos on predatory lending and related real property questions for ongoing litigation in both state and federal court. Advocated for clients facing foreclosure by calling lenders to negotiate loan modifications. Staffed a walk-in clinic at Brooklyn Supreme Court and advised clients of their rights before and during foreclosure.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, New York, NY

Health Care Advocate, June 2018-August 2019

Advised clients of legal rights with respect to public benefits and tenant-landlord disputes. Represented clients who were erroneously denied benefits at administrative hearings. Enrolled individuals into public health insurance programs. Assisted clients in applying for food stamps, Medicare Savings Programs, Unemployment Insurance Benefits, Public Assistance, and other public benefits. Conducted self-help workshops on public benefits.

Food Bank for New York City, New York, NY

Policy Intern, May-August 2016, May-August 2017

Prepared agency directors for testimonies before the New York City Council on summer meals and obesity. Researched and coauthored policy papers that proposed legislative and community-based approaches to hunger relief. Facilitated meetings of emergency food providers and elected officials to discuss implementing hunger policy.

Sample Graduate Resume

MARY CUMMINGS BROWN

200 New Jersey Ave., NW, Apt. 12E, Washington, DC 20001
marybrown@gmail.com | (202) 222-2222

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY

J.D., received May 2019

Honors: Pauline Berman Heller Prize Fund (highest-ranked female graduating law student)
Best Oral Argument, 1L Moot Court Competition
Columbia Law Review, Notes Editor
Activities: Law Students for Reproductive Justice

YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, CT

B.A., received May 2016

Honors: Degree awarded *cum laude* and with departmental honors in Art History
Activities: *Yale Daily News*, Staff Reporter

EXPERIENCE

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

Washington, DC

Staff Attorney

2019 – present

Draft amicus briefs for pending Supreme Court cases and federal court cases on a variety of women's health and employment issues. Draft testimony for legislative hearings, including *Violence Against Women Act* reauthorization hearings. Present updated state-by-state analysis of contraceptive equity laws, and draft edits to consumer guide entitled "Contraceptive Equity Laws in Your State: Know Your Rights – Use Your Rights" (available on website at <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/concovstateguide2009.pdf>).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROSECUTION EXTERNSHIP

New York, NY

Assistant DA (under special student practice order)

Spring 2019

Handled own prosecution of misdemeanor domestic violence cases at Queens Family Justice Center, in conjunction with Columbia Law School externship placement at Queens District Attorney's Office.

CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

New York, NY

Legal Intern

Summer 2018

Researched evidentiary issues for challenge to state law requiring pregnant women to view ultrasounds prior to scheduling abortions. Drafted memo assessing potential legal challenge to recently introduced state fetal personhood law. Participated in national conference calls on state and federal legislative issues.

LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

New York, NY

Legal Intern

Summer 2017

Drafted memoranda and assisted the General Counsel on a broad range of legal issues, including entertainment law, intellectual property law, labor and employment law, and trusts and estates.

BAR MEMBERSHIP

Admitted to NY and DC Bars. Member of DC Bar Committee on Gender and the Law.

Sample Graduate Resume

SAMIR PATEL

202 West 99th Street, New York, NY 10024 | sjp@gmail.com | 202-228-2297

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, New York, NY

J.D., received May 2018

Honors: Kent Scholar 2015-2016 (for outstanding academic achievement)
Stone Scholar 2016-2017 (for superior academic achievement)
Hamilton Fellowship (merit-based full tuition scholarship)

Activities: *Columbia Journal of European Law* (member of editorial board)
Student Senate (Graduation Co-chair)

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, Washington, DC

B.A., *magna cum laude*, in History and English, received May 2015

Honors: Phi Alpha Theta, National History Honors Society

Activities: *The Georgetown Voice* (staff writer)

EXPERIENCE

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF NEW YORK

New York, NY

Recent Law School Graduate Fellowship

Summer 2018-present

Brief senior staff in preparation for congressional hearing; analyze Dodd-Frank rule proposals; assist in the implementation of transparency initiatives; help craft legislative proposals for aiding underwater mortgage holders.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Washington, DC

Law Clerk, Bureau of Consumer Protection

Summer 2017

Surveyed state law on fair hiring practices; prepared training memo on the commission's consumer protection jurisdictional constraints; surveyed emerging legal concerns with social networking websites.

NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT

New York, NY

Extern, Administrative Law Division

Spring 2017

Wrote answers to Article 78 petitions for the NYPD Licensing Division and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; researched a variety of agency practices; prepared documents for court submission.

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Raleigh, NC

Legal Intern, Consumer Protection Division

Summer 2016

Interviewed consumers and wrote declarations; drafted CIDs; participated in e-discovery; prepared legal memoranda on issues of federal law; filed consent decrees at state courthouse; wrote criminal appellate brief regarding plea bargaining.

BAR ADMISSIONS

Admitted in New York State and Southern District of New York

Portion of Resume with Joint Degree: Option 1

ERIC ANDERS

105 W. 120th St., Apt. 2n, New York, NY 10027
212.699.9999 • Eric.Anders@law.columbia.edu

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY

J.D., expected May 2022

Activities: American Constitution Society Moot Court
Columbia Human Rights Law Review
Columbia Society of International Law

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, Princeton, NJ

M.P.A., expected May 2022

Concentration: International Relations

RICE UNIVERSITY, Houston, TX

B.A., *magna cum laude*, received June 2018

Activities: Semester Abroad at University of London
Big Brothers Big Sisters Program

Thesis: *The Remaining Resistance: The Role of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle*

Portion of Resume with Joint Degree: Option 2

ERIC ANDERS

105 W. 120th St., Apt. 2n, New York, NY 10027
212.699.9999 • Eric.Anders@law.columbia.edu

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL/PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, New York, NY/ Princeton, NJ

Joint J.D./Master of Public Affairs Degree, expected May 2022

Concentration: International Relations

Activities: American Constitution Society Moot Court
Columbia Human Rights Law Review
Columbia Society of International Law

RICE UNIVERSITY, Houston, TX

B.A., *magna cum laude*, received June 2019

Activities: Semester Abroad at University of London
Big Brothers Big Sisters Program

Thesis: *The Remaining Resistance: The Role of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle*

Portion of Sample Resume with Permanent Address

SOLOMON A. KING

Solomon.King@law.columbia.edu • (347) 847-9923

Current Address:

400 West 120th Street, Apt. 9
New York, NY 10027

Permanent Address:

31 Weaver Drive
Philadelphia, PA 99999

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY

J.D., expected May 2022

Activities: Public Interest Law Foundation
Student Senate
ACLU

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, Charlottesville, VA

B.A. with distinction, received May 2017

Major: Political Science
Honors: Holland Scholar (full-tuition scholarship)
Activities: College Democrats

EXPERIENCE

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

New York, NY

Extern, Civil Rights Bureau

Spring 2022

Assisted lawyers in Civil Rights Bureau through Columbia Law School's externship program. Investigated potential claim concerning an employer's denial of a request for religious accommodation. Performed legal research about ADA's public accommodation provision pertaining to polling site.

PROF. MATTHEW WAXMAN, COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

New York, NY

Research Assistant

Summer 2021

Researched U.S. national security intelligence and surveillance restrictions. Researched and edited content for casebook on privacy issues and 4th Amendment jurisprudence in light of new digital technologies.

TEACH FOR AMERICA

Oregon City, OR

Kindergarten Teacher

Summer 2017- Spring 2019

Taught 30 students to exceed one year's growth in reading and mastery of key state benchmarks in math. Established after-school program and new reading programs.

Portion of Resume for Transfer Student

AKEYLA HARRISON

222 Riverside Drive, #2, New York, NY 10026
212-227-9153 • akeyla.harrison@law.columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY

J.D. expected May 2022

Honors: Human Rights Internship Program

Activities: Harlan Fiske Stone Moot Court Society

Columbia Journal of Environmental Law, Submissions Editor

Note: Legal Measures to Curtail Global Warming, 22 *CJEL* (2022) (forthcoming)

Brooklyn Law School, Brooklyn, NY

September 2019-May 2020 (then transferred)

