



Health & Economic Renewal in the Mississippi Delta

Mississippi Delta Fellow Fellowship Description & Application Materials

*Applications for the 2014 Delta Fellowship will be accepted through February 6, 2015.
This fellowship is a two-year commitment.*

Delta Directions: Who are we?

The Delta Directions Consortium is an interdisciplinary group of individuals from academic institutions and foundations working towards change in the Mississippi Delta. Delta Directions believes that potential for progress and change in the Delta is so multifaceted and complex that its growth requires the interdisciplinary contributions of various professions, disciplines, and institutions. Delta Directions Consortium exists at the intersection of research and practice, providing a united front for coordinated and collaborative efforts for change within the Delta.

Please see www.deltadirections.com for more information.

The Delta Fellow: What do I do?

The Delta Fellow works independently and as part of an interdisciplinary group of individuals from academic institutions, community-based organizations and foundations to create transformational change in the Mississippi Delta region by improving public health and promoting economic development. The Fellow designs new and innovative programs to address the poor health and economic outcomes in the region, assists in evaluating existing and proposed programs, researches, drafts, and edits comprehensive reports on selected issue areas, and advises on, evaluates and creates public policies that promotes positive change in the Delta.

Now entering its fifth cycle, the Fellowship is an established program within the Delta and previous Delta Fellows have had unique and rewarding experiences both living in and working with local Delta communities. Previous Fellows have worked in a variety of topic area, including:

- Food Security and Food Access
- Farmers Markets
- Mental Health Care
- School to Prison Pipeline
- Juvenile Justice
- Early Childhood Education and Interventions
- Small Business Development

The Fellow will work on a variety of diverse and innovative projects that engage a number of different issues areas and skills. Below are some sample projects that previous Delta Fellows have created and developed:



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- *Food Policy:* A previous Fellow helped to create and establish the Mississippi Food Policy Council (MFPC), the first of its kind in the state. With support and assistance from the Fellow, MFPC has come to be recognized by state legislators and organizations as *the* resource for guidance in food policy. The council releases reports, holds an annual conference, undertakes surveys and data, and has drafted and passed several significant pieces of state legislation around food policy.
- *Farm to School:* Working with the MFPC, Fellows have helped to bring the Farm to School movement to Mississippi. A previous Fellow, along with the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, published comprehensive legal guides to Farm to School Purchasing and Selling and worked with schools to begin Farm to School programs. Fellows also assisted in the creation of an annual statewide Farm to Cafeteria Conference that is regularly attended by nearly 200 state stakeholders.
- *Breastfeeding Awareness:* A previous Fellow worked to increase breastfeeding rates in Mississippi through a multi-tiered outreach strategy. This included hosting community events across the Delta, working with local hospitals to establish breastfeeding-friendly practices, and promoting larger, systemic change through the successful drafting and passage of both local and state policy.
- *Economic Development:* Fellows have worked in various areas to improve economic development in Mississippi. A previous Fellow worked with University of Mississippi to create a small business incubator and a supportive transactional legal clinic for entrepreneurs in the state. Fellows have also drafted a number of reports in support of economic development, including a small business guide and recommendations for the state of Arkansas in developing a microfinance lending program.
- *Early Childhood Education and Intervention:* Previous Fellows have worked to increase Early Childhood Education in Mississippi through the drafting of several reports outlining the value of pre-K and early childhood education in Mississippi. A previous Fellow also secured funding and oversaw the implementation of a community parenting class, aimed at informing and supporting new parents with young children in the Delta.

Responsibilities and Activities:

The Fellow’s principal responsibilities include: coordinating Delta Directions Consortium members with each other and with other institutions, including local partners, government entities, and nonprofit organization; providing human capital and support to local community-based organizations and projects; maintaining updated content on the Delta Directions website and Delta Directions blog, hosting periodic Delta Directions conferences, and identifying other ways to update Consortium members and community members about various Delta projects and increase general engagement with Delta Directions; planning and supervising research projects and programs for students interested in working on health and economic development in the Delta; developing, evaluating, advising on, and promoting supportive public policy within the Delta; fostering further collaboration among Harvard Law School and institutions working in the Delta; managing existing and developing new projects, based on local needs, resources, and recommendations and approval from the Delta Directions Advisory Board.



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In addition to the above-mentioned issue areas and designated responsibilities, the fellowship provides the unique opportunity and freedom for Fellows to develop and pursue projects and other issues area of passion and interest. Assuming these issue areas and ideas match a need within the Delta, create positive and sustainable change, and are approved by the Delta Fellow Advisory Board, the Fellow is encouraged to seek out locally-based organizations and partners to collaborate with in order to launch programs and develop policies.

