



ACLS Leading Edge Fellowship 2025

Position Title	Community Advocacy Manager
Organization	Open Communities
Location	Evanston, IL
Stipend	\$72,000 in the first year, \$74,000 in the second year
Benefits	Access to employer health insurance. Professional development funds and relocation funds provided by ACLS.
Start Date	September 2025

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

[Open Communities](#)' (OC) focus is protecting the human right to fair housing. OC is rooted in the Civil Rights Movement when local women and interfaith leaders in Chicago's suburbs organized the North Shore Summer Project to protest housing discrimination. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at their 1965 rally in Winnetka to a crowd of 10,000. For over 50 years, OC has been dedicated to advancing housing equity as an essential component of social and racial justice. Our country's history of racism and discrimination in housing policies and practices created the segregation that continues to harm our communities today. Open Communities works to eradicate housing discrimination and unjust practices that perpetuate segregation and inequity. We foster thriving, inclusive communities through fair housing enforcement, housing counseling, education, outreach, and advocacy.

As a designated fair housing enforcement agency, we advocate for individuals facing housing discrimination and hold violators accountable as we work for systemic change. We educate and activate the community to influence municipal policies to support tenants' rights and increase attainable housing options. Our HUD-certified housing counselors help clients keep their homes when faced with eviction, foreclosure, or economic marginalization. We also support clients to become homeowners, build generational wealth, and shrink the racial wealth gap. Housing is an essential need we all share. Stable housing is a key social determinant of health and homeownership is a cornerstone of wealth building in our nation. Addressing the daily impacts and ongoing inequities embedded through generations of harmful housing practices and policies is essential to building social justice and creating communities we can all call home.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

We stand at a critical juncture. Housing costs are swiftly rising while large property managers and developers are influencing local decisions that affect our human right to housing. Open Communities urgently needs increased capacity for community engagement to create a grassroots movement for change. Many of our neighbors who are marginalized due to intersecting identities including race, ethnicity, immigration status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, income, and disability, are also starkly underrepresented in local decision-making on these issues. These community members must be mobilized and included in directing local housing policies that will affect us all for generations.

OC seeks a Community Advocacy Manager (CAM) to join our Fair Housing Department to build and launch a robust, community-centered advocacy program to fuel our housing justice campaigns. The CAM will strengthen connections to local community leaders and recruit neighborhood participants and volunteers to amplify voices and build coalitions working toward housing justice initiatives. Utilizing ethical story-gathering practices, the CAM will conduct a local housing needs assessment to collect and synthesize neighborhood-level qualitative data within a historical context. Strong persuasive writing and research skills will help the CAM craft position papers incorporating community voice and housing data to direct effective housing advocacy campaigns. In conjunction with our fair housing team and advocates, the CAM will attend municipal meetings to educate decision-makers on community needs and housing

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You may *not* contact the host institution to inquire about this position.

research. Reporting to our Director of Fair Housing, the CAM will develop and manage this multifaceted community engagement, needs assessment, and advocacy mobilization project, impacting local housing rights and availability for more inclusive communities. The fellowship tenure is 24 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 37.5 hours per week.

Responsibilities and tasks:

- Develop volunteer and advocate program infrastructure in collaboration with our Data Specialist.
- Strengthen outreach to underrepresented groups and amplify community voices by identifying and connecting with 8-12 new volunteer Community Ambassadors (CAs) in target communities.
- Conduct and supervise a qualitative, hyperlocal housing needs assessment with CAs using surveys, 1:1 interviews, and small group community discussions on housing concerns.
- Synthesize qualitative data to identify themes and inform direction for housing policy campaigns.
- Frame housing advocacy efforts by writing at least 2 policy papers on salient housing issues informed by community needs assessment input, data-driven research, and historical context.
- Track changing federal, state, and county regulations' impact on municipal decisions and policies to inform technical assistance and education of local decision-makers.
- Present findings with the Director of Fair Housing to educate the community and policymakers.
- Recruit and mobilize neighbor advocates by crafting online petitions, communicating strategy with e-blasts and organizing tools/documents, facilitating storytelling, and coordinating campaigns at municipal and other public meetings to impact local policies.

Qualifications:

- PhD in any field of the humanities or interpretive social sciences. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Passion for equity and inclusive communities, dedication to ethical, humanistic engagement.
- Excellent communication skills in speaking, facilitation, interviewing, writing, and presentation.
- Excellent project management skills: team management, organization, and attention to detail.
- Ability to combine basic numerical data with interpretive storytelling through qualitative research and data collection.
- Qualitative data analysis skills: ability to find themes in personal narratives and integrate research to support positions; ability to synthesize results for a non-specialist audience.
- Comfort engaging directly with community members, policymakers, advocates, and volunteers.
- Experience working across differences and willingness to engage in personal reflection.
- Desire to learn, grow, and collaborate in a team setting while being independently motivated.

Preferred:

- Professional or volunteer experience in housing justice work, civic engagement, legislative advocacy, or coalition building.
- Basic skills in statistical analysis and/or experience with mapping software (training available).
- Fluency in Spanish is a plus.

APPLICATIONS

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: <https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships>
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System (ofa.acls.org)
- Application deadline: 9 PM EDT, March 12, 2025.

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