Honors: Phi Delta Phi Honor Society

Activities: Black Law Students Association

Health Law and Policy Association

McGill University, Montreal, Canada

B.A. with great distinction, received May 2017

Honors: Edward Beatty Scholarship

Activities: Greenpeace University Chapter, President

QPIRG, Board of Directors

Simply Sweetly Choir

EXPERIENCE

Environmental Law Clinic, Columbia Law School

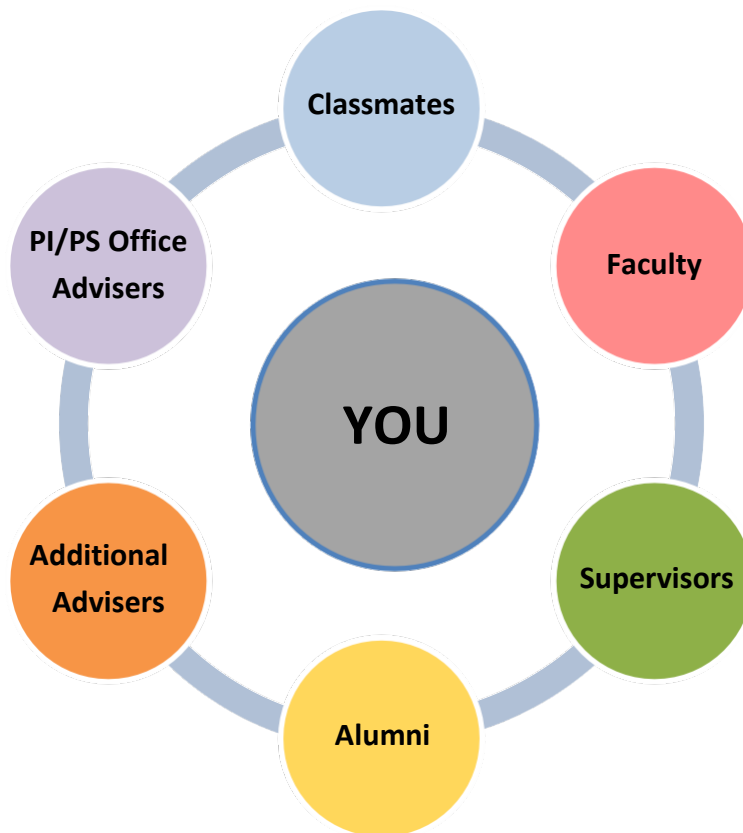
New York, NY

Student Participant

Fall 2021

Researched environmental impact (including pollution and waste) of proposed expansion of slaughterhouse in Brooklyn on low-income communities and communities of color. Advised residents of their rights and resources.

BUILDING YOUR TEAM AND FINDING YOUR HOST ORGANIZATION



If you plan to apply for a project-based fellowship, you will need to devote a significant amount of time and energy to securing a host organization and developing a project idea. Most likely you will be thinking about both at the same time.

Some students begin this process with a specific project idea—usually growing out of work done with a clinic or externship, or during a summer job—and some students do not. If you can identify the population you are interested in serving, or an area of law in which you have been and want to continue working, you can get started.

It is most important to remember that you are not expected to do all this alone. As noted earlier, you will be “building your team” as you go through this process. Your team will be help-

ful in a range of ways from the early stages to the end—from suggesting fellowships, organizations, and issues that might be of interest to you and developing project ideas, to helping you prepare for interviews and evaluate options.

At the outset, as you begin to think about project ideas and organizations, you will identify resources to help you. The specific resources you use will depend on your individual interests, experiences, and goals. Of course, begin by talking with your fellowship adviser. Together you will develop some initial strategies, likely along these four avenues:

1. Approaching a previous employer or supervisor, or your 2L summer organization. If you are interested in working with them, ask about their fellowship process, and what they might be looking for.
2. Monitoring [PSJD](#) and [Simplicity](#) for postings from organizations looking to host an applicant for a project.
3. Identifying other people who might be helpful at this stage (such as alumni, former fellows, clinical professors, and faculty).
4. Identify current issues in your areas of interest. Talk with practicing lawyers about the current needs of the clients and communities they serve.

Whether or not you have a host organization, consulting with others is an important element of *all* fellowship applications. This enables you to:

- Learn about current issues, needs, and “hot topics.”
- Meet practitioners in a field.
- Begin formulating project ideas.
- Get the “inside scoop” on an organization or funder (especially if you network with former fellows).

It is also often fun and inspiring to meet people doing the work you want to do.

How Do You Build Your Team?

There are various ways to do this. The easiest way is to talk to your contacts (such as your PI/PS Office fellowship adviser, other PI/PS Office staff, former employers, supervisors for pro bono, internship, and externship positions, Columbia professors, and so forth) about your interests and fellowship goals. You should also try at law school or summer intern events to meet any speakers or panelists of interest to you. In turn, those individuals may be able to give you advice and information about an organization and/or introduce you to individuals at that organization or others in the field.

