State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship Application Process

The deadline to submit letters of intent for the 2020-2021 State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship Program has passed (January 3, 2020).

Application Timeline

1. Deadline for Letters of Intent: **January 3, 2020, 11:59pm Eastern**
2. Notification of Status & Invitation to Submit Full Application: **End of January 2020**
3. Deadline for Finalist Full Application: **End of February 2020**
4. Notification of Fellowship Offers: **End of April 2020**
Application Submission Instructions

Applying to the SRCD State Policy Fellowship is a two-step process.

1. Submit a letter of intent (max 3 single-spaced pages) to an online portal.

   Letters of intent can be submitted:
   - jointly by a fellowship candidate and an interested professor or university-based researcher (referred to as academic mentor), or
   - by an interested academic mentor who will subsequently identify a fellowship candidate, if invited to submit a full application.

2. A selection committee will invite full applications from a subset of those who have submitted letters of intent. The full applications will be submitted through an online portal.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Applicants must be enrolled in a doctoral-level degree program, have completed at least 2 years of coursework by the start of the fellowship year and must be in good academic standing.
- Applicants must have a background in early learning and education.
- Applicants must be able to commit to a 12-month part-time placement in a state executive branch office that averages 20 hours per week over the course of a year. Fellowships are immersive experiences and fellows will be expected to be on site at the state agency for most if not all of their work.
- Applicants to the SRCD State Policy Fellowship Program must be a member of SRCD and be a U.S. citizen.
- The potential state executive branch agency office must focus on pre-kindergarten.

What is required in State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship letter of intent?
The letter of intent must include the following sections:

- **Policy research interests of the academic mentor and pre-doctoral candidate (if identified):**
  - Describe the academic mentor’s ongoing or planned policy-relevant research
  - If a pre-doctoral candidate is identified:
    - Describe the pre-doctoral candidate’s background in child development research and interest in early learning and policy research
  - If a pre-doctoral candidate has yet to be identified:
    - Describe the process for identifying a specific candidate

- **Current or planned working relationship with state executive branch office:**
  - Describe an ongoing working relationship with a state executive branch office, plans for development of such a working relationship, or previous policy-relevant research that would provide background for serving as an academic mentor to a SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellow
  - Confirm that (should a full application be invited) it will be possible to obtain a letter of commitment from the identified state executive branch office, indicating that a placement with the agency will be feasible
  - Describe the types of work potentially available for the pre-doctoral fellow in the identified agency with the understanding that specific projects will be determined together with the agency when the fellowship begins and that projects will evolve during the course of the year

- **Mentoring for the SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellow:**
  - Describe the professional support the academic mentor would provide to the fellow throughout the year, including:
    - Plans for frequency of meetings and whether these meetings would be one-on-one or part of ongoing meetings with a group of graduate students or a research team
    - Providing guidance and sharing resources relevant to placement projects (within guidelines set by the agency regarding confidentiality). Support might include, for example, directing the fellow to research literature relevant to a
project; serving as a sounding board in the formulation of a research question, evaluation plan, or plan for monitoring aspects of program implementation; or addressing issues with data analyses.

- Indicate how the fellowship would align with and contribute to (rather than derail progress towards) the doctoral training of the graduate student

*The letter of intent must not exceed three single-spaced pages.*

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**How do I submit the letter of intent?**

Letters of intent should be submitted through an online portal. See “Application Submission Instructions” above.

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**What is required in a State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship full application?**

**A. Five items from the pre-doctoral candidate:**

1. **Statement of interest** (1,000 word limit) describing:
   - The candidate's academic background and qualifications for the program, including background in the research on early education
   - Current areas of research, primary questions of interest, and methodologies used to address the questions
   - Basis for interest in the State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship, including policy areas or issues of interest and skills to be acquired
   - Career goals, including how the fellowship would support those goals
   - How participation in the fellowship program would be coordinated with other work
towards completion of the doctorate, including progress on the dissertation.

