



**SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS**

Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness Fellowship Program

Partner Organization: Special Olympics Inc.

Project Title: Family Advocacy for Disability Inclusion

SCSC Fellowship 2023:

Project Proposal

Partner Organization: Special Olympics Inc.

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for over 4 million children and adults with intellectual disabilities around the world, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

Currently, Special Olympics has programming in 201 countries across the world representing seven global regions: North America, Latin America, Middle East/North Africa, Africa, Europe-Eurasia, East Asia, and Asia Pacific.

Special Olympics' work goes beyond sports events, aiming to drive social change, improve the health of our athletes and build inclusive communities that enable full social participation and life-long fitness for people with intellectual disabilities (ID) throughout the world. Through our 54 years of experience, we know that adults and children with intellectual disabilities are every society's most neglected population.

Learn more at: <https://www.specialolympics.org/>

Location of the Project: Remote

Special Olympics Headquarters is located in Washington, DC but the fellowship will operate remotely.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Section 1: Description of the Project

Over the past five years, Special Olympics has devoted significant resources to understanding the experience of families within the movement with a particular focus

on siblings of Special Olympics athletes. Through this work we were able to gain insight into the unique experiences of siblings and create more thoughtful and meaningful sibling engagement opportunities.

Building on the success of our sibling engagement work, Special Olympics will expand engagement opportunities to now include parents and caregivers. Over the next four years, Special Olympics plans to develop and implement a global family strategy that engages, educates, and empowers family members of Special Olympics athletes to be teachers of inclusion. Families will learn to advocate for more opportunities for their family member with an intellectual disability to play, through Unified Sports, and be represented in inclusive education, through Unified Schools programming. Siblings, parents and caregivers will join the Global Leadership Coalition as local and national leaders advocating for national governments to achieve full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

This project will help us towards this goal by providing Special Olympics with 1) an understanding of the current landscape of family advocacy and what is known about the impact of families on governments or other policy makers, 2) outcomes of these family advocacy efforts, and 3) best practices and examples of successful advocacy activities by families.

Section 2: Goals of the Project

The goals of the overall family engagement strategy for Special Olympics is to mobilize and train family members to advocate to governments and global development organizations on the importance of inclusive education. Targeted areas for this work include the following regions and countries:

- Africa: Kenya, Nigeria, Sengal, and South Africa
- Asia Pacific: Australia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand
- East Asia: Mongolia
- Europe Eurasia: Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland
- Middle East North Africa: Egypt, Kuwait, UAE
- North America: Belize, Canada, United States

Engaging and training families through the Global Leadership Coalition will also provide opportunities for families from diverse backgrounds to connect with each other,

understand shared experiences, and use this connection to sustain advocacy efforts over time.

In order to do this, Special Olympics must understand the current landscape of family advocacy around the world in order to effectively mobilize athletes and their families to effect change within their local communities and countries - through advocacy to governments and global development organizations on the importance of inclusion and belonging. **Therefore, the overarching goal of this project is to help Special Olympics understand the current state of advocacy in the field of disability inclusion within sports, schools, and communities and identify strategies for achieving maximum impact.**

Importantly, this project will be inclusive as the fellow will work alongside a Special Olympics athlete leader on all phases of this project so that the voices of people with intellectual disability are included.

Section 3: Guiding Questions

1. What is the current landscape of family advocacy in various parts of the world?
 - a. What is the impact of families on governments or other policy makers?
 - b. What are the outcomes of family advocacy efforts?
 - c. What are best practices and examples of successful advocacy activities by families?
2. How do families describe their advocacy experiences towards inclusion for their child with intellectual disability and or the larger disability population?
 - a. What are the successes?
 - b. What are the challenges?
 - c. What advice would families give to others who are just learning how to advocate?
3. What is the role of community and belonging in family advocacy?
 - a. What networks support family advocacy?
 - b. Do experiences of belonging [to a community, organization, cause] help empower advocates?

Section 4: Key Deliverables

- 1 blog post (500 – 1,000 word), posted to SCSC’s website.
 - Including an easy read version of the blog co-created with the Special Olympics athlete leader.
- A Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) in support of the Final Output
 - The CEI will be led by the Fellow and designed with the support of SCSC’s program manager and the SOI team. This could include interviews with families of Special Olympics athletes who have experience advocating for inclusion to understand in more detail their experiences, successes, and challenges.
- A Final Output(s)
 - A 25 – 35-page research report supported by primary or secondary source data focused on analyzing the current landscape of inclusion.
 - An easy read summary of the final report co-created with the Special Olympics athlete leader.
- A Final Presentation with the Cohort

Applicant Information:

About the Fellowship/What the Fellowship Offers

The Fellowship empowers young people, recent graduates, and community leaders to engage in meaningful research and community action. At the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness our mission is to build connectedness within and between communities through partnerships, research, programming, learning initiatives, and advocacy. Belonging is central to our work, and the Fellowship offers the opportunity to apply the lens of ‘Belonging’ to intersectional issues, writing, and problem solving.

This is a paid full-time opportunity from May 8 – August 28, 2023 [16 weeks]. The Social Connectedness Fellowship is a research and community action summer program focused on understanding & integrating social connectedness.

SCSC Offers:

- Competitive wages
- Work with national & international community partners
- Capacity building, skills development, & mentorship

- Meaningful work where your research has impact

Equity Statement:

The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness is an equal opportunity employer, and we encourage applicants to apply even if they do not meet all the criteria. We believe all candidates have something to bring to the organization and the role. If you have skills outside the job description that you think can benefit the project, let us know in your cover letter. We encourage all equity-seeking groups such as immigrants, Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, women, young people, 2SLGBTQ+ community members, and people with disabilities to apply. Please let us know if you need any accommodation throughout the application and interview process and we will be happy to support you.

Key Attributes and Skills in the Applicant:

- Academic background in the psychology, social sciences or related field
- Some knowledge of or interest in disability inclusion and non-profits as well as government relations and/or policy.
- Exhibit cultural sensitivity; be mindful of challenges facing marginalized populations
- Exceptional communication and organizational skills
- Demonstrated writing and research skills
- Detail-oriented, flexible, excellent time management skills and the ability to work independently to complete projects in a timely fashion.
- Basic computer skills, including proficiency in email, internet research and Microsoft Office.
- Creative thinker with a genuine curiosity and investigative sensibility.
- Prior experience working with people with ID or Special Olympics a plus