

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)
2025 Kathy A. Possinger Housing Policy Fellowship Application

May 1, 2024

Background

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency ("PHFA" or the "Agency") was established in 1972. PHFA is an agency of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania existing and operating under state law for the purpose of providing affordable housing and fostering community and economic development to make the Commonwealth a better place to live. Among its programs, PHFA provides capital for decent, safe, and affordable homes and apartments for older adults, persons of modest means and persons with special housing needs. Additional information about PHFA's programs is available at www.phfa.org.

Created in 2019, the Housing Policy Fellowship aims to further the Agency's mission and foster the development of new leaders in the housing and community development field. In 2021, the fellowship was renamed the Kathy A. Possinger Housing Policy Fellowship in honor of PHFA board designee and affordable housing champion Kathy A. Possinger. Possinger served Pennsylvanians for two decades through her housing work in both the public and private sectors.

Purpose

The goal of this program is to support the development of new perspectives and approaches to significant unmet housing or community development needs across Pennsylvania through a self-directed research project. The program will also cultivate new housing and community development leaders.

Award Duration

Fellowships must be completed over no more than twelve months.

The Fellowship must begin within six months of receipt of award letter.

Award Value

Each fellow receives a stipend of \$1,000 per month (\$12,000 maximum).

Stipend can be used to pay for travel, conferences, technology, research tools, and/or administrative expenses.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be:

- A legal resident of Pennsylvania
- Over the age of 18 years

Applicants do not need to have an institutional, organizational, or governmental affiliation. Applicants can be currently enrolled students (graduate, undergraduate, full-time, or part-time), employees of a non-profit, for-profit, or unit of government, or even self-employed.

Fellowship eligibility has been left intentionally broad to ensure it is accessible to all Pennsylvanians with a relevant research project in need of financial support.

*Current PHFA staff and Board Members are not eligible to apply.

Project Eligibility

Eligible research projects must have a connection to **housing and community development in Pennsylvania**. The findings from and application of Fellowship research should be relevant and useful in expanding PHFA's and other housing policy groups' knowledge of the topic of study.

PHFA encourages projects that will seek to gain a new perspective or implement an innovative approach to an unmet housing or community development need. Projects that utilize a unique perspective or innovative solution/methodology are encouraged.

Examples of possible areas of research include (but are not limited to):

- Racial equity, overcoming structural racism in housing (homeownership, rental, or other areas of the housing industry)
- Zoning/land use reforms and affordable housing
- Sustainability in housing (increasing climate change resiliency in housing)
- Connections between housing and health (design, programing, and/or development)
- Housing solutions for vulnerable populations (formerly incarcerated, seniors, chronically homeless, survivors of domestic violence, disability community, etc.)
- Impact of pandemic on housing (affordability, availability, etc.)
- Innovative techniques for engaging local communities (storytelling, photojournalism, etc.)

Fellowships may not be used for: promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view; advocacy of a particular program of social or political action; support of specific public policies or legislation; and/or preparation or revision of textbooks.

Selection

Reviewers will apply the following five criteria when judging the quality of applications:

- Significance of the proposed project to housing/community development policy and practitioners.
- Extent to which the applicant's proposal represents a unique/innovative approach to the topic.
- Quality and clarity of definition, organization, and description of the project.
- Feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed work plan.
- Likelihood that the applicant completes the project within one year.

PHFA will not review late, incomplete, or ineligible applications. Applications exceeding the page limits for any of the application elements will not be reviewed.

Application Materials

Applications should be single-spaced pages with one-inch margins. Font size should be no smaller than 11 points. Applications exceeding page limits for the various components or not following format instructions will be declared ineligible and will not be reviewed.

1. Narrative (Four single-spaced pages maximum)

The narrative should provide a clear explanation of and justification for your project. It should not assume specialized knowledge of the subject matter and should avoid technical terms and jargon.

The application narrative must address the five areas listed below:

❖ Issue and Significance

Describe the housing or community development issue that you feel is significant/relevant and how your project will seek further insight, research, documentation, or solution(s) to the issue. State the project's thesis and provide an overview, explaining the idea, problem, or question to be examined by the project. Explain how the project will complement, challenge, or expand issues in the field.

❖ Methods and Work Plan

Describe your method(s). Indicate the current state of the project and what you will be undertaking during the year of the stipend. Provide a work plan describing what will be accomplished during the Fellowship, where you will be located and how you will spend time on the project. Describe where the project will be conducted and what additional materials, technology will be used. Your work plan should be based on the amount of time you feel will take to complete your project.

❖ Competencies, Skills, and Background

Explain your competence, qualifications, and background in the area of your project. If the area is new to you, explain your reasons for working in it and your qualifications for doing so.

❖ Final Product and Dissemination

Describe the intended audience and anticipated results of the project. Explain how the project findings will be shared and why these means are appropriate.

PHFA expects award recipients to provide broad access to all fellowship products. PHFA would expect that the final product be presented to its Board of Directors, senior staff, and other stakeholders. A copy of final project materials produced as part of the fellowship will be shared and maintained by the Agency to ensure their long-term viability.

❖ Project Funding

Applicants should provide a brief paragraph discussing how the PHFA Fellowship funds will impact the completion of their project. Applicants should address if and how their project will get completed if they are not awarded PHFA funding and if any other funding sources will be used to complete their stated research project.

2. Resume (Two single-spaced pages maximum)

Your resume should address the following:

- *Current and past positions.*
- *Education: List degrees, dates awarded*
- *Awards and Honors: Include dates.*
- *Other Relevant Activities, Experience and Accomplishments – including lived experience with the subject matter if applicable.*

3. Letters of Recommendation

Two letters of recommendation are required. Letters of recommendation may be **professional, academic, or personal**. Letters should address the applicant's interest in housing and community development and their ability to successfully complete the project.

Letters should be provided to the applicant and submitted as part of the Fellowship application.

Submission

All application materials must be organized according to this RFP and submitted by email with PDF attachments **NO LATER THAN 5 PM EST, WEDNESDAY, July 31st, 2024**, to:

Amy Sechrist
Senior Policy Officer
Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
Email: PolicyFellowship@phfa.org
Phone: 717.780.3945

Questions concerning the Fellowship or application can be emailed to Amy Sechrist at PolicyFellowship@phfa.org.

Additional details regarding the Fellowship are available at: <https://www.phfa.org/about/fellowship/>