



Cornell University  
Law School

Lawyers in the Best Sense

## Cornell Law School Public Interest Law Fellowships

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**Application deadline: Monday, November 27, 2023**

**Applications submitted after this date will not be considered unless previously approved by the Director of Public Interest in the Career Development Office.**

Cornell Law School is offering two public interest fellowships for graduating third-year students or recent Cornell Law graduates.

The Frank H. T. Rhodes Public Interest Law Fellowship was established in 2010 to provide support to new Cornell Law School graduates who show exceptional commitment to the field of public interest law. The Fellowship is designed to provide opportunities to gain substantive experience in work that will improve the quality and delivery of legal services to the poor, the elderly, the unhoused, and those deprived of their civil rights. This is a two-year fellowship.

The Susan A. and Frederic A. Rubinstein Fellowship is a one-year fellowship that will be awarded to a student who shows exceptional commitment to the field of public interest law. The selection committee will consider project proposals for a broad range of public interest work, including (but not limited to) work with local, state, and federal government agencies to promote just and democratic governance.

The following guidance applies to both the Rhodes and Rubinstein Fellowships

**Project Scope:** Projects may be civil or criminal in focus. Projects in the area of indigent criminal defense should focus on innovative services, and support or delivery mechanisms that are not adequately funded by the government or that are designed to impact broad criminal justice issues. For both civil and criminal projects, advocacy may entail a wide range of approaches, including, but not limited to, community legal education and training, organizing, direct services, litigation, transactional work and administrative efforts. For the Rhodes, preference will be given to projects that are designed to impact a large number of people, create programs that can be replicated in other communities and create lasting institutions or programs. For the Rubinstein, applicants need not demonstrate broad or systemic impact.

**Salary:** Fellows will receive an annual salary of at least \$58,000, plus benefits. Once the fellowship has commenced, Fellows may apply for loan repayment assistance through Cornell Law School's Public Interest Low Income Protection Plan, a separately-funded program. The Fellow will be paid through Cornell payroll and will need to satisfy those hiring requirements.

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be third-year Cornell Law Students or recent Cornell Law School graduates, including graduates completing judicial clerkships. Applicants must secure a sponsoring non-profit organization and, together with the organization, submit a proposal for a project with specific focus and goals. The Rhodes Fellowship application should include a specific timeline and a plan for measuring success. The sponsoring organization can be based in the United States or abroad.

**Responsibilities:** The selected fellow must agree to be available and willing to return to Cornell Law School to speak to students about their work. They must also be willing to allow Cornell to publicize the fellowship project.

**Selection Process:** Applicants will be interviewed and selected by a Faculty Fellowship Committee. Criteria the Fellowship Committee will use to evaluate applicants and potential sponsoring organizations will include, but not be limited to, the following:

*Applicants:* The candidate's demonstrated or stated commitment to public-interest law generally, and specifically to the community in which the candidate is planning to work. The candidate's professional, volunteer and/or subject matter expertise indicating that the candidate possesses the relevant skills and initiative to make the proposed project a success.

*Sponsoring Organization:* The non-profit organization's commitment and ability to provide training, support and supervision throughout the Fellowship project. An articulation of how the project fits into organizational priorities.

Please submit the application and supporting materials electronically **in a single PDF** (except for letters of recommendation) to Michaela Rossettie Azemi, Director of Public Interest, at [ma688@cornell.edu](mailto:ma688@cornell.edu). Letters of recommendation may be submitted directly to [ma688@cornell.edu](mailto:ma688@cornell.edu).

1) **Application Cover Sheet:** This page must include the following:

- A. Applicant information
  - i. Your full name
  - ii. Your year of graduation from Cornell Law School
  - iii. Your current mailing address
  - iv. Your phone number
  - v. Your email address
  
- B. Please indicate if you wish your application to be considered for both the Rhodes Fellowship and Rubinstein Fellowship. You do not need to submit separate applications. Include an addendum for the Rubinstein Fellowship indicating how you will adapt your project to the shorter timeline (1 year).
  
- C. Sponsoring Organization Information
  - i. Organization name
  - ii. Organization mailing address
  - iii. Organization web site address
  - iv. Organization mission statement
  - v. Organization tax status
  - vi. Name of organization attorney who will supervise your project
  - vii. Attorney's phone number
  - viii. Attorney's email address

2) **Your resume**

3) **Project Proposal:** *Proposed plan for the fellowship term – The plan must include one of the following:*

- (a) a proposal for a legal project designed by the applicant in partnership with a sponsoring organization;*
- (b) a proposal to work on an existing project with a host organization;*
- (c) a proposal to work as a staff attorney at a public interest organization (describe range of work/projects for fellowship year(s)); or*
- (d) a proposal to be funded for an unpaid foreign or international court or prosecution internship or other human rights organization.*

The proposal should include a description of the need for the project, how goals will further the public interest, and how they will be accomplished within the fellowship term. Include a proposed timeline for the fellowship year(s).

Specifically, ***each proposal should include:***

i. **A short statement** describing the applicant's specific commitment to the proposed public service activity and how the applicant came to focus on this particular area of work; the applicant's past experiences and work activity in the public interest broadly construed; the applicant's aspirations for future public interest work, and the ways in which the Fellowship will help to achieve those goals. Applicants are encouraged to submit a thematic or focused essay of no more than 3 double-spaced pages.

Note: The application should not restate the applicant's resume. Please use this opportunity to help the selection committee understand why you have focused on a particular area of work, how your law school career or other experiences have affected your choices, and what you hope to learn and contribute in your project.

ii. **Statement of other fellowships or public interest positions for which the applicant has applied**, including the status of those applications, plans if the applicant does not receive fellowship funding or offers of employment, and, if the applicant has not sought other fellowships or public interest positions, a brief statement of the reasons.

**Note:** While applications for this fellowship are pending, applicants are required to provide updated information to the Office of Public Service about the status of applications to other fellowships and job applications.

iii. **Statement of Interest:** *State briefly (300 words) why you want to pursue a career in public interest law, and describe what skills, talents or other qualities you would bring to this project.*

iv. **Sponsoring Organization Commitment Letter:** *The potential sponsoring private non-profit organization must state that they will hire you should you receive the Fellowship. The organization must also commit to integrating you into the organization, which includes providing attorney supervision and professional support.*

v. **Two recommendation letters** from people familiar with your work; one from a full-time Cornell Law School professor, and one from a former public-interest employer. The letters may be submitted directly to [ma688@cornell.edu](mailto:ma688@cornell.edu). Electronic signatures are acceptable.

vi. **Law school transcript**, an unofficial transcript is sufficient.

Please submit the application and supporting materials electronically **in a single PDF**. Please feel free to contact the Director of Public Interest at [ma688@cornell.edu](mailto:ma688@cornell.edu) to discuss your project.