You can also do your own research to find organizations or individuals doing work you are interested in. For example, you can:

- Look at organizational profiles in [PSJD](#), the PI/PS Office Public Interest Database on [LawNet](#) (under “Student Services”), and other informational databases.
- Check out the list of [postgraduate fellowship recipients](#) on Columbia’s website to find current and former fellows and their host organizations.
- Use the PI/PS Office’s Alumni Fellowship Advisory Committee to connect with past fellowships who have agreed to advise current applicants. Contact the [director of public interest professional development](#) for access.
- Review job postings on [PSJD](#) and [Symblicity](#) (both include postings for organizations looking to host fellows).
- Use LinkedIn and your existing network of friends and colleagues.
- Look at lists of previous fellows on fellowship websites.
- Search the internet for legal issues or organizations that interest you.

Your fellow students can be a good resource. Some may have had summer internships at organizations of interest. Current and former fellows are usually happy to share their experience and insights with applicants as well.

Unless you are committed to a particular geographic area, consider organizations or practitioners in a range of locations (keeping in mind the parameters of the fellowships you are considering).

Setting Up a Meeting

Once you have a list of organizations to explore and/or individuals to contact, your next step is setting up meetings. Although it may feel awkward, the process is quite straightforward: it simply requires contacting individuals at organizations or in fields you are interested in and asking to meet with them. You might be surprised to find how receptive and helpful public interest lawyers can be!

Remember, you are not asking for a job; you are seeking knowledge and ideas so that you can pursue work you both deeply care about.

We tend to think of two different kinds of meetings:

- One is intended to explore the possibility of that organization hosting you for a fellowship application, along with learning the organization’s interests and priorities. As mentioned, sometimes there is a formal application process you must go through (in which case your formal application materials will be more in sync with what the

organization is looking for), but sometimes there is not. In either event, you want to think of this kind of meeting as something like a job interview.

- The other kind of meeting is to gather background information; that is, your goal is more to learn about the issues you are interested in or to get recommendations of offices to explore, rather than to secure a fellowship host. These kinds of meetings might be less formal but remember that worlds are small—you still want to prepare and make a good impression. Anyone you speak with can connect you with or make an informal recommendation to someone else. For these reasons, Columbia faculty, PI/PS Office advisers, supervisors who already know you, students, and sometimes alumni are the best places to start.

Once you identify an organization of interest and are ready to reach out, the next question is who to contact. If you have a specific contact at an organization (either because you know the person or someone has suggested the person to you), then reach out directly to that individual. If you don't, consult your PI/PS Office fellowship adviser. You might also look at the staff list of the organization and figure out who is likely to be the best person to approach by considering expertise, role in the organization, and their affiliations (such as Columbia alumni). It is fine to contact someone with whom you have no direct connection. That person may not be interested in meeting with you, but there is no harm in trying. Even if the person you contact is not available to meet with you, they may direct you to someone else—for example, there may be a more appropriate person at the organization to talk to about fellowships, or they may know someone at another organization seeking to host a fellow.

When you have identified the person to contact, you should send an email to request a meeting. Look at the attached sample for guidance but remember that you should frame your correspondence so that it reflects who you are. There is not one “right” way to draft your request; however, you should follow these simple guidelines—while not making the email too lengthy:

- ☐ Introduce yourself and clearly state the purpose of your email (i.e., you are looking for a host organization for a fellowship or looking to discuss their work for your project).
- ☐ If you know which fellowship(s) you plan to apply for, identify them.
- ☐ If applicable, mention who referred you or any other mutual acquaintance or relationship. If you have previously met the person you are writing to (such as at a law school event), mention the context.
- ☐ If you have not met or spoken with anyone at the organization, explain how you discovered or became interested in the organization.
- ☐ Briefly convey your background/experience in the field. Consider mentioning project ideas (if you have any) to show you have thought about it—but don't sound too wedded to them.

- ☐ Explain that you would like to meet or speak with them. (This can be in person or by Zoom, or phone.)
- ☐ It is often a good idea to attach your resume to the email.

Please note: if you are responding to a posting by an organization that indicates they are looking to host a fellowship applicant, you should not follow the steps outlined here, but instead should respond to the posting more formally (i.e., with a resume and cover letter indicating your interest). Include any other application materials as required. Alert your networking contacts that you are applying for the opening (in case they have contacts there). If you know anyone on staff at that organization, let them know about your application. And, of course, consult with your fellowship adviser. Some organizations will ask also for a project proposal. This is often challenging because you may not know the organization well. Also, you want to offer a thoughtful proposal, while at the same time conveying flexibility. Your adviser will be able to help with this.

