



## *Request for Proposals*

# **2023 Arts Research with Communities of Color Fellowship**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Social Science Research Council invites applications from early career researchers for two year-long fellowships to conduct qualitative studies of arts organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color in the United States and Puerto Rico. These fellowships will form part of the SSRC's Arts Research with Communities of Color (ARCC) program and the [Wallace Foundation's current initiative in the arts](#).

Fellows selected in this process will work with one of the following organizations (further details below):

[Esperanza Peace & Justice Center](#), San Antonio, TX  
[Museo de Arte Contemporáneo](#), San Juan, Puerto Rico

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2021, 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 supporting 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 facilitates primarily ethnographic research projects that match early career research fellows with arts organizations funded by the Foundation for a 12-month period. The aim is to collaboratively produce in-depth studies of their histories, organizational cultures, and 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), insights that will also contribute to the initiative and the field of the arts more broadly. This work began with an [initial cohort of ARCC fellows](#), who commenced their projects in Fall 2022. They will be joined by the program's second cohort, which launches in Summer 2023.

The studies will provide important documentation for the organizations 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**

The SSRC will appoint 2 new fellows in total to join the 2023 cohort. Fellows are expected to begin their 12-month studies sometime between May and August 2023. 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 working in existing archives or developing archival systems for existing materials. 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.

## **MORE ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ARTS ORGANIZATIONS**

Each successful fellow will work in collaboration with **one** of the following community arts organizations:

[Esperanza Peace & Justice Center](#), San Antonio, TX

The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center is a multidisciplinary, community-based cultural organization with a vision for social change that bridges the divides between communities. Throughout its history, the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center has been led by queer Chicanas and has been one of a few organizations to center LGBTQI and feminist voices in both its cultural work and community activism.

The ideal candidate will be familiar with Chicana history and culture, willing to relocate to San Antonio for at least half of the fellowship, and have a background or significant research interest in grassroots and/or cultural organizing. Fluency in Spanish is a plus.

[Museo de Arte Contemporáneo](#), San Juan, Puerto Rico

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (San Juan, Puerto Rico) is an artist-founded museum that fosters an open view of contemporary art from multiple perspectives that converge in Puerto Rico: Diasporic, Latinx, Caribbean-regional, and Latin American cultures within a global context. It is a collecting institution, a space of production and creation, as well as of research and conservation, that encourages a constant dialogue between artists and audiences.

The ideal candidate will be familiar with Puerto Rican history and culture, able to relocate to Puerto Rico for the duration of the fellowship, and fluent in Spanish. Research in collaboration with MAC will benefit from an intersectional and educational approach through the lens of contemporary art. Candidates should be familiar with Caribbean history and understand Puerto Rico's unique political predicament: culturally, a nation; politically, a non-sovereign society.

## **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 2017 and no later than May 2023. Finalists will be required to verify their degree status prior to beginning the fellowship term. 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 a full-time commitment for the fellowship year, and prospective fellows will be expected to commit an average of 35 hours per week for the year of the fellowship. In cases where a fellow is matched with an organization located outside of their

home city, 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, in consultation with the organization's leadership team.

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.

## 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 for 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 community/ies 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, particularly in relation to community organizations of color?
  - Which of the two participating community arts organizations are you most interested in working with? Why are you drawn to this particular organization? What makes you well-suited to collaborate with the organization?
- 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.
- Complete answers to the ARCC candidate questionnaire (approximately 1500 words; accessible via the application portal).

Submissions will be reviewed by an independent selection panel. Applications will be evaluated based on applicants' fit with the specific participating arts organizations, in addition to their research and practical experience, community and cultural experience, and commitment to the goals of the program, including equity and impact. Successful applicants will be invited to a finalist round interview with the relevant community arts organization.

**The deadline for submissions is January 6, 2023.**

## ESTIMATED SELECTION TIMELINE

Applications will be reviewed and promising candidates will be scheduled for interviews with the organizations in mid-late February 2023. Successful applicants will be notified of their awards and placements in mid-March 2023.

*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.*