

Policy Fellowship: How to Apply

Applications for SRCD's U.S. Policy Fellowship program open each year in the fall and typically close early in the new year. Learn about how to apply, eligibility requirements and all about finals week in D.C.

Applications for the 2024-25 SRCD U.S. Federal and State Policy Fellowship are closed. Applications for the 2025-2026 cohort will open in Fall 2024.

What's New This Year?

We strive to build diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into everything we do in the Policy Fellowship, including in our selection process. That's why, for the 2024-25 cohort, we have made significant changes to our application process to build in DEI best practices.

Applicants will be assessed based on concrete skills, which are described in detail below. Your submission will be name and institution blind to ensure we look at the facts and not institutional branding. We will continue our commitment to ensuring applicants are scored by multiple reviewers at each phase, and that we spend diligent time moderating scores, to ensure we have a fair and impartial result. And, we will guarantee that everyone gets feedback at every stage, to help everyone know what to improve when they either apply again to us, or look at other opportunities.

This is a new process for us, and we may make revisions in the future, so please watch this space if you are considering applying in upcoming years. We encourage this year's applicants to read carefully to understand the changes.



What We Look For

This program is best suited for researchers that are passionate about evidence-based policymaking, who are open to growth and learning, and who want to explore policy-related career paths.

You will be most successful if you are eager to learn, are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and are passionate about bringing evidence into the policy space.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for all placements must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Earn a doctoral-level degree (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D.) relevant to child development by September 1 of the following year.
- Be active members of SRCD. **While our database is under improvement, we are currently accepting new membership.**

Citizenship

- Federal agency and Congressional applicants must be U.S. citizens,
- Non-U.S. citizens can apply to the state fellowship but must get confirmation that lack of citizenship is not a requirement.

Specific backgrounds

- State and Congressional applicants must have an interest in early childhood. Candidates may have conducted research or worked in practice with families of young children or systems that touch young children such as programs that touch low-income families.

Application Submissions

Submission Details

Applications are submitted on our online portal. If you're preparing in advance, here's what you need to prepare:

1) Application Questions

These include eligibility questions on your degree status, SRCO membership status, and citizenship status (note, state applicants should check citizenship eligibility with their placement office). You will be asked to provide your educational and professional background, demographic information, and you will be asked to self-assess your experience with different research methodologies and child development concepts.

2) Statement of Interest (1,600-word limit)

You will be asked to complete a personal statement addressing the following questions:

- What are your current areas of research, primary questions of interest, and methodologies used to address the questions?
- What interests you in the SRCD state/federal policy fellowship? What do you hope to learn from this experience and why do you want to learn those skills?
- What specific skills, training, or experience make you a good candidate for this fellowship?
- Please describe a specific instance where you worked with someone from a different background than yours, such as those from different racial, ethnic, or economic backgrounds. What was this experience like and what did you learn?

3) References

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You will need to ask for **three** references to complete a short survey about your skills, abilities, and experiences.

Note: The Selection Panel will only review the responses of three (3) references for each applicant. If an applicant submits additional references, SRCD will randomly select which three (3) the Selection Committee will review for that applicant.

Your references have until January 14, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. ET to submit their surveys. To be considered, it is the applicant's responsibility that references meet this deadline.

4) Transcript

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You will be asked to upload a PDF of your transcript (official or unofficial). Your transcript will be used to confirm that you have an academic background in developmental science.

5) Placement Agency Statement of Support (State applicants only: 750-word limit)

State applicants must submit a letter from their perspective placement, confirming their interest in hosting you as a fellow. Please see [SRCD's State Agency Statement of Support](#) template for your letter of intent submission, making sure you adhere to the guidelines on the template.

- The statement of support should be written by an employee in a leadership position working on early childhood policy at the state agency. It should be from the agency that would provide the placement opportunity to the SRCD State Policy Fellow. The statement of support must be signed and on agency letterhead.
- Note: it may be the case that an individual other than the employee in a leadership position would be the supervisor for the fellow. In such cases, we recommend this statement be written jointly with the proposed supervisor.

The Pre-Interview Task

This year, we will be introducing a pre-interview task for applicants to complete. We are using this task to help us ensure we are looking at applicant's skills, not necessarily their polish. More information will be provided to applicants, if they pass the initial written stage.

Finals Week

Those invited for an interview will participate in finals week! For the 2024-2025 cohort, this will take place the week commencing February 26, 2024.

If you have applied for the federal agency placement, you will be supported to travel to D.C. where you should expect to spend the full week (we will release you early, if possible, but we can't guarantee it). Applicants who have applied to both the federal agency and another placement will only interview with SRCD once, and will come to D.C. State and Congressional-only applicants will interview virtually.

Here's what the week looks like:

Date	Federal Applicants	State and Congressional Applicants
Wednesday - Monday, February 7-12, 2024	Successful applicants will be notified that they have been selected for Finals Week.	
Monday, February 26, 2024	Hear a presentation from each agency, then participate in a 15-minute speed date interview with federal agencies. Return in the afternoon or on Tuesday for your SRCD interview.	N/A
Tuesday, February 27, 2024	SRCD interviews. Finalists announced after 5 p.m.	Virtual SRCD interviews.
Wednesday - Friday, February 28 - March 1, 2024	Federal agencies interview applicants in person.	Virtual SRCD interviews.

Our Selection Panel

The Fellowship selection panel is comprised of members of SRCD's Science & Social Policy Committee (SSPC) and fellow alumni. We build panels with diverse backgrounds (e.g., different fellowship placement experiences and different career trajectories), to allow our SSPC members to provide context for assessing fellowship credentials.