*The statement should indicate the pre-doctoral applicant’s understanding that the fellowship involves on-site immersion at the state agency for 20 hours per week. The statement should include information about distance and time involved in travel to the state placement and confirmation that this travel is feasible and would not pose an undue burden.*

Further questions to consider when writing the statement of interest:

- Why are you interested in the SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship? Why are you interested in working in policy?
- What are your academic and professional goals and how does the fellowship align with these goals?
- What are your interests and passions? How do these interests match with the purposes of the SRCD State Policy Fellowship program?
- How will you leverage your background to bridge between research and policy?

2. **Current C.V.**

3. **Transcript** (official or unofficial). Your transcript will be used to confirm that you either (1) have completed at least two years of coursework or (2) will have completed two years of coursework by the start of the fellowship and are in good academic standing.

4. **Two letters of recommendation** for the pre-doctoral candidate, addressing the following:
   - How does the pre-doctoral candidate’s skill set and interests prepare the candidate for a successful fellowship experience?
   - What is the pre-doctoral candidate’s knowledge base and how does the candidate’s past experiences relate to policy?
   - To the best of your knowledge, what drives or motivates the pre-doctoral candidate to pursue this fellowship?

B. Two items from the academic mentor:

1. **Statement of interest** (750 word limit) that indicates why the academic mentor is
recommending the applicant for this fellowship, describes the academic mentor’s areas of research, and the ways in which the academic mentor would provide individualized support and mentorship for the pre-doctoral fellow.

The academic mentor may include sections from the letter of intent in the statement of interest. Please be sure to expand upon the content from the initial letter, where appropriate. The statement from the academic mentor must be signed and on letterhead.

2. **Current C.V.**

   *If the academic mentor is not the graduate student’s program advisor, instructions in the application will also be provided for requesting a brief letter from the program chair indicating that the graduate student’s participation in the program will be in keeping with requirements and progress towards the doctorate.*

C. Two items from staff at state executive branch agency:

1. **Statement of interest** *(600 word limit)*

   The statement of interest should be written by an employee in a leadership position at the state executive branch agency that oversees the state pre-kindergarten program and who would provide the placement opportunity to the SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellow:
   - Description of professional background and role in the organization
   - Description of possible projects the fellow might assist with
   - Confirmation of interest and description of supervisory plan. This would include a description of the individual(s) who will supervise the fellow and provide guidance and feedback on specific placement projects, regularly scheduled discussions with the supervisor(s) during which the fellow could ask questions and reflect on what they are learning, and identify opportunities for the fellow to learn about policy development and implementation in a state agency.
   - Description of onboarding plan to orient the fellow to the agency’s structure and functions

2. **Letter of commitment**

   The letter of commitment should be written by a representative of the state executive
branch agency with appropriate authority:

- Confirm that the agency would host a pre-doctoral fellow for a year-long placement and that such a placement would be in keeping with agency rules and regulations and state laws
- Name the specific supervisor
- Confirm that an appropriate workspace would be made available including use of a computer and telephone (used only according to agency guidelines). An alternative approach to placement location would be considered if it is made clear how an immersion experience would be achieved.

*The statement of interest noted above and letter of commitment may be from the same individual, if appropriate. The statement of interest and the letter of commitment must be signed and on letterhead. The full applications will be submitted through an online portal.*

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**How do I submit a full application?**

Full applications will be due by the **end of February 2020** through an online portal. See “Application Submission Instructions” above for more information.

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**How are State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellowship full applications evaluated?**

Pre-doctoral candidates will be evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria:

- Demonstrates relevant academic background in developmental science, including background in the research on early education (e.g., topically relevant graduate coursework)
• Demonstrates strong research skills (e.g., research methods coursework, methodologies used in publications)
• Previous professional experiences related to the application of research to practice (e.g., clinical)
• Record of publications, presentations, and professional activities commensurate with experience and appropriate to discipline
• Demonstrates strong communication skills
• Alignment of interests and career aspirations with the fellowship program

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**Tips & Tricks**

Watch the webinar on tips and tricks for applying to the SRCD U.S. State Policy Fellowship presented by Dr. Kelly Fisher, SRCD's Director for Policy, and Dr. Ruth Friedman, Co-lead for the SRCD U.S. State Policy Fellowship.