

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)

Kathy A. Possinger Housing Policy Fellowship

Frequently Asked Questions

General

When does the application become available and what is the deadline?

Applications become available in early May and close at the end of July. Selection decisions are typically completed in early November.

Specific application cycle deadlines and dates for the current Fellowship cycle include the following:

- **Wednesday, May 6, 2026:** Application Opens
- **Friday, July 31, 2026:** Application Closes
- **November 2026:** Notification of Decisions
- **January 2027:** Expected start of Fellowship

How will applicants know PHFA received the application?

Applicants will receive confirmation from PHFA following the submission of application materials. This email will confirm the application was received but will not notify an applicant if any fellowship application materials are missing, so applicants must ensure that their submission is complete; incomplete applications will not be considered.

How many fellowships are awarded annually?

Two Fellowships are awarded annually. Typically, one Fellowship is targeted at academic applicants; those who currently are seeking a degree or work in an academic institution. The second Fellowship is targeted at housing and economic development practitioners or anyone with an interest in housing and economic development research. Selecting one academic and one practitioner application for award may vary depending on quantity and quality of applications submitted in each category and is subject to PHFA's sole discretion.

Who should I contact if I have a question that is not addressed by an FAQ?

Questions concerning the Fellowship or application can be emailed to policyfellowship@phfa.org

Applicant Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for the PHFA Policy Fellowship?

Applicants must be a legal resident of Pennsylvania and the age of 18 years or older. Current PHFA staff and Board Members are not eligible to apply.

I am not affiliated with an academic institution/program; am I eligible to apply?

Yes, applicants do not need to have an institutional, organizational, or governmental affiliation.

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. This includes individuals with lived experiences related to the chosen topic of study.

Can I reapply for the fellowship if I have applied before but was unsuccessful?

Yes, past unsuccessful applicants may apply again during a different funding cycle.

Do I need to live in Pennsylvania to apply for the Fellowship?

Yes, applicants must be a legal resident of Pennsylvania.

Project Eligibility

What types of projects are eligible for funding through the Fellowship?

Eligible research projects must have a connection to housing and community development in Pennsylvania. Projects should seek to complement, challenge, or expand the current understanding of the chosen housing or community development issue.

Eligible project criteria have been left intentionally broad to encourage innovative and creative projects in housing and community development research that may not be eligible for other sources of funding.

Are there any topics of particular interest to PHFA that I can use as a jumping off point for my project?

Possible areas of research of interest to PHFA include:

- 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.)

Projects are not required to address one of the above topics to be eligible for the Fellowship.

Application Process

What materials are required for my application?

Applications consist of three main components:

1. Project Narrative
2. Resume
3. Letters of Recommendation

Additional details on each section of the application can be found in the current Fellowship Application at <https://www.phfa.org/about/fellowship/>.

Are there length or format requirements for the application?

Application sections with maximum length requirements include:

1. Project Narrative – Four single-spaced pages maximum
2. Resume – Two single-spaced pages maximum

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 ineligible and will not be reviewed.

How many letters of recommendation do I need?

Two letters of recommendation are required for eligible applications. Additional letters over two will not be reviewed.

Who should I ask to write a recommendation on my behalf?

Letters of recommendation may be professional, academic, or personal. Letters should address the applicant's interest in housing and community development and the applicant's ability to successfully complete the proposed project within twelve (12) months.

The strongest letters of recommendation provide additional insight into the applicant's abilities and experience through specific examples of past work and activities.

How are letters of recommendation submitted?

Letters of recommendation should be provided to the applicant and submitted as part of the Fellowship application package. Recommenders do not need to send letters to PHFA separately.

How should I submit my application?

Application materials should be organized according to the current Fellowship RFP and submitted via email to policyfellowship@phfa.org by the application deadline.

Review Process

What are the selection criteria?

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 or which do not meet the format specifications will not be reviewed.

Who reviews applications?

An internal team of PHFA staff will review applications for the stated selection criteria.

When will Fellowship decisions be communicated?

Fellowship decisions are usually completed and communicated by early November. Please refer to the current Fellowship Application and <https://www.phfa.org/about/fellowship/> for additional details.

Will I be notified if I did NOT receive the Fellowship?

Applicants will receive an email notification if they are not awarded the Fellowship.

Stipend

What is the dollar amount of the stipend?

The Fellowship provides the selected Fellow with a stipend of up to \$1,000 per month over the course of conducting their research project, which may not exceed twelve (12) months. The maximum stipend amount is \$12,000.

How long does the Fellowship last?

Fellows have a maximum of twelve (12) months to complete their research project. The Fellowship research must begin within six months of the receipt of an award letter from PHFA.

What can the Fellowship funds be used for?

Fellow stipends may be used for a variety of activities related to the research project including but not limited to administrative expenses, travel costs, conference fees, technology, printing services, access to necessary data sets, and materials.

What approvals are necessary for participation in the Fellowship program?

In certain instances, an employer, school or other organization (collectively, “Organizations”) may view participation in the Fellowship program as a potential conflict or contrary to participation in a program or employment and may, for this or any other reason, require a Fellow to obtain approval prior to participating in the program.

To the extent that a Fellow must obtain approval from an Organization to participate in the Fellowship program, such approval must be supplied to PHFA prior to the start of the Fellowship, unless such timeframe is extended by PHFA in writing. If approval is required and is not provided prior to the start date of the Fellowship, the Agency reserves the right to delay commencement of the Fellowship, and no stipend shall be issued to a selected Fellow until the requisite approval is provided to the Agency. If the approval is not provided prior to the start of the Fellowship or within any other timeframe as may be determined by the Agency, PHFA reserves the right to rescind the Fellowship and reallocate the Fellowship to another eligible applicant.

What are the responsibilities of the Fellow after they accept the award?

After accepting their award, Fellows are expected to complete the following:

- Participate in regular (at least quarterly) progress check-in calls with PHFA.
- Complete and submit a final report to PHFA on the findings of research project.
- Present their final project to PHFA in the manner determined by the Agency, which may include a presentation to the PHFA Board, senior staff, or other stakeholders.
- Provide any materials produced as part of the Fellowship to PHFA to ensure long-term viability.

What happens with the products of the Fellowship after the Fellowship ends?

PHFA expects that any materials produced because of the Fellowship award will be maintained by the Agency to ensure their long-term viability. PHFA is committed to promoting and celebrating the work of Fellows, as such and when appropriate Fellowship materials and findings will be shared on the PHFA website and promoted to PHFA partners.

The Fellow may copyright any work that is subject to copyright or for which ownership was required under the PHFA Housing Policy Fellowship. PHFA reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the Fellow’s PHFA-supported work, and to authorize others to do so.