

## *Request for Letters of Interest*

# **SSRC Arts Research with Communities of Color (ARCC) Fellowship**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Social Science Research Council invites letters of interest from early-career researchers for year-long fellowships to conduct qualitative studies of arts organizations founded by and for communities of color in the United States. These fellowships will form part of the SSRC's recently-launched Arts Research with Communities of Color (ARCC) program and the **Wallace Foundation's latest initiative in the arts**.

### **BACKGROUND**

This year, the SSRC established the Arts Research with Communities of Color program, an initiative devoted to exploring how social science research can contribute to a thriving and more equitable arts field through empirical research, theory building, and analysis, and to support the networking of early-career researchers with one another and with leading researchers and practitioners in the field. This program represents a broadening of SSRC's work that seeks to foreground the ethics of research and collaboration, academic-community engagement, and an inclusive vision of social research.

Partnering with the **Wallace Foundation** in its new initiative on how arts organizations of color leverage their community orientation towards resilience and relevance, the program will facilitate 12-month primarily ethnographic research projects that match selected fellows with arts organizations funded by the Foundation. The aim is to collaboratively produce in-depth studies of their histories, their organizational cultures, and their relationships with and approaches to the artistic or cultural community they serve. In addition, the research will explore how organizations maintain their relevance, how they define and maintain their resilience, and how they perceive their impact(s).

These studies will serve as actionable information for the organizations, as well as artifacts that the organizations may use to tell their own stories, both past and present. They will also make important contributions to social research fields focused on community organizing, artistic practice, and social justice, among others. Driven by the program's commitment to advancing new models of ethical, engaged research, the studies will provide a space for experimentation in creating research-practice partnerships that foreground meaningful and equitable collaboration, engaged participation, and broad relevance. The studies will also contribute to the goal of the broader initiative to situate arts research in the wider social context.

### **TERMS OF THE FELLOWSHIP**

Fellows are expected to begin their 12-month studies sometime between May and August 2022. The timeline as well as the nature of work to be conducted will depend on the needs of each organization and will be determined in collaborative dialogue between each fellow and organization. This ethnographic work may include observing and participating in meetings of the organization, assisting with administrative tasks, conducting oral history interviews, and developing archival systems. In addition to their ethnographic studies,

all fellows will participate in regular professional learning community activities, including seminars and check-ins, together with the program's research advisory committee and SSRC staff. Fellows are expected to produce materials of benefit to the participating organizations and to publish on aspects of their research for both academic and public audiences. Each fellow will receive a stipend of \$70,000 for the 12-month research period, as well as up to \$15,000 to cover costs associated with relocation (where relevant), research set-up, and involvement in any pre-research activities such as workshops and other meetings.

## ELIGIBILITY

The fellowship is open to early career social researchers who hold a PhD or equivalent terminal degree in a relevant field in the social sciences or humanities, including but not limited to anthropology, arts administration, sociology, history, art history, (including performing arts disciplines), arts education, and political science. Prospective fellows' doctoral degrees must have been conferred no earlier than January 2016 and no later than May 2022. Applicants must have conducted substantial ethnographic or similar qualitative research with community-serving or cultural organizations of some kind. Experience with arts organizations of color is valuable, but not required. The fellowship requires full-time commitment for the fellowship year, and prospective fellows will be expected to take a leave of absence from other employment for its duration. In cases where a fellow is matched with an organization located outside of their home city, they will be required to arrange significant amounts of time spent embedded with the organization. Relocation to the organization's home city is the optimal arrangement. However, alternative arrangements may be possible, depending on a range of circumstances, and will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

It is critical that all fellows have a demonstrable ability to create and maintain trust within communities like those represented by the participating arts organizations. Preference will be given to early-career scholars of color, in particular to researchers with demonstrated familiarity with the cultural, linguistic, and/or regional context of the organizations. Participating organizations will be arts organizations of color, defined here as those founded by (in either artistic or administrative leadership) and for Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latinx, Arab American, or Asian American/Pacific Islander communities, and continue to serve those communities today.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications must be submitted through our online portal and should include:

- Online application form
- A letter of interest (no more than two pages) that responds to the following questions:
  - Why are you interested in applying to this fellowship?
  - How would this fellowship fit into your broader career trajectory?
  - What is the nature of your prior experience with ethnographic research and/or in arts or community-serving organizations of color?
  - Which communities do you consider yourself to be embedded in or culturally, linguistically, and/or regionally familiar with?
  - How do you see your research as related to both understanding and addressing social justice issues, and in particular in relation to community organizations of color?
- A current CV summary of the applicant (two pages). CVs should include the following details: education and employment history, relevant research experience, honors and awards, professional affiliations, language skills, and a list of no more than five relevant publications.

Submissions will be reviewed by an independent selection panel. Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal (further details to be provided upon selection). Letters of interest will be evaluated based on applicants' general fit for the program, while full proposals will determine applicants' fit with the specific participating arts organizations.

**The deadline for letters of interest is December 3, 2021**

For details about application requirements and other useful information, visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

Please contact program staff at [artsresearch@ssrc.org](mailto:artsresearch@ssrc.org) if you have additional questions or for further guidance in preparing your application.