

## Mississippi Delta Fellowship 2024

The Mississippi Delta Fellowship connects a recent law school graduate to on-the-ground, community-centered work in the Mississippi Delta. Based in the heart of the South and home of the Blues, the Fellowship provides a unique opportunity to inform and catalyze community change through the development, management, and creation of interdisciplinary projects. In turn, the position provides opportunities for professional development, especially in the areas of project management, navigating and analyzing law and policy, community relations and coalition building, teaching and mentoring, engaging with interdisciplinary academics, public speaking, research, and writing. Previous Fellows have gone on to careers in policymaking, teaching, writing (academic and non-academic), research, film-making, and professional legal practice in community development. The Fellowship is a one-year commitment with opportunity for renewal at the end of the first year. However, due to the Delta Fellow's central role in the Mississippi Delta community, applicants able to commit to a two-year fellowship are preferred. The Fellow receives a competitive salary and benefits, detailed further below, commensurate with or above that of most fellowships for recent law graduates, particularly in light of relative cost of living.

The Fellow works in collaboration with the Delta Directions Consortium (DDC), an interdisciplinary group of academic institutions, community-based organizations, and foundations focused on pursuing improvements in health, food systems, education, and economic development in the Mississippi Delta Region. The Delta Fellow is hosted by the Community First Research Center for Wellbeing & Creative Achievement (CREW) at the University of Mississippi. While reporting to the Director of CREW, and working in collaboration with other CREW research associates, the Fellow also works closely with the Harvard Law School Food Law & Policy Clinic (of the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation) and the Harvard Law School Mississippi Delta Project, as well as with other members of the DDC. The Fellowship is supported by the Winokur Family Foundation and the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi.

By working closely with the DDC and its partners, the Fellow is a part of a diverse network creating transformational change in the Mississippi Delta. Through their work, the Fellow becomes familiar with community needs, assets, challenges, and opportunities. The Fellow acts as a doer and facilitator, pairing law, policy, and academic resources with community-based organizations in the Delta through initiatives that address community interests. The Fellow has the opportunity to build on existing projects and launch new projects in partnership with DDC members. This can include, among other activities, supporting community organizations in accessing state or Federal resources, supporting community-driven research projects, providing policy guidance and advocacy support, publishing helpful resources and tools to support community initiatives, and convening partners to facilitate dialogue and advance collaboration.

Previous and current project themes include:

- **Economic Development:** Current Delta Fellow projects include community-based infrastructure planning, including the creation of a community designed and driven strategic plan, developed for a local community after the passing of the Infrastructure Investments & Jobs Act; broadband and digital equity research and outreach, including policy brief writing on the topics of affordability and digital infrastructure. Past Delta Fellows' work has included partnering with University of Mississippi to create a small business incubator and launch a transactional legal clinic; publishing guides to support small businesses, including a small business legal guide and a guide for farmers to sell products to local Mississippi institutions; and publishing reports about economic development topics, such as recommendations for Mississippi to enact paid family leave and recommendations for Arkansas to develop microfinance lending.
- **Public Health, Health Care Access, and Social Determinants of Health:** Delta Fellows' projects have included supporting better mental health practices via research on policies needed to keep those utilizing mental health services in the least restrictive settings; supporting breastfeeding through conducting a multi-tiered outreach and education strategy, working with local hospitals to establish breastfeeding-friendly practices, and promoting systemic change through passage of local and state breastfeeding policies; engaging in research and recommendations on improving maternal and infant health; and conducting research on policy opportunities to support better lead testing in small rural water systems.
- **Food Policy:** Current Delta Fellow projects include the organization of the "Hunger Summit" - a gathering of diverse stakeholders working in the food insecurity space; food prescription policy research and advocacy;

and USDA discrimination financial assistance program outreach and advocacy. Delta Fellows' past work has included establishing and supporting the Mississippi Food Policy Council, a diverse group of stakeholders aiming to educate Mississippians about food and farm policies that build healthy communities and strengthen local food systems; supporting farm to school programs by helping launch pilot programs, publishing legal guides, and assisting in the creation of an annual statewide Farm to Cafeteria Conference; supporting small farmers by publishing guides and conducting trainings on topics such as the impacts of inheritance laws on farms; and working to increase food access, by launching farmers markets and making recommendations to eliminate the ban on people with drug convictions felons utilizing SNAP.

Principal responsibilities of the Delta Fellow include:

- Managing existing and developing new projects and long-term initiatives, based on local needs, research, evidence-based results, interdisciplinary opportunities, and support from Delta Directions partners;
- On the ground collaboration and engagement with diverse community members;
- Convening partners and facilitating collaboration;
- Researching, drafting, and editing policy and research reports, and educating community partners and policymakers on the research;
- Working with faculty and staff to develop clinical and pro bono projects for Harvard Law students in the Mississippi Delta Project, the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, and other Harvard Law clinics;
- Helping to plan and host the annual Delta Regional Forum;
- Contributing to the Delta Scholars program, a student leadership development program for college students;
- Supporting coordination, growth, and development of the Delta Directions Consortium.

For more information, please visit <https://cfnm.org/programs/delta-directions/> (for information about Delta Directions) and <http://www.chlpi.org> (for information about the HLS Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation). For questions please contact [flpc@law.harvard.edu](mailto:flpc@law.harvard.edu)

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## APPLICATION MATERIALS

### Experience & Qualifications:

- Law degree;
- Strong writing, research, organizational and communication skills;
- Interest in learning and developing skills for connecting social and public health research and law and policy and working in interdisciplinary teams to inform community members;
- Ability to work both independently and in diverse teams, and in demanding and periodically high stress circumstances;
- Strong sense of self-motivation and entrepreneurial mindset;
- Demonstrated leadership experience, experience bringing together diverse stakeholders, and/or experience with direct public action or community development preferred;
- Relevant academic or professional experience, including interest in or experience with economic development or public health, especially in rural areas; and
- Interest in or knowledge of the Delta region or the American South preferred.

**Salary:** \$63,000 plus benefits in year one (subject to salary increase if fellowship is renewed beyond year one), along with a relocation stipend. Additionally, there is \$10,000 in the program budget to cover travel, event planning, hiring, and other expenses related to the position.

### Application Materials & Deadline:

- Curriculum vitae, including relevant coursework, work experience, and extracurricular activities;
- 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;

- Two recommendation letters, at least one from an academic reference; and
- Academic transcript.

**Application Instructions:**

Applications should be submitted by email to Laura Johnston at [ljohnston@law.harvard.edu](mailto:ljohnston@law.harvard.edu) by February 16, 2024. Please include "Mississippi Delta Fellowship" in the subject line of your email. Applicants will be notified within 2-3 weeks whether they will advance to an interview.

**Please submit the application materials by midnight (11:59pm) on February 16, 2024.**