



Health & Economic Renewal in the Mississippi Delta

Mississippi Delta Fellow Fellowship Description & Application Materials

*Applications for the 2015 Delta Fellowship will be accepted through February 15, 2016.
This fellowship is a two-year commitment.*

Fellowship Description

Delta Directions: Who are we?

The Delta Directions Consortium is an interdisciplinary group of individuals from academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, 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 contributions from diverse professions, disciplines, and institutions. The Delta Directions Consortium exists at the intersection of research and practice, providing a united front for coordinated and collaborative efforts for change within the region.

Please see www.deltadirections.com for more information.

The Delta Fellow: What do I do?

The Delta Fellow works both independently and as part of an interdisciplinary group to create transformational change in the Mississippi Delta region by improving public health and promoting economic development. The Delta Fellow's work focuses on addressing this goal through pursuing changes and improvement in a variety of fields, most specifically health, food systems, and economic development.

Now entering its fifth cycle, the Fellowship is an established program within the Delta. Previous Fellows have had unique and rewarding experiences both living in and working with local Delta communities. Below are some sample projects undertaken by previous Delta Fellows:

- *Food Policy:* A previous Fellow helped to 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 analysis, and has drafted and successfully advocated for the passage of 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.
- *Maternal and Infant Health:* 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 drafting and passage of both local and state policy.



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The Fellow also secured funding and oversaw the creation and implementation of a community parenting class program, aimed at improving public health practices for expecting and parenting families and children.

- *Economic Development:* Fellows have worked in various areas to improve economic development in Mississippi. A previous Fellow worked with faculty at the University of Mississippi to create a small business incubator and launch a transactional legal clinic which services entrepreneurs in the state across a variety of industries, including agriculture. Fellows have also drafted a number of reports in support of economic development, including a small business legal guide, recommendations for the state of Arkansas in developing a microfinance lending program, and a guide for farmers to sell their products to local Mississippi institutions.

Delta Fellow Responsibilities and Activities:

The Fellow's principal responsibilities include: coordinating Delta Directions Consortium members with each other and with other institutions; providing human capital and support to local community-based organizations and projects; researching, drafting, and editing comprehensive reports on selected issue areas; planning and supervising research projects and programs for Harvard Law students and students from local universities interested in working on health and economic development in the Delta; increasing communication and engagement with Delta Directions by maintaining updated content on the Delta Directions website and hosting periodic Delta Directions conferences; and developing, evaluating, and promoting supportive public policy within the Delta.

In addition to continuing the work begun by prior Fellows, examples of which are included above, the fellowship provides the unique opportunity and freedom for Fellows to develop and pursue projects within their areas of passion and interest. These projects will be reviewed and approved by an Advisory Board drawn from Delta Directions members and, generally, should be developed in coordination with local partners to maximize sustainability and impact.

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 lower Mississippi Delta region consists of a number of counties on either side of the Mississippi River in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana that are part of the broad alluvial floodplain system. This land, flat and fertile from years of Mississippi River flooding, created the unique agricultural



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heritage of the region. The Delta also has a deep, rich culture, including its 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 median family household income was \$53,046 (2013 five-year estimate). Mississippi ranked 50th in the U.S. with regard to household income, at \$39,031, and even lower in the Delta.
- Nationally, the percent of persons living below poverty was 15.4% (2013 five-year estimate). This rate was 23% in Mississippi. This rate was even higher 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.

Though these alarming statistics tell a grim story about the Delta, it is not the whole story. People and their communities have a long history of social change initiatives, and partners continue this work. There is a large body of talented and committed people in the Delta anxious to make these efforts successful. 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 both independently and in diverse teams, and in demanding and periodically high stress circumstances
- Demonstrated creative problem-solving skills and ability to work creatively within broad program goals
- Strong sense of self-motivation and entrepreneurial mindset
- Demonstrated leadership experience, experience bringing together diverse stakeholders, 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, preferred but not required
- Interest in or knowledge of the Delta or the American South preferred but not required



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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. This will enable the Fellow to become acquainted with the researchers and their activities at SSRC, and will give the Fellow the opportunity to present his/her work in an academic setting. The Fellow will be based in Clarksdale, Mississippi (in the Mississippi 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.



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Application Materials & Deadline

Please Submit the Following Materials in order to apply:

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

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

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| 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 |
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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 university and 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.