Preparing to Meet

Especially for your meetings with potential fellowship hosts, preparation is key. These meetings could be structured like formal job interviews (for example, if the organization posted a job listing for a fellow) or could be more informal (for example, in response to your request for a meeting). Sometimes a meeting can be both formal and informal. You need to be prepared for both scenarios.

Remember: you have a fellowship adviser, and you should consult them!

In either kind of meeting, you want to get across your knowledge of the area of law, as well as your familiarity with the work of their organization (and with the person you are meeting with, if possible). Be prepared to answer questions about your interest in their field and their organization specifically, as well as about your experience, your goals, and so forth. Also, be prepared to explain why you want to do a fellowship and why you are interested in that organization. (That is, why you want to devote yourself to the organization's efforts; not why you believe this fellowship will be good for you.) Come in ready to offer some potential project ideas and to discuss your application plans. You may be asked whether you are applying for more than one fellowship and whether you are approaching other organizations to be your host as well. Be honest!

To prepare for interviews, read everything you can about the organization and its work – and about the field in general. Review the [Public Interest Job Search Toolkit](#) section on public interest interviewing and practice the sample questions. If you have not interviewed recently, consider setting up a mock interview with PI/PS Office staff. Additionally, come with questions to ask your interviewer(s), such as:

- Do you have any current fellows? What are they working on?
- Have you hosted fellows in the past? What did they work on? (Note: if the organization has never had a fellow, you may need to educate them about the benefits and commitments of having a fellow, as well as the process and basic timelines for applying for a fellowship.)
- Are there particular fellowships you are interested in having an applicant apply for?
- What are you looking for in a fellow?
- Does your organization have needs, goals, or projects which you would like to see (or which could be addressed) in a fellowship proposal?
- Who would supervise me if I was a fellow here?
- What kind of training do you offer to new attorneys or fellows?
- Are you anticipating any big changes in the office or in your work in the next few years? Do you think the organization's priorities will stay the same?
- Is there anyone else on staff I should meet with?

Following Up

At the close of the meeting, ask when you can expect to hear from the organization. Make sure to send a short thank you note (email is fine) within 24 hours of the interview to anyone you met with (see the sample in this toolkit). Keep in contact without being imposing or invasive. Follow up on other potential leads until you hear back. If you receive another offer but prefer this organization, contact the preferred organization immediately, explain the situation, and ask when they will decide. If you accept another offer, withdraw your name from consideration ASAP and thank them again for their time.

Finding a Host: Tracking Chart

This is a sample chart to track outreach to potential host organizations.

HOST ORGS	Email resume	Follow-Up Call	Meeting	Thank You Sent	Follow-Up Calls	Decision	Other
Sanctuary for Families PO Box 1406 Wall Street Station NYC 10268 (212) 349-6009 sanctuaryforfamilies.org Contact: Mary Smith	6/2 sent to M. Smith	6/9	6/18 w/ M. Smith, J. Donovan at office	6/18	6/28 to M. Smith	Email rec'd 7/1: rej.	
The Door NYC 121 Ave. of the Americas NYC 10013 (212) 941-9090 door.org	6/3 sent to J. Francis	6/10 to J. Francis; referred to L. Norris; sent follow-up email	6/12 w/ L. Norris via phone	6/12	6/22 w/ L. Norris; 2nd phone call sched. for 6/29	Call rec'd 7/3: will host! Meet 7/16 to discuss ideas	Research project ideas by 7/16

Sample Emails

Email Requesting Meeting with Potential Host

Option 1

Dear [redacted],

I just finished my second year at Columbia Law School, and I am planning to apply for postgraduate fellowships in a few months. I am particularly interested in [identify area of law/legal issue/ population] and would like to craft a fellowship proposal focusing on this issue. Because [name of organization] is a leader in this field, I would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss whether you would be interested in serving as a host organization for my fellowship.

Option 2

I am in my second year at Columbia Law School, and I am planning to apply for postgraduate fellowships in a few months. I am particularly interested in [identify area of law/legal issue/ population] and would like to craft a fellowship proposal focusing on this issue. [Name of contact] suggested that I contact you to learn more about [name of your organization] and to explore whether you might be interested in serving as a host organization for my fellowship.

