



Mobilizing social science for the public good.

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROSPECTUS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than a century, the [Social Science Research Council](#) (SSRC) has been furthering research and building research capacity in the social sciences for the benefit of the public. At a moment when the social sciences are ever more important, and with the Council in excellent financial health, the SSRC's Board of Directors has launched the search for the Council's new President, with an appointment expected to take effect in early 2026. The Board will prefer to appoint a chief executive who will lead the organization on a full-time basis, but is open to considering candidates who will commit to the role on a part-time (at least 50%) basis.

The SSRC's new President will be a proven relationship builder with deep intellectual and academic credibility who will champion a compelling vision for the Council, inspiring stakeholders across the social sciences community through genuine curiosity and conviction about the role the social sciences play in advancing just, informed, and responsible societies. The new President will combine the highest standards of leadership, a commitment to accountability, and a capacity for strategic risk-taking to support innovation and impact in all the Council does. Drawing on a record of effective executive leadership in managing people, programs, finances, and relationships, the President will have the opportunity to strengthen donor relationships and expand revenue streams to ensure that the SSRC will continue to play the catalyzing and convening role it has played since 1923.

THE COUNCIL

Based in New York City, the SSRC is an independent, not-for-profit, international organization. Created in 1923 when representatives from four professional associations—the American Economic Association, the American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Association, and the American Statistical Association—began working together to “advance the development of scientific methods in the social sciences by mobilizing social and behavioral scientists to search for solutions to important societal problems.” Two years later, the American Anthropological Association, the American Historical Association, and the American Psychological Association sent representatives to join the fledgling organization.

Today, the SSRC enjoys collaborations with hundreds of US and internationally based researchers, policymakers, and institutional professionals active in the private and public sectors.

The work of the SSRC is funded by philanthropic institutions and governmental agencies (both US and international), as well as by the College and University Fund for the Social Sciences, an arm of the SSRC that includes more than 50 institutions of higher education. A [network](#) of major foundations, corporate partners, agencies, and NGOs provides support, counsel, and leverage for the Council's work. The SSRC in turn contributes to the work of several advisory councils, including for the Fulbright U.S. Scholars Program and the United Nations Scientific Advisory Board.

A staff of approximately 50 develops and executes the Council's [programs](#), which encompass the management of interdisciplinary research projects, workshops and conferences, fellowships and summer training institutes, and a wide array of scholarly exchanges. The SSRC shares knowledge with various public and decision-making groups through publications and other communications, including the [Knowledge Platforms and Publications](#) that the Council sustains on overarching themes.

SSRC staff members work in a range of in-person and hybrid modalities, many though not all of them in the New York City metro area. The President may also establish a hybrid work arrangement.

The Council recently completed a \$100 million campaign focused on programmatic and operational initiatives. Alongside the Council's success with philanthropy, its College and University Fund for the Social Sciences (CUF) is a cornerstone fundraising priority and offers clear value to multiple stakeholder groups (universities, governments, and foundations) while addressing urgent societal challenges through evidence-based policy solutions. In FY2025, the Council reported revenues of \$16.3M. Its endowment is currently valued at approximately \$50M.

THE POSITION

The President is the chief executive officer of the SSRC and is responsible for its organizational and fiscal health, and for setting, articulating, and implementing the SSRC's strategy in collaboration with its Board of Directors. The President is the principal outside spokesperson for the SSRC. The President should be a distinguished social scientist, dedicated to scholarly, programmatic, and institutional innovation, and should possess a wide range of intellectual interests, an appreciation for different scholarly approaches, and the capacity to connect, collaborate, and facilitate exchange across diverse geographic, institutional, and intellectual boundaries.

The President orchestrates the Council's efforts to secure funding for programs aligned with its programmatic direction and must be an energetic fundraiser, skilled speaker, and able representative of the social sciences who can explain their contributions to potential funders. As a respected and creative intellectual, the President uses the Council's convening power to bring different communities of scholarship and practice into conversation with foundations, government and international agencies, and the public to address challenges around the world. The President also harnesses the communications organs of the Council to convey its research findings and accomplishments to the scholars, institutions, and agencies most likely to benefit from them.

The President works to increase the Council's institutional capacities through the cultivation of productive relationships with people of diverse interests and affiliations, superintends the basic features of the budget, fundraises to meet core operating costs and support its programs; and envisions new programmatic directions. With the assistance of the Chief Operating Officer, the President leads, guides, and mentors a diverse staff of professional social scientists. The President supports staff members in raising program-specific funds and achieving programmatic goals and is supported by them in turn in developing new initiatives.

