

The Gem Project Fellowship

2025–2026 School Year | October 14, 2025 – June 11, 2026| USA - HQ in Newark, NJ

About the Fellowship

The Gem Project Fellowship develops the next wave of youth leaders (ages 16–24) through organizing, service, and direct civic engagement. Fellows work together to tackle pressing issues in Newark, holding elected officials accountable while learning skills to lead change in their schools and communities.

Since 2006, The Gem Project has empowered over 3,500 youth and young adults through mentoring, organizing, and social justice initiatives.

Our **mission**: Boost high school and college student engagement and on-time graduation through peer-based mentoring, youth organizing, employment, and service-learning—all grounded in a social justice approach.

Our **vision**: A world where every young person, regardless of background, is equipped with the tools and resources to catalyze positive change in their communities.

While our programming includes leadership development, civic learning, and community organizing year-round, this year's centerpiece initiative is a powerful opportunity for youth to lead direct accountability efforts.

Focus for 2025–2026

- **Youth-Led Accountability Scorecard**: Fellows will design and present scorecards that measure how Newark School Board members are addressing student needs, including mental health, education quality, and equity.

Policy Drafting: Fellows will work on policy proposals shaped by community input, data, and lived experiences.

Direct Engagement: Fellows will meet with elected officials, present their findings, and advocate for changes that improve student and community life.

This Year's Initiative: Youth-Led Accountability Scorecard for Elected Officials & Civic Engagement

For the 2025–2026 school year, fellows will lead a dynamic youth-driven accountability campaign focused on the Newark School Board. This initiative includes and builds on work from June 2024:

- **Designing Youth Accountability Scorecards**
Fellows will co-create scorecards that track how school board members are responding to

student needs—especially around mental health, educational equity, and youth priorities, gained from focus groups and youth authored white papers from Newark, NJ.

- **Policy Drafting from Lived Experience**

Fellows will draft and hone policy proposals rooted in their communities' real needs and lived realities to propose in partnership with elected officials.

- **Direct Civic Engagement**

Fellows will present their scorecards and policy insights to elected officials, engaging in dialogue to elevate youth voices in educational decision-making.

Key Dates at a Glance

Milestone	Date
Application Deadline	September 30, 2025
Interviews	October 6–10, 2025
Fellowship Kickoff	October 14, 2025
Fall Term	Oct –Dec 2025
Spring Term	Feb–June 2026
Summer Movement-Building (Optional)	Summer 2026

What Fellows Gain

- ☐ Service Stipend (up to \$1,000 based on attendance and deliverables)
- ☐ Hundreds of hours of civic engagement and organizing experience
- ☐ Hands-on work with accountability tools, policy briefs, community service, and civic advocacy.
- ☐ Professional development aligned with justice-centered leadership and summer employment opportunities based on
- ☐ Mentorship, college/career readiness, and a polished digital portfolio

Cohort & Format

- **In-Person and Hybrid Cohort** (based near Rutgers Newark, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4–6 PM)
 - **Online Cohort** (flexible for out-of-state or conflicting schedules, given via asynchronous modality)
 - **Stipend Awards Issued:** December 2025 & June 2026
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How to Apply

- **Visit:** thegemproject.org

Deadline: September 30, 2025

Questions? Email HQ@thegemproject.org or call (973) 506-9275