As you can see from my attached resume, I have a strong background in [area of law/legal issue/ population] [Add a couple of sentences about your experience in this area of law, mentioning relevant summer jobs, internships, *pro bono* work, externships, clinics, and so forth.] OPTIONAL: I would be especially interested in doing a fellowship focusing on [add details here—don't sound wedded to this focus but use it to demonstrate some of your project ideas and your knowledge of the field/organization's work]. I would love to discuss with you the needs that your organization currently faces and how I could develop a project to address those needs.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you soon. Thank you in advance.

Regards,

[Your name]

Thank You Email

To: Mara Youdelman; Deborah Reid; Wayne Turner CC:

Subject: Thank you

Dear Mara, Deborah, and Wayne,

I wanted to thank you all again for meeting with me earlier today. I enjoyed learning more about the work of the DC office of National Health Law Program (NHeLP) and meeting your dynamic staff. The work of NHeLP is incredibly important, and I am especially interested in the direction your work has taken after the Supreme Court decision upholding the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I would welcome the opportunity to work on a fellowship project focusing on the issue of low-income workers' right to healthcare coverage under ACA, as you suggested. I look forward to hearing from you soon about hosting my fellowship.

Best,

Carlos Sanchez

cs4455@columbia.edu

(917) 692-6685

FELLOWSHIP TRACKING CHART

A chart like this can be an invaluable tool for tracking the pieces of your project-based fellowship applications.

FELLOW-SHIP	RESUME	ESSAYS	TRAN-SCRIPT	REFS & RECS	ORG COMMIT. LETTER	APPLI-CATION	OTHER TO-DO	NOTES
Skadden Due:	Required (updated 6/16)	Essay 1: 2nd draft to adviser 9/1; awaiting comment Essay 2: rec'd 1st draft comments from adviser Essay 3: In progress	Required (ordered 7/1) (rec'd 7/5)	2 recs req. Emailed Smith 8/12; followed up w/ res., other info 8/16; check 9/5 if not rec'd Emailed host 8/12; sent draft 8/22 for review; being finalized now	Being drafted; expect to rec. 9/10; will attach 501(c)(3) letter	Need to fill out forms	Called SBP on 8/2	Remember to email by close of business day 9/17 – one day before the due date
K&E Due:	Required (updated 6/16; update again in Dec)	2 req. (haven't started yet)	Required (rec'd 7/16)	2 written refs req. Use Skadden refs w/ tweak	Host will tweak in early Dec; need 3 docs: commit. letter, host letter, 501(c)(3)	Need to fill out forms		Adviser away Dec 19-Jan 5
Equal Jus. Init. Due:	Required (updated 6/3)	Letter of Interest (meet with PI/PS Office re 1st draft)	Required (rec'd 7/16)	Not yet	N/A	Just cover letter	Contact the 2 former fellows from CLS	

THE FELLOWSHIP/FUNDER INTERVIEW

Once applications are completed and submitted, the review process begins. Fellowship funders have different approaches to narrowing the pool of applicants (some send applications out to different readers, others have all applications reviewed by a committee within the funding organization), as do organizations with their own fellowships. Inevitably a select group of applicants will be invited to interview, most often with a small group of interviewers. The interview is a very important part of the process, and you should consult with your fellowship adviser to learn as much as you can about what to expect. **Also, we cannot stress enough the value of mock interviews.** The PI/PS Office, alumni with prior fellowship experience, and your host may all play a role in helping to prepare you. You should also consult the [Public Interest Job Search Toolkit](#) for general interviewing tips.

What Are Funders and Host Organizations Looking for?

At this stage, you can assume your written materials have been evaluated very highly. So, what are funders looking for from the interview? Overall, they are looking for fellows who have the skills, knowledge, insight, and personality to carry out the work or proposed project well. This includes the ability to serve clients compassionately and effectively, to work productively with stakeholders, other organizations, community partners, etc. as needed, and to be organized and able to follow through. Often funders will invite fellows to present their work, and thus poise and the ability to speak about your project are important. Finally, you are an investment, and so funders look for individuals who are deeply committed and likely to engage in the work long-term, and who will learn and grow from the fellowship experience. Generally, this amounts to a combination of self-confidence and humility, with passion and careful preparedness thrown in. Think about how you might convey this in an interview.