How We Evaluate Applications

SRCD is deeply committed to diversity in the child development field and within our Policy Fellowship. This includes training and engaging a workforce that is representative of diversity in all its forms. We encourage fellowship applications from scholars of color, scholars from underrepresented cultural and ethnic backgrounds, scholars from low-income backgrounds, first-generation college graduates, scholars with all abilities, and scholars from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Skills Evaluated

We score applicants on defined skills, as laid out below. All skills are assessed on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being no evidence of the skill and 5 exceeding expectations based on the skill description.

1) Expertise in developmental science

Understanding of factors that influence children's development and current theoretical and empirical underpinnings of that knowledge base. The role of ecological contexts in children's growth and development, including the role of the family, schools, community, and society.

- Assessed in your written application, in pre-interview task, in interview, and by your reference's survey results.

2) Expertise in research design and methodology

Understanding of and ability to use different methodological approaches used in child development research. Can articulate their advantages and disadvantages, feasibility, and theoretical foundation and can apply them to different research questions. Ability to apply research to real-world contexts, articulating the applications of research, implications of research limitations and contexts, and the implications of methodological choices in research, including on the ability to draw real-world outcomes or policy conclusions.

- Assessed in your written application, in the pre-interview task, in interview, and by your references' survey results.

3) Openness to growth and learning

Interest in learning about policy making and policy implementation and other skills relevant to the experiences provided by the fellowship (e.g., communication, relevant child and family policy issues.). History of openness to learning from new experiences, including ability to seek

out new endeavors, to tackle unfamiliar or unexpected challenges and to take on tasks or projects outside of area of expertise. Openness to working on and learning about new topics in child and family policy, even if not necessarily tied to current expertise.

- Assessed in written application, interview, and by your references' survey results.

4) Appreciation for and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

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Understanding of the importance of attending to economic and sociocultural inequities in child development research and child and family policy. Demonstrates experience, ability and openness for working with people from different backgrounds. Promote diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity, respecting difference and external experience. Ability to consider and offer solutions for the diverse needs, desires, motivations, and challenges facing different groups in relevant contexts. Understands how their own behavior and background can impact interpersonal relationships and demonstrates clear intent, actions, and strategies to foster inclusive, collaborative environments. Monitors the effectiveness of own inclusivity, assessing where and takes action to improve where necessary.

- Assessed in your personal statement, interview, and by references' survey results.

5) Communication

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Ability to communicate complex ideas, knowledge, and interests orally in a clear, accessible, and concise manner. Ability to communicate complex ideas, knowledge, and interests in written format in a clear, accessible, and concise manner. Takes into account people's individual needs, adapting messages, content, vocabulary, and media depending on the situation. Delivers difficult messages with clarity and sensitivity, being persuasive when required. Considers the impact of the language used. Monitors the effectiveness of own communications and takes action to improve where necessary. Ability to communicate scientific findings in plain language, without jargon, in simple, short sentences in a way that is simple to understand.

- Assessed in your personal statement, in the pre-interview task, at interview, and in your references' survey results.

6) Critical thinking & creative problem solving

Ability to think critically about problems and identify innovative or creative solutions to address them. Clarifies own understanding and stakeholder needs and expectations, before making decisions. Ensure decision making happens at the right level, seeking input where needed. Encourage both innovative suggestions and challenge from others, to inform decision making. Analyze and accurately interpret data from various sources to support decisions. Find the best option by identifying positives, negatives, risks and implications. Considers the impact to different groups, including groups that are different to the applicant. Presents reasonable conclusions from a wide range of complex and sometimes incomplete evidence. Makes decisions confidently even when details are unclear or if they prove to be unpopular.

- Assessed in written application, in the pre-interview task, at the interview, and in your references' survey results.

7) Initiative-taking

Ability and willingness to take the lead in assigned tasks, do necessary planning or research to complete them, and get the work done on time. Awareness of when to ask for support or guidance on assigned tasks. Eagerness to help with projects by volunteering to lead or complete necessary tasks. Welcome and respond to views and challenges from others. Seeks out shared interests beyond own area of responsibility, understanding the extent of the impact actions have on the organization. Can seek out information and take appropriate risks, with minimal supervision.

- Assessed at the interview and in your references' survey results.

8) Reliability

Ability to meet deadlines or clearly communicate when deadlines need to be revised. Timeliness in attending meetings or calls. Consistency in meeting obligations for work products, meeting attendance, or other expectations.

- Assessed in your timeliness in meeting all application deadlines and attending interviews, and in your references' survey results.

How We Are Funded

The federal agency placements are generously funded through a grant from the Administration for Children and Families and each placement agency. This grant is up for renewal in spring 2024 and we will know if we

have been successful in early fall, 2024. State and Congressional placements are generously supported by the Heising-Simons Foundation on either one-year or two-year grant cycles. Because of our amazing funders, placement sites do not have to pay for fellows.

We have a high degree of confidence in our competitiveness for our grant applications. However, it is important that applicants understand that their placements are always subject to our funder's ability to sustain the program.

SRCD can support a dedicated placement for a specific state if there are philanthropic or other funders interested in supporting that placement. If you know of a philanthropic organization that might be willing to support a fellow in your state, please reach out to us at policy@srcd.org. We would be happy to work with that organization to support a dedicated placement in your state.

Get Help or Ask Questions

If you have any questions or would like to get connected with a current or former fellow, please email policy@srcd.org and a member of the team will assist you as soon as possible.

Navigate:

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2. [FAQs](#)
3. [Congressional Placements](#)
4. [State Agency Placements](#)
5. [Federal Agency Placements](#)
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