

# Women's Policy Institute Application 2023-2024

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Application Release: August 11, 2023

Online Application Due: August 29, 2023

Application Status Notification: September 1, 2023

**We are now accepting individual applications!**

## **ABOUT**

The Mississippi Women's Policy Institute (WPI) is a program of the Women's Foundation of Mississippi designed to train Mississippi community-based leaders in public policy advocacy. The goal of WPI is to increase the number and capacity of visionary leaders, their organizations and/or their communities so they can actively shape and implement policies that affect the lives of women in Mississippi and add experienced voices to women's health policy discussions in our state. Through a comprehensive training program WPI will introduce women to policy making and policy priorities for women's health, and equip them with skills needed to participate in the process, including but not limited to public speaking, persuasion, and managing through conflict.

Our social justice framework focuses on the structural causes of inequities embedded in public institutions, including lawmaking bodies and administrative agencies. WPI was developed in response to these structural inequities as such, we encourage each cohort to critique institutionalized oppression to create progressive policy changes within the government systems. WPI will equip program participants to influence healthcare related policies that make Mississippi a more just and equitable place.

Individual women will intern with an organization already working on a policy agenda, lending resources to that effort. WFM will pair the fellows with a mentor organization and offer stipends to their organizations to support this mentorship component.

Applicants with varying degrees of past policy experience—from none at all to extensive involvement—will be considered for the program. The WPI seeks to increase the numbers of women involved in the policy arena—particularly those from communities of color, immigrant communities, queer communities, low-income communities, and rural communities. By bringing individuals who experience gender-based discrimination into the policy process, WPI works to empower leaders who will advance a policy agenda that is responsive to the needs of all.

## **WPI ISSUE AREA: Healthy Women**

WPI will accept individual applications from women interested in and with experience in issues related to positive maternal, infant, and child health outcomes that intersect with economic security, and who understand the need for all people to make informed decisions about their healthcare needs. We believe that these healthy outcomes are broader than a physical condition: health has social, cultural and economic impacts on the well-being of individuals, families and/or communities.

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In this context, policy projects may include, and are not limited to:

- Comprehensive medically accurate evidence-based sex education;
- Access to care: health insurance, quality improvement, health information technology;
- Maternal mortality prevention efforts;
- Supporting mothers in the workplace such as pregnancy nondiscrimination and breastfeeding;
- Boosting funding for and access to quality childcare and early childhood development.

## **What do WPI fellows do and learn?**

By participating in the WPI, our fellows will:

- Gain policy advocacy skills;
- Learn how to access and use policy research;
- Gain knowledge and information about the current realities of Mississippi's policy landscape, including the policy processes;
- Overcome perceived barriers and increase their confidence in participating in the policy process;
- Develop the relationships necessary to do coalition work that advances public policy;
- Increase their participation in policy formation and implementation;
- Use the knowledge obtained to increase the use of the policy process to address problems in your respective work, communities and/or organization;
- Work with an advocacy organization to provide support and assistance with that organization's advocacy efforts;
- Strengthen their relationships and collaboration with other social justice organizations and movements in Mississippi; and
- Create a peer learning environment among state-level advocates.

## **What is the structure and time commitment?**

- Training sessions will be in-person and virtual. In-person trainings will take place in the Jackson Metro area and lodging will be provided, if needed. Virtual trainings and sessions will take place on Zoom.
- The training program includes monthly training sessions from September to April.
- Additionally, from January – May 2024, you will work with a Mississippi organization engaged in advocacy to receive hands-on experience.
- It is important to come to the sessions rested and without the expectation that you will be able to work remotely on non-WPI projects during the training.
- In addition to the monthly trainings, a couple of hours each week will likely be needed for research and reading time between sessions. During the legislative session from January – May 2024, flexibility to attend a variety of commitments will be necessary. Employers must be supportive of their employees and allow them to fulfill the fellowship commitments.

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## When will the training take place?

- The WPI training is scheduled from September 2023 – May 2024. Applicants are asked to put the following dates in their calendars now and hold these dates until a final determination on their application is made.
  - September 22 -23, 2023 In-Person Kick Off Retreat, Jackson, MS
  - October 20-22, 2023, In-Person Retreat Two, Jackson, MS
  - November 17, 2023, Retreat Three: Virtual
  - December 15-16, 2023, Retreat Four: In-Person
  - January 2024 (TBD) Retreat Five: Legislative Advocacy Day
  - February 2024 (TBD) Retreat Six: Virtual
  - March 2024 (TBD) Retreat Seven: Virtual
  - April 12-13, 2024, Retreat Seven: In Person
  - May 2024 (TBD) Final Meeting, Evaluation and Celebration

## What is the financial commitment?

- The fellowship is offered free of charge. The Women's Foundation of Mississippi is committed to eliminating financial barriers to access.
- The Women's Foundation of Mississippi will provide stipends of \$5,000 each to participants (upon completion of a W9 form and other documentation if selected) to support their travel costs, child-care costs, or other needs to allow individuals to participate. Half of the stipend will be paid at the beginning of the training and the remainder in 2024.
- Meals and lodging will be provided during the trainings.
- Participants are required to have computer and internet access. If this is a barrier to participation, please indicate this need on your application.
- Costs associated with regular teamwork that takes place outside of the trainings (phone calls, etc.) will be paid by the participants.