Getting Prepared

Before the interview:

- Research as much as you can about the fellowship from the fellowship website. Also look at who and what they have funded in the past.
- Speak with former fellows and alumni who have been through interviews with the funder/organization.
- Know everything on your resume and cover letter and other application materials. Consider bringing relevant material.
- Develop two to three questions for the interviewing committee.

- Schedule mock interviews. Your fellowship adviser and host organization can be good resources.

As you prepare, keep in mind the importance of the following:

- Showing a personal connection to and a passion for the work you are proposing.
- Being able to articulate why you have chosen this organization.
- When proposing a project with a host organization, talking about how great the supervision will be there.
- Focusing on the clients and the impact of the work, not on you.
- Being up to date and ready to discuss current events that relate to your project or the organization.
- If relevant, being ready and able to discuss cultural or racial barriers that you may confront in your project/work and how you will deal with those barriers.
- Knowledge of the former fellows/projects active in the same space.

The Interview

Remember that interviews start in the elevator. That is, you don't know who is in the elevator or waiting room, or who is at the reception desk or welcoming you in. Consider yourself being interviewed from the moment you walk in the building. Be kind, courteous and respectful.

Fellowship interviews are often done by a small committee, so you are likely to be interviewed by more than one person at the same time. For project-based fellowship interviews, the funder selection committee is often comprised of individuals with different levels of knowledge about your project and about the legal issues that will be involved in your work. You will need to keep this in mind as you present your project and answer questions. Often answering a question with a personal story or anecdote can work well to help you avoid too many generalities and convey your personal qualities and thoughtfulness.

Finally, think about connecting with your interviewers. A good handshake and eye contact go a long way. Being human is good, as is demonstrating your ability to relate to clients and others with whom you will be working.

Think confidently and be enthusiastic, but don't forget the value of self-awareness and humility. You are not expected to have all the answers or to have finished your learning.

Interviews for organization fellowship are likely to be similar to those for public interest jobs, and so you might review the section on interviewing in the [Public Interest Job Search Toolkit](#). If

you are interviewing with a funder for a project-based fellowship, consider the following common questions:

- How did you pick your project?
- Why did you pick this topic (e.g., healthcare, domestic violence)?
- What kind of impact do you expect to have?
- How will you measure success?
- Why are you the right person to do this project?
- Where do you see yourself 10 (five, 20) years from now?
- What was the toughest situation you ever found yourself in, and how did you resolve it?
- What would you do about your issue (e.g., domestic violence, healthcare) if you were “queen/king for a day”?
- What are your career plans if you do not get this fellowship?
- Describe the supervision you will be given if you are a fellow.
- What is it about your hosting agency that makes you want to work with them?
- Who exactly will be your clients? Describe their lives.
- Where did you grow up? What was your life like?
- Why did you choose Columbia Law School?
- Do you have questions for us?

Depending on the work or your project, you might also be asked questions such as:

- What about this project requires a lawyer? Can this work be done by a very skilled social worker?
- Where will your clients come from? How will they find you?
- What happens if a client comes to you and says she needs a place to sleep? How are you going to keep from taking one of your clients to your home? How are you going to deal with the emotional stress of dealing with such difficult lives and issues?
- How will you involve community partners?

Closing Words

Please don't forget that the PI/PS Office is here to ensure you have the support you need, and to help you all along the way. Reach out at any time for any reason!

As your research progresses, you may change your mind about what opportunities interest you. You may find it difficult to know which options you prefer. That's all ok—just keep in touch with your fellowship adviser. As you might predict, we advise you to cast a wide net.

And, while it is true that applying for project-based fellowships requires a good amount of work, it is almost always beneficial. Whether or not you are awarded one of these fellowships, the work you put into developing an application invariably pays off. You will have thought deeply about your interests and goals, developed ways to articulate your interests and experiences, met people doing work you admire and learned about substantive issues, needs, and work being done within your focus area. You will have developed written documents that you can draw on for other applications and met people and discovered organizations interested in working with you.

Finally, a word about timing and decisions: each public interest fellowship, staff attorney position, government honors program, and clerkship is likely to have different application deadlines and extend offers at different times. This often means you are asked to consider an offer before you hear from all the entities you have applied to. If you find yourself in that position and you are not sure the first offer is your first choice, please consult with the PI/PS Office. These are coveted positions, and decisions are not always easy. An acceptance should be honored, and when an offer is accepted, other applications should be withdrawn. It is sometimes possible to get a deadline extended or find out the status of outstanding applications, but it is a delicate process.