

**Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)**  
**2021 Housing Policy Fellowship Program Application**

September 14, 2020

**Background and Overview**

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 in order 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 on its website at [www.phfa.org](http://www.phfa.org).

To best achieve its goals and to carry out its fundamental mission in the most effective ways, PHFA is accepting applications for the **2021 Housing Policy Fellowship Program** (the "Fellowship"). The Fellowship will provide an opportunity for the selected recipient to undertake a project/program that addresses a housing issue of significant interest/relevance to the applicant. PHFA is attempting to create a cadre of new leaders that will think creatively and broadly about possible solutions to the ongoing struggle for meeting the affordable housing needs of Commonwealth residents. Each Fellowship project must have some connection to housing/community development and their application would need to be relevant, appropriate and useful in assisting PHFA and other housing policy groups/professionals learn and think differently about an issue.

The PHFA Housing Policy Fellowship are competitive awards granted to individuals interested in pursuing independent projects that embody unique, innovative or exceptional opportunities to spend a year undertaking an in-depth study of a particular housing/community development issue.

The Fellowship provides recipient's time and resources to investigate, explore, catalog, research, analyze and document their proposed issue. This could include travel, conferences, technology or other methodologies for gaining further insight into the issues and a better understanding about housing and community development.

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.

PHFA encourages projects that will seek to gain a new perspective or approach to a significant unmet housing need or community development issue. Undertaking a project that gives a unique perspective, innovative solution or unaddressed methodology to an issue is encouraged.

## **Award Information**

The period of performance for the Fellowship is no more than twelve months at a stipend of \$1,000 per month (\$12,000 maximum). Additionally, the stipend will cover all administrative expenses (travel, conference fees, technology, printing and other material).

The Fellowship must begin within six months of receipt of award letter and must be completed within twelve months of execution of the award letter.

The recipient 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 recipient's PHFA-supported work, and to authorize others to do so.

## **Eligibility\***

All legal residents of Pennsylvania, over the age of 18 years, are eligible to apply, whether they have an institution, organizational or governmental affiliation, or not. This includes the following;

- Currently enrolled students (graduate, undergraduate, full-time or part-time);
- Employees of any not-for-profit, for-profit, unit of government;
- Self-employed individuals;

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

## **Review Criteria**

Reviewers will be asked to apply the following five criteria when judging the quality of applications.

1. The significance of the proposed project, including its value to housing and community development policy and/or practitioners.
2. The quality of promise of the applicant's work as a unique/innovative approach to housing and community development.
3. The quality of conception, definition, organization and description of the project and applicant's clarity of expression.
4. The feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed plan of work, including, when relevant, the soundness of methodology.
5. The likelihood that the applicant completes the project in within one year of commencement.

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\* Current PHFA staff and Board Members are not eligible to apply for the fellowship.

## **Application Elements**

Your application should include the parts listed below.

**Applicants should format single-spaced pages with one-inch margins and with a font size no smaller than 11 point. Applications exceeding page limits for the various components or not adhering to the format instructions will be declared ineligible and will not be reviewed.**

### **1. Narrative – Not to Exceed Four Single-Spaced Pages**

The narrative must provide a sound rationale and justification for your project, addressing the four areas listed below; issue and significance; methods and work plan; competencies, skills and background; and final product and dissemination. The narrative should not assume specialized knowledge and should be free of technical terms and jargon.

- *Issue and significance*

Describe the particular housing, 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 relevant 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. Your work plan should be based on the amount of time you feel will take to complete your project. Your work plan for the Fellowship should not depend heavily on factors beyond your control.

- *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. Describe where the project will be conducted and what additional materials, technology will be used.

- *Final product and dissemination*

Describe the intended audience and anticipated results of the project. Explain how the project findings, conclusions will be disseminated and why these means are appropriate. PHFA expects award recipients to provide broad access to all grant products. For a project that leads to the development of a website, PHFA would expect free access and availability through its own website. PHFA would expect that the final product be presented to its Board of Directors, senior staff and other stakeholders. PHFA expects

that any materials produced in digital form as a result of the award will be maintained by the Agency to ensure their long-term viability.

## **2. Resume – Not to Exceed Two Single-Spaced Pages**

Your resume should provide the following;

- *Current and past positions.*
- *Education: List degrees, dates awarded*
- *Awards and Honors: Include dates.*
- *Other Relevant Professional Activities, Experience and Accomplishments.*

## **3. Writing Sample – Not to Exceed Five Single-Spaced Pages**

Applicants must submit a writing sample that demonstrates the applicant's ability to express ideas and make a clear argument. Reviewers will use the sample to assess the clarity of your writing as well as your knowledge of the issue.

The writing sample should not be more than five years old and can be related to the specific project proposed or some other topic.

## **4. Letters of Recommendation**

In addition to the items referenced above, the applicant should provide two letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation are more highly regarded if they are related to the specific proposed project that would be undertaken during the Fellowship, the candidate's interest in housing and community development and ability to successfully undertake the project.

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

### **Deadline for Submission**

All application materials must be organized according to this RFP and submitted electronically (by email) **NO LATER THAN 3 PM, FRIDAY, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020**, to:

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Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency  
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Questions concerning the Fellowship or application can be emailed to Bryce Marezki at [bmarezki@phfa.org](mailto:bmarezki@phfa.org).