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## **APPLICATION INFORMATION**

### **WPI Application Eligibility**

Individuals living and/or working in Mississippi;

Individuals working in a community-based or non-profit setting with the full support of their employer and/or supervisor; or

Individuals pursuing a degree or who otherwise have interest or experience in developing their policy skills; and

Individuals who agree to all participation requirements listed below - AND whose employers agree to all participation requirements (if applicable). If you need permission from another entity, such as a college program, please ask the appropriate person to also sign the agreement.

Cisgender and transgender women, non-binary and genderqueer people, and transgender men are welcome.

### **WPI Fellowship Selection Criteria**

Individual applications will be judged based on the following criteria:

1. Depth of Issue Expertise
  - a. Individuals must articulate content knowledge or interest in how improving maternal, infant, and child health outcomes can also impact economic security, and connection to those affected by the issues, combined with the ability to speak with confidence and authority about the issue area (expertise can come from work, education and/or lived experience).
2. Teamwork
  - a. Individuals should demonstrate an openness to collaboration, a love of learning, a high level of emotional intelligence and an appreciation of diversity and innovation;
  - b. Individuals must be willing to work to bridge differences in personality and work styles; and
  - c. Individuals must be willing to work on a team with others who have varying interests, backgrounds and lived experiences.
3. Commitment to Policy Advocacy Work
  - a. Individuals must be able to articulate the value of learning about state policy to their current employment, individual community needs, the broader social justice movement, and their own future work; and
  - b. Individuals must be able to articulate why now is personally a good time to go through the program (i.e., have the time, support, interest, etc.).
4. Employer Support (if applicable)
  - a. Individuals must demonstrate that they have the full support of their employers to participate in WPI and to spend staff time working on a policy project that includes lobbying; and

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- b. Individuals must be able to state the value their employer sees in their learning how to advance state-level policy.
5. Position within the organization or community
  - a. Individuals must be able to demonstrate how their participation in WPI will increase the policy advocacy work at their organizations or in their communities; and
  - b. Individuals must have the ability and desire to bring the training back to their organization and community.
6. Time Availability
  - a. Individuals must affirm their ability to participate in all retreats, check their email daily throughout the program and dedicate an average of 20 hours per month; and
  - b. Individuals must allow enough flexibility in their schedule to advance their policy project between retreats.

In addition, applications will be evaluated based on the thoroughness of responses to the application questions. For example, it is not sufficient to provide a one-sentence response to a section where a paragraph response is requested.

## Individual Applicant Requirements

Each individual applicant, and their employer if applicable, must pre-certify that the following requirements can and will be met if the applicant is chosen for the WPI program.

1. Applicant and Employer understand that this fellowship constitutes an “in-kind” grant of approximately \$7,500 per fellow. The Foundation covers the cost of the trainings, the Applicant and Employer understand that the Applicant’s full participation in the fellowship is equivalent to a grant requirement.
2. Employer will fully support the Applicant during the Institute to spend approximately 20 hours/month of staff time to work on a policy project in between retreats and throughout the program.
3. Employer will ensure that the Applicant shares what they are learning with other staff, volunteers, and Board (whenever possible).
4. Employer will fully support Applicant to attend all trainings in their entirety and participate in all webinars and homework assignments in their entirety. Applicant understands that attending all in-person training and participating in all webinars is a requirement.
5. Applicant understands that while exceptions to the retreat and webinar attendance requirement may be made in case of personal emergencies, participants who miss more than 2 of the total number of training days and/or webinars may lose their fellowship.
6. Applicant will work actively with their organization placement team on their advocacy assignments during and between meetings/retreats, including participating in meetings, engaging community input (if applicable), advocating for their project and staying in regular communication with the team regarding availability and potential barriers to participation.

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7. Applicant will maintain an email address that is checked daily and communicate with the Foundation if potential barriers to participation arise.
8. Applicant will conduct themselves professionally at all times within WPI and while engaging with elected officials, county employees, policy advocates and community members.
9. Applicant will provide feedback to the Foundation on the Applicant's experiences in WPI by filling out evaluations after each retreat and after completing the program.
10. Following the Applicant's graduation from WPI, Applicant understands that they are strongly encouraged to stay connected and keep us informed on how their WPI experience is impacting their organization, field and/or community.

