



ACLS Leading Edge Fellowship 2026

Position Title	Director of Creative Advocacy and Partnerships
Organization	The AjA Project
Location	San Diego, CA
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 2026

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Based in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, [The AjA Project](#) (Autosuficiencia Junto con Apoyo/Supporting Self-Sufficiency) is an arts and social justice organization dedicated to engaging critically with issues that affect our community and realizing our collective liberation through participatory storytelling and the documentary arts. Since 2000, The AjA Project has advanced its mission through media arts workshops, fellowships, grassroots advocacy, and community-driven public art. In recent years, in light of rising anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, we are intensifying our work to catalyze narrative change by elevating stories of lived experiences and building power and a sense of agency among San Diego's immigrant and refugee communities.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

AjA's creative advocacy initiatives harness the power of participatory arts to address issues of concern for local immigrant, refugee, and other historically marginalized communities. The Director of Creative Advocacy and Partnerships will play an essential role in informing, supporting, and expanding The AjA Project's art and advocacy work to amplify our programs' reach and impact. Reporting directly to the Executive Artistic Director, The Director will link AjA program staff, local coalitions, ally organizations, and refugee and immigrant communities who are disproportionately impacted by surveillance, criminalization, and civil liberties violations. This individual will conduct strategic analysis to deepen AjA's understanding of the policy landscape. They will use this analysis to develop creative advocacy responses at the city and county levels, through community engagement in town halls, oral history sharing, and public participatory art. The Director will focus on two key programs: 1) Countersurveillance, which empowers marginalized communities to use art and visual storytelling to challenge systems of surveillance, reclaim their narratives, and assert visibility on their own terms; and 2) Civil Liberties, which grounds in historical civil liberties violations, particularly the deportation of Japanese American Communities, to engage immigrant communities in using the media arts to explore, educate, and advocate for the current issues of concern. This is an ideal opportunity for someone who is passionate about arts-based social justice, creative advocacy, and applied participatory research in community settings. The Director of Creative Advocacy and Partnerships must be based in San Diego to attend AjA's in-person workshops and public art programs and build relationships with local partners. The fellowship tenure is 24 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 37.5 hours per week.

Responsibilities and tasks:

- **Coalition Engagement & Strategic Analysis:**
 - Participate in local coalitions including Transparent and Responsible Use of Surveillance Technology (TRUST SD), liaise with community allies, and stay up to date on related advocacy efforts; incorporate relevant learnings to inform *Countersurveillance and Civil Liberties*.
 - Cultivate and maintain relationships with local partners, advocacy groups, and stakeholders including Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA), Mid City Community Action Network, and others, ensuring bidirectional flow of information and insight.

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

- Analyze policies, technologies, and issues that impact local residents, and summarize research to identify creative tactics for AjA's engagement and advocacy that will be further developed by AjA staff.
- **Creative Advocacy:**
 - Develop and implement creative advocacy responses at the city and county levels through community engagement in town halls, oral history sharing, and public participatory art.
 - Work in collaboration with program staff to integrate advocacy activities into AjA programming.
 - Assess learnings from implementation to iteratively inform future programming.
 - Support the program team in translating analysis and advocacy messaging into public-facing materials such as social media content, infographics, and zines.

Qualifications:

- PhD in any field of the humanities or interpretive social sciences. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, with the ability to convey complex ideas clearly and accessibly to diverse audiences.
- Demonstrated ability to synthesize insights from primary and secondary sources.
- Strong project management and time management skills, including the ability to work independently, meet deadlines, and balance multiple priorities.
- Alignment with AjA's organizational values, including a commitment to equity, cultural humility, collaborative process, and the belief in the transformative power of art and storytelling.

Preferred:

- Demonstrated commitment to community-engaged or applied research, including work that is collaborative, participatory, and grounded in lived experience.
- Experience with community-based organizations, coalitions, or advocacy groups, particularly those connected to refugee, immigrant, and/or otherwise historically marginalized communities.
- Experience in community organizing, especially in coalition-building roles.
- Familiarity with issue-based advocacy, especially related to immigrant and refugee rights, surveillance, digital privacy, and civil liberties.
- Proficiency in qualitative research methods such as ethnography, oral history, or archival research.
- Interest or experience in arts-based advocacy and creative methods such as documentary or media arts, visual art, public art, participatory storytelling, etc.
- Experience designing or facilitating community-based education, especially informal learning spaces like workshops, teach-ins, or participatory arts programs.
- Relevant linguistic/cultural familiarity (e.g., Spanish, Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese, Swahili, etc.).

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 11, 2026.

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