

# ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hybrid-Remote | Washington, District of Columbia  
Applications Due Sunday, March 1, 2026 at 9pm ET

Advancement Project is seeking its next Executive Director (ED) at a pivotal moment in our history; a time when rising authoritarianism is attacking the progress and power of our multiracial democracy and threatening the opportunities, freedom, and safety of brown and Black people nationwide. This is a unique opportunity for an inspiring, adaptive leader to take the helm of a bold, thriving racial justice organization. The next ED will follow the successful leadership of Judith Browne Dianis, who has served as Advancement Project's Executive Director for nine years and as a founding staff member for 25 years.

In response to the original call for applications in Fall 2025, Advancement Project was heartened to receive inquiries from many qualified candidates. The search committee also recognizes that the challenges facing the social justice sector have made it difficult for many leaders to consider a career move and prepare an application. For this reason, we have decided to extend the application period and to remain open to new applications on a rolling basis. Please see further details below.

### About Advancement Project

[Advancement Project](#) is a cutting-edge, no-holds-barred, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to building local power in communities of color across the country. We wholeheartedly believe in the genius of ordinary people to achieve lasting and permanent change. We envision a future where people of color are free – where they can thrive, be safe, and exercise power.

Since its founding in 1999 by three former attorneys from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Advancement Project has grown into a powerhouse organization with over 35 dedicated staff members and a budget of \$8.3 million. Our staff have been members of a collective bargaining unit since 2017 – The Washington-Baltimore News Guild, CWA Local 32035.

Our team of movement lawyers, organizers, advocates, and communicators can be found in the courts, in the media, and on the ground fighting for change. Partnerships are central to our impact locally, regionally and nationally. Through our partnerships with coalitions and local allies, we offer strategy development, research, litigation, training, and communications support. Over the years, we have worked with more than 75 [partner organizations](#) in 18 states to strive for justice against enormous odds.

The [Advancement Project Action Fund](#), our 501(c)(4) sister organization, directly engages in voter education and mobilization around racial justice issues and supports advocacy work to

advance policies that help communities of color thrive. Our Executive Director also leads the Action Fund, under the governance of a separate Board of Directors.

Currently, our efforts to build power and dismantle racism are focused on three issue areas:

**Voting Rights** | We are leading the way in the emerging voter protection movement. We eliminate barriers to voting and restore voting rights to those who have been disenfranchised. This includes identifying and preventing voter suppression efforts that target voters of color, the illegal removal of voters from the rolls, polling place closures and consolidations, insufficient notice of changes to voting procedures, barriers to voting by mail, and voter intimidation.

Advancement Project has been fighting to protect electoral power since we served as legal counsel in the 2000 presidential election case in Florida. Since then, we successfully challenged North Carolina's voter suppression law, and we were the founding member of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition that won the ballot initiative striking down the state's ban on voting for those with felony convictions. We also supported legislative efforts to pass the Virginia Voting Rights Act, the first voting rights anti-discrimination law in the South.

**Policing & Decriminalization** | We are working to end abusive policing and dismantle the prison system so communities can define and build their own visions for safety. We challenge the militarized police enforcement that criminalizes Black, brown, and immigrant communities, and we protect the rights of activists and organizers targeted for exercising their right to dissent. Our work demands divestment from police and incarceration, including ending local police participation in immigration enforcement, and reinvesting in community-led safety solutions rooted in care, equity, and self-determination.

In partnership with movement leaders, strategies like the Stop Cop City campaign are halting the expansion of militarized training facilities and stopping state-sanctioned violence. We continue to stand with organizers in the streets and in the courts to ensure they can protest without fear of government retaliation. And we helped secure concrete wins such as supporting the Close the Workhouse Campaign with Action St. Louis, which forced the city to commit to shutting down a jail and investing those resources back into the community.

**Education Justice** | We are pioneering the movement to end the school-to-prison pipeline. We fight for access to quality public education and police-free schools, including efforts to defend Black, Latiné, immigrant, and LGBTQIA+ students, and to resist school closures.

We won significant victories in several school districts across the country that reformed disciplinary policies and practices and removed police from schools entirely. This work led to federal guidance on racial discrimination in school discipline. Building and nurturing a grassroots movement of parents and youth was key to this success. For example, along with the Alliance for Education Justice, we launched the National Police Free Schools Campaign, a youth-led campaign to end policing in their schools.

## **The Opportunity**

The Advancement Project's next executive leader will join us at a critical moment in the organization's work, ensuring our ongoing stability and continued impact. Key responsibilities will include:

**Strategic Leadership** | Develop and implement power shifting strategies that lead to systemic change and weave together grassroots organizing, movement lawyering, litigation, and

communications. Continually develop bold new approaches and evaluate impact in collaboration with our staff and partners.

**Partnering** | Play an active role in establishing and maintaining partnerships with grassroots and national movement allies, and regularly identify opportunities for collaboration and greater impact.

**Communication** | Serve as a public-facing thought leader and spokesperson for our organization, issue areas, and campaigns, to increase our visibility, amplify the voices of partners, and help to shift the narrative. Working alongside the communications team and program leaders, our ED is a visible and inspiring communicator at a host of public speaking engagements, from national conferences to mainstream media appearances.

**Management** | Hire and lead the development and retention of a talented and diverse staff team. Currently, five staff members report directly to the ED – the Deputy Executive Director, the Managing Director of Development, the Managing Director of Campaign Strategies, the Managing Director of Communications, and the Chief Operating Officer. Our ED ensures the ongoing stability and impact of the organization, and its C4 arm, Advancement Project Action Fund. This includes working closely with the Chief Operating Officer to oversee fiscal planning, budgeting, management, human resources, organizational culture, technology, safety and security, union relations, and legal compliance.

