



ACLS Leading Edge Fellowship 2026

Position Title	Program Evaluation and Research Coordinator
Organization	Operation Shoestring
Location	Jackson, MS
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

[Operation Shoestring](#) (OS) invests directly in the children, families, and neighborhoods of Jackson, Mississippi, aspiring to transformative change by supporting student success, providing family-centered programming, and cultivating community. We envision a thriving community for children and families where we all rise together united in purpose and prosperity. For nearly 60 years, we've provided safe spaces for kids and families in order to help create communities. Operation Shoestring primarily serves the Georgetown, Virden Addition, Mid-City and Midtown neighborhoods in the heart of central Jackson, just a stone's throw from Mississippi's capitol building. We provide year-round academic, social and emotional support to children from pre-K – 8th grade, while supporting and providing resources to their families. We currently serve nearly 200 school-aged children from approximately 160 low-income households. Our work features evidence-based literacy instruction and academic remediation with licensed teachers, as well as horizon-expanding opportunities. We partner annually with dozens of organizations and many volunteers to help support the children and families we serve. These strategic partnerships with community stakeholders allow us to offer our families an ever-expanding list of services including financial literacy workshops, maternal health supports, social services, and more. Through surveys, assessments, and frequent phone calls, we stay in close contact with families in our neighborhoods and create programming that is responsive to their needs, dreams, and desires

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Program Evaluation and Research Coordinator will work strategically with all full-time OS staff to provide program evaluation support, research, data analysis, and to communicate details of evidence-based practices for programs. This position will primarily gather and document service recipient and wider community feedback and associated data, while identifying opportunities for greater community impact. This position will also organize existing OS practices into a more clearly documented and accessible format that will allow OS to consistently implement and finetune programming while identifying potential innovations. Work conducted by the Coordinator will assist us in deepening our community development work and help us complete our facility and community masterplanning. A key component of this position is to research connections between community and service recipient feedback and existing best practices, policy, and academic research, and lay the groundwork for future projects such as generating spaces for community-resident advocacy and creating programming to foster advocacy skills. This position will assist OS in implementing the family and community components of OS's strategic plan while assisting OS in evaluation of its current efforts agency-wide. The skills fostered by a humanistic education (research, interdisciplinary thinking, communication, etc.) are vital to this role, which involves sharing data findings and ideating real-world applications of research with service recipients. This position is envisioned as one that all fields of humanities and interpretive social sciences can thrive in—OS will assist in procuring any data or evaluation training required for a candidate to succeed.

This role is envisioned as research-focused and iterative with clear lines of communication to community stakeholders and to constituents served by OS. As such, this position reports to the Communications Director while also serving as a liaison to our constituents and wider Jackson community. OS services are designed to help support the spiritual, emotional, and social needs of

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

people, and work actively toward social, economic, and racial equity. OS works hand in hand with service recipients, neighborhood residents, faith communities, businesses, policymakers, and interested individuals to carry out our current model of providing year-round academic, social, and emotional support to children. This fellow would add capacity to this work by providing data and assessments that will enhance our year-round services to a marginalized community. Through methods such as identifying best practices, compiling family program curriculum ideas, research, and focus groups, this fellow will assist OS in delivering high-quality programming and services to families in our core communities. This fellow will also connect their humanities experience to our work through creative problem solving, community presentations, literature reviews, and other applications of a well-rounded humanities education. The fellowship tenure is 24 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 37.5 hours per week.

Responsibilities and tasks:

- Research and present best practices for services in coordination with the OS executive team.
- Document and develop with OS's current strategic plan a cohesive calendar and curriculum for family programming.
- Solicit and document feedback from community residents, service participants, volunteers, and other stakeholders and design the tools to measure this feedback.
- Support Communications Director and Development Coordinator via research and information gleaned from community feedback.
- Develop initial plans for community advocacy programs
- Support OS staff in pursuing goals outlined in strategic plan and create assessment products for them to evaluate effectiveness of their efforts.

Qualifications:

- PhD in any field of the humanities or interpretive social sciences. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Able to pass a Mississippi State Department of Health background check.(Required for OS's childcare licensure)
- Experience in qualitative data analysis.
- Strong communication skills with a variety of audiences.
- Strong commitment to educational and economic equity.
- Ability to negotiate conflict in a productive manner.
- Reliable personal transportation and auto liability insurance.

Preferred:

- Experience interviewing constituents and/or conducting ethnographies.
- Experience or prior academic work relevant to children, education and/or social work.

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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