

PUBLIC VOICES FELLOWSHIP

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What kind of time commitment is involved?

Fellows attend four convenings. The first convening is 1.5 days, and the remaining convenings are one day in duration. Fellows also commit to producing at least two op-eds or other forms of concrete thought leadership in the public sphere during the fellowship year. There is no minimum time commitment, however we expect fellows to approach this experience in a meaningful and purposeful way, with appreciation for the extraordinary resources and talent being invested in them. Some fellows work a lot (several hours or more every week) because they want big and consistent results. Others work in waves, communicating in advance with their journalist mentor around a more flexible schedule, that may include intense bursts of activity at periodic intervals. Both options are fine, as long as communication is clear. We know that we are all busy professionals who have a full plate. Our aim is to use time with radical efficiency and maximum meaning, making it possible to achieve remarkable results in an amount of time that would otherwise be impossible.

2. Will the Fellows have mentors?

Yes. Each of the fellows is assigned a journalist mentor from the OpEd Project team. Generally there are two journalist mentors assigned to each fellowship, each of whom mentors ten fellows (they may switch or swap during the year, for maximum impact). Additional facilitators and journalists may attend the in-person convenings.

3. Will there be individual meetings with our journalist mentors?

Yes. Journalist mentors will meet fellows at all convenings. Following the first convening, they will kick off the fellowship by setting up one-on-one calls with each of their fellows, in the weeks following the first convening. Beyond this, there are no required individual meetings. In most cases, fellows will work with their mentors virtually (email, phone, Zoom, or Google hangout) in between convenings.

4. What can I expect from my mentor?

In general, you can expect meaningful and timely support from your mentor, but not 24/7 support. Like you, our journalist mentors have other jobs (they are journalists, commentators, educators, and have other things cooking) but you can count on them to be in your corner on the regular. You can expect your mentor to provide editorial support and coaching for a diversity of ideas, including those with which s/he may disagree (unless the gap is too large to work together, in which case we will swap mentors). You can expect your mentor to respond to your emails within 24 hours (except on weekends), although not necessarily with edits. You can expect edits within a timely period, usually within a few

days. An exception is if you have a very timely idea tied to the current news moment, in which case our team will bend over backwards to edit faster. You can also expect advice and support with pitching at the start of the fellowship, when our team will typically pitch for you and CC you; as we progress, you can expect your mentor to provide advice on pitching, as you begin to increasingly pitch yourself.

5. What will my mentor expect from me?

Your mentors expect fellows to treat them like colleagues, not employees (better yet, if it's real, treat them as friends). We expect fellows to attend all four convenings, start to finish, and to bring your most challenging and most meaningful ideas to the table. Mentors expect you to engage with them and with each other, and to respond in a timely manner to their communications (which are designed to support you, and will not be intrusive or overwhelming). Mentors expect you to send them your draft op-eds, on the regular. As a condition for acceptance into this fellowship, you committed to producing at least two op-eds, therefore they expect you to send them at least two viable drafts, and hopefully many more. We expect you to give back to your fellowship cohort: to engage, challenge and support the other fellows in this fellowship by sharing ideas, challenges, learnings and successes with the group, in the way you see best, whenever possible.

6. We were asked to commit to writing at least two op-eds. Will these be submitted to media outlets?

Yes. All fellows commit to producing at least two op-eds or other concrete "thought leadership" results in the public sphere (for example, a TED talk, an essay or blog post, a speech, etc). Our journalist mentors will help fellows pitch in the initial month or two of the fellowship, and in later months will guide fellows in pitching themselves, on their own. Many fellows will produce more than two pieces.

7. Can one work in other types of public media in order to be considered, beyond print (op-ed, essays)?

Yes. Fellows are welcome to focus on any concrete thought leadership outcomes they wish, across any media platform they like, whether written, broadcast, online, public speaking, or something else. The purpose of this commitment to concrete outcomes is simply to ensure that you are putting ideas into the public sphere, and not merely talking about it.

8. Will there be opportunities to work with Fellowship advisers to decide how, where and when to publicize our work? Including in other media?

Yes. We work across a broad spectrum of public media.

9. Will the fellowship help with venues like the New York Review of Books, London Review of Books, The New Republic, Harpers, etc., or is it just the short venues that "count"?

It depends. Fellows are welcome to aim for those magazine outlets too, if they wish - but they should understand that doing so is a different game, and (on the whole) may be less strategic. This is because literary and political magazines like the ones mentioned above tend to feature professional writers and journalists, with experience in reporting. There are of course exceptions (several of our fellows have

published in these outlets), but the value proposition tends to favor the skill set of professional writers - and in this arena academics and nonprofit leaders, who are not trained in this way, may be less competitive.

By contrast, short form opinion forums (across all media and public platforms) place priority on the ideas and expertise of the contributor. Communication skills still matter, obviously one still needs to be able to express an idea clearly and compellingly; but the value proposition favors expertise--so in this arena academics and nonprofit leaders have a strong competitive advantage. For this reason we place a strategic emphasis on these forums.

Nevertheless, Public Voices fellows are free to weigh these strategic considerations and decide for themselves. Our curriculum is not about any platform – it's about making more and better ideas happen, creating an environment where we can think more expansively, and using the best available research and methods to increase our ability to influence the planet. If we do our job, the lessons will be applicable not only to any media but to any realm of life.

10. What if I have to miss a convening?

Attendance of all four Public Voices Fellowship convenings is mandatory, and your commitment to attend all four convenings in full is a condition of acceptance into the fellowship. We expect you to realize that this fellowship is built around a social mission. Your presence is not just about what you will get out of this fellowship, it is about what you will give. As a fellow you will become 1/20 of the fellowship cohort, and we will expect you to show up.

In the event of an emergency, fellows may be allowed to make up a session.