**Fundraising** | Closely partner with a robust development team to create and implement annual fundraising plans that raised more than \$6 million in 2025 from foundations (86%), individuals (13%), and corporations (1%).

**Board Relations** | Build and maintain strong relationships with our Board of Directors, and ensure they have the tools and information needed to govern the organization.

## **Profile of Our Next Leader**

Advancement Project seeks a visionary, ambitious, strategic, and values-aligned leader to guide us through the next chapter of the organization as we strive to counter the rising tide of anti-democratic and racist forces. Successful applicants will hold most of the following core qualifications. While all of these skills and attributes are critical to the ED's role, we are mindful that some knowledge and skills can be learned and some experiences can be deepened with focused effort. If you have the requisite passion, most of the core qualifications or extraordinary strength in one or more of them, and can envision yourself as Advancement Project's next ED, we encourage you to apply and tell us why.

**Leadership** | A bold executive or senior-level leader in an organization of similar size and complexity to Advancement Project. You bring 10-plus years of professional experience. Prior experience at the executive level is ideal but not a requirement. What is more important is that our next ED is an inspiring leader who can demonstrate a track record for initiating and leading change efforts that have resulted in real impact. You also bring the capacity to manage organizations, supervise effectively, and build teams, in collaboration with a talented staff team. Your leadership style projects both gravitas and humility. In short, you are a leader that others want to follow. You also foster a work environment that values listening and learning, and respects the voices and expertise of colleagues, movement partners, and other stakeholders. You are skilled at conflict resolution and able to manage through crises. Among the key qualities you will bring to this role are energy, self-awareness, flexibility, optimism, and a focus on accountability.

**Legal Background** | Holds a J.D. and deep experience with movement lawyering. Specific experience with litigation as a strategy for challenging power is a significant plus. Advancement Project defines movement lawyering as community-centered racial justice lawyering. We support power building in grassroots organizations working to eliminate oppressive structures in our laws and institutions and to shift narratives towards transformative change. While we envision our next ED will possess a legal background, community organizers and other movement actors with a track record working alongside attorneys are equally welcome to apply.

**Movement Background** | Shows a dedicated history in radical, leftist, and abolitionist movement spaces. Our next ED may very well be an experienced organizer in their own right and will absolutely know how to listen to and partner with grassroots and frontline activists. Our next leader will have significant experience in at least one of Advancement Project's core issue areas – democracy, policing, or educational equity. If your experience is closely aligned with one of our issue areas, we welcome you to apply and make the case for why your background is connected to our work.

**Fundraising & Communications** | Advancement Project's leader must be a compelling storyteller and skilled writer with the ability to engage and inspire a wide range of audiences. We are looking for a strategic and powerhouse communicator who is also humble. Fundraising is a critical responsibility for our ED in partnership with a robust and talented development team. While direct experience with foundation and individual fundraising is desirable, what is most important is that our next leader can leverage their skills as a persuasive communicator and authentic relationship builder to grow and sustain mission-critical revenue. Knowledge of 501(c)(4) fundraising is a plus.

## **Compensation & Location**

The successful candidate will be offered an annual salary of \$325,000 - \$370,000 depending on experience. This is a full-time, hybrid position that currently requires presence in the D.C. office two days per week. We are open to a fully remote ED with expectations for in-office presence to be negotiated. If relocation is necessary or desired, Advancement Project will provide a moving stipend of \$7,500. Our Executive Director can expect to travel regularly to represent the organization at meetings, events, and conferences.

Advancement Project's compensation package fosters a human-centered workplace that prioritizes sustainability and work-life balance. This includes paid vacation time that increases with tenure, starting with 15 days during the first two years of employment. We also offer 13 paid holidays and 3 floating holidays, along with office closure between December 24th and January 1st, and Fridays off in the month of August. In addition to time off for illness and other life events, employees are eligible for a fully paid, one-month sabbatical after seven years of employment, and every five years thereafter. Medical insurance is fully covered for all employees, their spouse/partner, and dependents. Advancement Project offers a 403(b) retirement plan and matches 60% of employee contributions (up to 6% of salary), increasing to 70% after five years of employment. Other benefits include a Flexible Spending Account for healthcare, commuting costs, and dependent care, and student loan relief.

## **Application Instructions**

Strategies for Social Change® LLC (SSC) is conducting the executive search and transition for Advancement Project. SSC is a woman of color-owned, nationally recognized capacity building and leadership development practice dedicated to working with social justice organizations. Advancement Project is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

We are accepting applications on a rolling basis until further notice. The priority deadline for applications is Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 9 pm ET. This means that applications received on or before the priority deadline will be reviewed in the order they are received. Applicants selected for interviews with our Board-Staff Leadership Transition Committee will be contacted before the end of March.

## **A Note For Previous Applicants**

If you previously applied for the position during the first round, and you have not been informed otherwise, we are holding onto your application and will consider your candidacy alongside any new applications. We have revised the profile above and added to the instructions below. Upon reviewing these instructions, if you would like to revise and resubmit your application materials, feel free to do so.

## **Application Instructions**

Please upload your application materials using [this link](#). Your application should include:

- A thoughtful and compelling cover letter (no more than 3 pages) that briefly describes your leadership journey and explains why you want to join Advancement Project. The search committee is especially interested in how you have successfully led change, practiced movement lawyering, and/or community organizing. Please also highlight your experience working alongside or within grassroots groups and in radical movement spaces.
- A resume (no more than 4 pages) that clearly addresses the qualifications above, and includes highlights of your communications experience. Please include links to written work products and/or speaking engagements.
- Contact information for three references, including names, affiliation, relationships to you, email addresses, and phone numbers. References will not be contacted until the final stage of the search, and candidates will be given an opportunity to notify their references in advance.

---