The Fellow serves as Director of the Delta Directions Consortium as well as Harvard Law School Delta Clinical Fellow and Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center. The Fellowship is supported by the Winokur Family Foundation and Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center.

The Fellow will report to the Director of Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School and the Director of the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University, and will also provide regular oral and written progress reports to the Delta Directions Advisory Board. He/she will live and work in the Delta region and will also have an office at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University, where the Fellow will travel regularly for meetings and updates.

The Mississippi Delta: Additional Information

The Mississippi Delta consists of a number of counties on either side of the Mississippi River in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana, that used to be the alluvial floodplain for the river. This land, flat and fertile from years of Mississippi River flooding, created the unique agricultural heritage of the region. The Delta counties have many cultural and historical similarities, including the Delta's claim to being the birthplace of the Blues.

However, the Delta also suffers many persistent and troubling health, economic, and social problems. The following figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Delta Health Alliance show that the Mississippi Delta's conditions are among the worst in the nation, often on par with those of some developing countries:

- Nationally, the percent of individuals living below poverty is 14.5%. This rate is 22.3% in Mississippi. This rate is even higher in the Delta.
- Nationally, the median family household income in 2007 was \$51,939. Mississippi ranks 50th in the U.S. with regard to household income, at \$37,095, and even lower in the Delta.
- Nationally, the infant mortality rate is 6.27 per thousand births. The rate in Mississippi is over 9.86 per thousand, the highest in the nation. The rate is over 14 in some Mississippi Delta counties.
- Mississippi leads the United States in its obesity rate (35.1%), the rate of deaths resulting from cardiovascular disease (rates 30% above the national median), including heart disease and stroke death rate.



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Though these alarming statistics tell a grim story about the Delta, it is not the whole story. The Delta is also ready for change, and there is a large body of talented and committed people in the Delta anxious to make these changes. The work of Delta Directions, the Delta Fellow, and local partners present a unique opportunity for the region to renew itself as a thriving economic and social system, promoting its rich history and culture.

What We Are Looking For: Experience & Qualifications

- Completion of graduate degree in law (preferred), public health, and/or public administration
- Strong writing, research, organizational and communication skills
- Strong motivation to learn and achieve superior results
- Ability to work independently, as well as in teams, and in demanding and periodically high stress circumstances
- Creative problem-solving skills; demonstrated ability to work creatively within broad program goals
- Strong sense of self-motivation and entrepreneurial mindset
- Relevant academic or professional experience, including interest in or experience with economic development or public health, especially in rural areas, preferred but not required
- Demonstrated leadership experience, experience bringing together diverse stakeholders, or experience with direct public action or community development preferred
- Interest in or knowledge of the Delta or the American South preferred but not required

Duration and Expectations:

The Delta Fellowship is an expected two-year commitment, subject to change or termination only in unusual circumstances. The Fellow is also expected to spend the first six months of the fellowship in residence at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University in Starkville. The Fellow will be based in the Delta for the remainder of the fellowship, with routine visits to the Social Science Research Center for various projects.

Salary

\$50,000 plus benefits per year with a relocation stipend, health benefits, and generous retirement benefits; also includes stipends/reimbursements for certain travel and other expenses related to the position.

Application Materials & Deadline

1. Curriculum vitae, including relevant coursework, work experience, and extracurricular activities
2. Personal statement (500 words maximum) about the applicant's relevant experience, interest, and suitability for the Delta Fellow position, as well as future career aspirations
3. Two recommendation letters, at least one from an academic reference
4. Academic transcript



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Please submit one copy of the application materials to each of the following individuals:

1. Jennifer Flannagan
Social Science Research Center
Mississippi State University
P.O. Box 5287
Mississippi State, MS 39762
jennifer.flannagan@ssrc.msstate.edu
2. Judith Murciano
Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest
Advising
Harvard Law School
Wasserstein Hall, Suite 4039
1585 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
murciano@fas.harvard.edu

Selection Process

The Delta Fellow Selection Committee will include representatives from Harvard Law School and the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University, with input from the Winokur Family Foundation.

Following receipt of the application materials, selected applicants will have a screening interview in Cambridge, and finalists will have the opportunity to travel to the Delta for interviews with community partners.

Contact

For any questions related to the Delta Fellow Position or the application process, please contact Emily Broad Leib, ebroad@law.harvard.edu, 617-390-2590.