The President reports to the SSRC Board of Directors and typically serves a five-year term renewable upon mutual agreement after an external review during the fourth year.

QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

In providing dynamic, accountable, empathetic, and impactful leadership of the SSRC, the President will draw on many qualities, competencies, and experiences. The Board appreciates that each candidate will possess strengths in different measure. Nonetheless, the successful candidate will bring a majority of the following qualities to the role:

Intellectual and Creative Leadership

The President should have a record of outstanding creativity and intellectual achievement in the social sciences, wide-ranging intellectual interests, and a substantial record of impact. Evidence of distinguished leadership related to the academy and intellectual life is expected, as are deep connections within academia and with both established and emerging funders of social-science research. The President should have a demonstrated record of building teams and supporting initiatives amongst staff, while maintaining a culture of collaboration across a virtual, geographically distributed organization.

Constituency Connections and Cultivation

The SSRC is a network of networks. The President should demonstrate skill at creating and using cultural capital. This includes the ability to interface with the SSRC's wide range of constituencies and stakeholders, such as US and internationally based social scientists, foundation presidents and officers, individual donors, consumers of social science inside and outside of governments, international agencies, and advocacy groups.

Leading Through Ideas: Defending Social Science Value in a Complex Environment

The increasingly challenging environment for the social sciences requires a leader who can articulate the value of research through compelling ideas and creative solutions, building public trust by demonstrating the relevance and integrity of social science disciplines and re-establishing the value of these disciplines and the knowledge they produce to society, policy, and government.

Commitment to Openness

The President should combine a clear expertise in specific areas of the social sciences with intellectual range and a distinct appreciation for and openness to approaches, topics, and views outside their area. Further, the President should seek to make the Council and its programs as inclusive as possible.

Fundraising

In addition to championing programs and projects, the President should have the ability to raise core and endowment funds not attached to programs and to fundraise in the more traditional style of a university President, through cultivation of sources of financial support, both individual and institutional, whose strategic concerns align with the Council's work.

Organizational Skills and Administrative Experience

The President must have experience with how organizations operate and how organizations can best be deployed to fulfill their mission. They must be able to manage a complex organization and oversee its administration and

budgets. Experience beyond the academy, either in a foundation or not-for-profit, or broad intellectual experience in a public-oriented organization, is important.

International Reach

The SSRC exists in a globalized world. The President should not be constrained by the boundaries of American intellectual life or by issues of domestic concern. The ability to nurture the SSRC's international networks of social scientists and practitioners and to enhance the SSRC's international orientation is critical. The President should be able to foster interdisciplinarity, international reach, and innovative knowledge production, in order to mobilize high-quality social science knowledge for the benefit of all societies.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Board is interested in discussing with its chosen candidate a full- or part-time (at least 50%) appointment, with time commitment, responsibilities, expectations, and compensation to be negotiated appropriately.

Annual salary is commensurate with experience. The general salary range for this position is \$450,000 - \$550,000 annually, with compensation determined based on experience, qualifications, and whether the position is structured as part-time or full-time.

Comprehensive benefits include health, dental, vision, disability, life, and gym reimbursement; annual tuition and/or student loan reimbursement and professional development funds; outstanding pension plan and tax savings programs; generous vacation and sick leave; and more.

The Social Science Research Council is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer, dedicated to equal employment opportunity and to cultivating and sustaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce. The SSRC maintains a policy of non-discrimination with all employees and applicants for employment. All aspects of employment with the Council are made on the basis of competence, skill and qualifications and will not be influenced in any manner by race, creed, color, religion, sex/gender, national origin/ancestry, ethnicity, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital or domestic partner status, medical conditions (including pregnancy and/or genetic information) or physical or mental disability, citizenship status or any other categories prohibited by law.

THE SEARCH PROCESS

The Social Science Research Council has retained [Opus Partners](#) to support this recruitment. [Craig Smith](#), Senior Partner, [Kenna Boyd](#), Partner, and [Marisea Rivera](#), Senior Associate, are leading the search.

Applications, inquiries, and nominations should be sent to marisea.rivera@opus-partners.net. Required application materials include a CV and letter of interest that addresses the responsibilities and qualifications of the role. The search process will unfold with the greatest possible attention to candidate confidentiality. Finalist candidates should expect to complete a comprehensive reference-checking process managed by Opus Partners as well as a background check.