



**JOB POSTING: Project Coordinator, “Stronger Michigan Communities”  
Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice, Detroit**

The Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice (Sugar Law) is seeking a mid-career professional with strong writing, interpersonal and time management skills to coordinate and lead support to external clients and partners for Sugar Law’s **Stronger Michigan Communities** initiative. The Project Coordinator for **Stronger Michigan Communities** will work closely with community activists and coalitions in Michigan, as part of Sugar Law’s team providing technical support and meaningful advocacy. The ideal candidate will have a demonstrated commitment to working in, and with, social justice communities, excellent communications skills in a range of settings, and an understanding of the impacts of infrastructure decisions on the communities that bear them.

**Organization Background**

The Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice is a national, nonprofit organization founded in 1991, dedicated to using the law and other public advocacy to advance the rights of working people and their communities. Sugar Law was founded as a project of the National Lawyers Guild, and remains closely affiliated with the Guild, a national nonprofit legal and political organization of lawyers, legal workers, law students and jailhouse lawyers. The Guild is the oldest and most extensive network of public-interest and human rights activists working within the U.S. legal system. All of Sugar Law’s work reaffirms the Guild’s basic principle that human rights are more important than property rights.

Throughout its history Sugar Law has highlighted the interdependence of civil and economic rights, working to bind corporations and government to their legal and moral responsibilities. Sugar Law has built a national network of attorneys who work closely with the Center, thus maintaining national scope while keeping costs low.

Over almost two decades, Sugar Law has provided valuable advocacy for thousands of low-income workers fighting workplace abuses. Sugar Law has also consistently served as a resource and advocate for community groups seeking to have a say in local and state economic development.

**Project Background: Stronger Michigan Communities**

Sugar Law has always given particular attention and resources to its home city and state. The new position of Project Coordinator will focus on directly providing and coordinating support for the organization’s Michigan work to increase its effectiveness in serving clients here, while also identifying lessons relevant for social justice efforts around the U.S.

The primary focus of **Stronger Michigan Communities** over the next 2 ½ years will be to provide technical assistance to community groups in Michigan that are uniting to demand that economic development in the state serve all its residents. Sugar Law will support those who are bringing to Michigan the “community benefits” model, a strategy that changes major development projects through community organizing, applied research, legal strategies, and alliance-building. The goal of community benefits organizing is to make more positive the impact economic development has on the environment, job opportunities, and neighborhood quality of life for low-income communities and people of color.

Coalitions using community benefits strategies elsewhere in the U.S. have negotiated remarkable investments on the part of private developers to meet community needs. As such coalitions and community alliances come together in Michigan, Sugar Law will provide multiple forms of facilitation, legal and technical support to their efforts. These include: 1) Research and analysis—legal, economic and

political; 2) Outreach and communications support; 3) Coalition functioning assistance; and 4) Legal representation as needed. The forms of Sugar Law’s assistance are determined by the needs, requests and phase of development of each community group, as well as by Sugar Law’s capacity and resources.

In Southeastern Michigan, the community benefits model has already managed to do something virtually unprecedented: over the past year, it has brought together a diverse coalition of unions, environmental, community- and faith-based organizations. These stakeholders have joined together in a collaborative called “Doing Development Differently in (Metro) Detroit” (D4), to advance effective and equitable economic development—development that will create good jobs while ensuring a healthy, safe environment for all. Sugar Law has been involved in the emergence of D4, has provided some of the support described above to the coalition, and anticipates continuing to participate in D4’s work advancing community benefits in metro Detroit.

## **The Position**

### **PURPOSE**

Working closely with and under the direction of Sugar Law’s Executive Director and Legal Director, provide support to and assist in coordinating the Center’s technical assistance to D4 and other community benefits coalitions in Michigan. Represent Sugar Law in multiple external contexts; advocate effectively for social and economic justice for low-income communities and people of color.

### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Approx. 80% of time:*

Provide support directly and coordinate Sugar Law’s assistance to community benefits coalitions in Michigan. The following duties are neither a complete nor a comprehensive list, but are provided to suggest the scope of support this position may encompass.

- Coordinate technical support providers drawn from coalition member organizations and individuals hired under contract to conduct research and policy development around regional economic development issues.
- Analyze issues, research and draft legal and technical memoranda, legal documents, and related material in support of community benefits coalitions’ efforts.
- Assist in developing Sugar Law positions on strategy formation, coalition work, and policy advocacy. Represent the Sugar Law Center at public meetings and coalition discussions, in committees, workgroups, and other forums conducted to advance the work of community benefits alliances and coalitions.
- Work effectively with key leadership of allied organizations; assist in forging and implementing common agendas and action plans.
- Provide support and guidance to subgroups, taskforces or campaigns within a given coalition.
- Support recruitment of and communication with coalition member organizations and unions.

*Approx. 20% of time:*

Support Sugar Law’s other work for economic, racial and social justice in Michigan. This includes litigation, public advocacy, communications, and coalition-building. Develop organizational tools to connect these Sugar Law functions and maximize team effectiveness.

*In addition:*

Pitch in with good humor and team dedication to help with Sugar Law organizational needs of all sorts as the need arises.

## **DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

Experience: This is a mid-level position. The ideal candidate will have 4-6 years of relevant experience. Individuals with the requisite skill set should apply.

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience; J.D. a plus.
- Familiarity with metro Detroit organizations, issues and challenges.
- Demonstrated experience in at least two of the following:
  - legal research and analysis;
  - other research and analysis (academic, urban planning, etc.);
  - project management;
  - community organizing, building diverse and effective alliances and collaborations;
  - managing local or regional advocacy campaigns;
  - successful work with unions, community groups, and/or nonprofit organizations.
- Excellent verbal and written communications skills.
- Excellent organizational and planning skills, ability to meet deadlines and problem-solve.
- Excellent research and analytical skills.
- Excellent interpersonal skills; ability to work collaboratively, independently, and under the direction of others.
- Demonstrated commitment to social, racial and economic justice; understanding of the mission and operations of Sugar Law Center.

Strong candidates will either have knowledge of local and regional public policy and economic development processes or show an ability to learn these topics quickly. Strong candidates will be able to provide evidence of their commitment to the Detroit region or other Michigan communities.

## **SALARY/BENEFITS**

\$33,000-\$45,000, depending on qualifications. This is a 2.5-year grant-funded position with the possibility of extension. Good benefits. Position reports to either Executive Director or Legal Director of Sugar Law; does not have supervisory responsibilities. Position is represented by UAW Local 2320. All staff must join the National Lawyers Guild (dues paid by Sugar Law).

Sugar Law Center is committed to affirmative action for all under-represented groups.

This position will regularly require the employee to use a personal computer, communicate orally to large and small audiences, reason and analyze, travel independently around metropolitan Detroit. On occasion, the employee may also need to travel elsewhere in Michigan.

Candidates invited to interview will be asked if they need reasonable accommodation for this process.

## **TO APPLY**

Send a resume, cover letter, and three references to the address below. In your cover letter, please provide information demonstrating your commitment to the Detroit region or other Michigan communities, with specific details on your experience.

For email please be sure to use "Stronger Michigan Communities Candidate [YOUR NAME]" as the subject. Attachments must be in PDF format or a format that can be opened and read with MS Word.

Cover letters will be considered to serve as writing samples, but finalist candidates will be asked to complete a real-time writing assessment as well.

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