## **HOW TO APPLY–APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

### **Application Requirements**

1. Required: Each applicant must complete and submit in its entirety their application online at: [www.womensfoundationms.org/WPI](http://www.womensfoundationms.org/WPI)
2. A completed application includes ALL of the following submitted at the same time:
  - a. Answers to all questions in the online application (list of questions for reference are listed below – answer questions using the link):  
[www.womensfoundationms.org/WPI](http://www.womensfoundationms.org/WPI)
  - b. Upload via the link a PDF of your completed Individual Narrative (outline is below)
  - c. Upload via the link a PDF of your completed Applicant Agreement Form (last pages of this document)

**Completed applications MUST be submitted no later than 6:00 pm CST on August 29, 2023.**

### **Online Application Questions:**

1. First and Last name:
2. Email address:
3. Cell phone:
4. Work phone:
5. Mailing address:
6. How did you hear about the Mississippi Women's Policy Institute?
7. What are your gender pronouns?
8. Your employer/organization name, website:
9. Your title/position:
10. Name and contact information of your supervisor:
11. Please share your personal demographic information. We ask these questions to gauge our success in our efforts to build a diverse and inclusive social justice movement in Mississippi, and all demographic information about individual applicants is kept strictly confidential.
12. Race/ethnicity, Age, Disability

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13. Do you have access to a computer?
14. Do you have access to high-speed internet?
15. Have you participated in any other trainings similar to this one before? If so, please list them and the year of your participation?

## The Individual Narrative

Each Applicant will create their own Individual Narrative using a word processing software (like Microsoft Word). Once completed, the document should be saved and uploaded to the application site as a PDF at the same time you submit your online application questions and signed Applicant Agreement Form (last pages of this document). [www.womensfoundationms.org/WPI](http://www.womensfoundationms.org/WPI)

- Your Individual Narrative should include one-inch margins, headers for each question below, 12-point type and single spacing.
  - Individual Narrative Introduction. On page one of your Individual Narrative, include your name, organization/affiliation, email and phone number.
  - Individual Narrative Questions. Please answer each question below and use the words in caps as the section titles of your document.
- A. BIO: Please supply a professional bio. The bio should be one paragraph long (150-word maximum) and written in the third person. If you are selected, the bio will be shared with others in your cohort.
  - B. EXPERIENCE IN ISSUE AREA: Please describe your experience in and knowledge of women's health and how it impacts social, cultural, and economics outcomes of well-being.
  - C. EXPERIENCE ORGANIZING: Describe your experience organizing with others on behalf of your community.
  - D. PUBLIC POLICY EXPERIENCE: Describe your experience (if any) advocating with local, state or federal policymakers on behalf of yourself, your family or community.
  - E. PERSONAL POLICY WORK GOAL: How do you personally intend to incorporate policy engagement into your own work?
  - F. ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY WORK GOAL (if applicable): What greater role participating in the policy process in Mississippi would your organization/employer be able to take on as a result of your acceptance in the WPI?
  - G. ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION (if applicable): Describe the mission of your organization, including the issues the organization focuses on, the geographic reach of the organization, the demographics of the population the organization serves and the types of services the organization provides.

If you are unemployed and not able to answer items any of the above items, please share how you plan to use this experience in the future as a community member.

**Résumé:** Please include your résumé at the end of your Individual Narrative.

*Mississippi Women's Policy Institute is based on the successful Women's Policy Institute of the Women's Foundation of California (WFC) which launched in 2003.*

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## Mississippi Women’s Policy Institute: 2023-2024 Applicant Requirements Agreement

Both the Applicant and the Applicant’s employer/supervisor (if applicable) must **initial each requirement and sign at the bottom of the form** to indicate that they understand and agree to the requirements. The Applicant Requirements Agreement must be completed and submitted with other application materials to be considered. If the Applicant is selected to participate in WPI, completion of this form signifies that both the Applicant and Employer understand and agree to the stated requirements.

Applicant Initials (Agreement)	Employer Initials (Agreement)	Requirements
		1. Applicant and Employer understand that this fellowship constitutes an “in-kind” grant of approximately \$7,500 per fellow. Though no payment to the Employer will be made, the Applicant and Employer understand that the Applicant’s full participation in the fellowship is equivalent to a grant requirement.
		3. During the Institute, Employer will fully support Applicant in spending approximately 20 hours/month of staff time working on a policy project.
		4. Employer will ensure that the Applicant shares what they are learning with other staff, volunteers and, if possible, with the board of the applicant organization.
		5. Employer will fully support Applicant, should they be chosen to participate in the WPI, to attend <u>ALL trainings in their entirety</u> and to participate in <u>ALL webinars</u> , and Applicant understands that attending ALL trainings and participating in ALL webinars is a requirement.
		6. Applicant understands that while exceptions to the retreat attendance requirement may be made in case of personal emergencies, participants who miss a significant number of retreat days and/or webinars may lose their fellowship.



Applicant Initials (Agreement)	Employer Initials (Agreement)	Requirements
		8. Applicant will maintain an email address that is checked daily and communicate with the Foundation if potential barriers to participation arise.
		9. Applicant will conduct themselves professionally at all times within the Institute and while engaging with elected officials, staffers, policy advocates and community members.
		10. Applicant will provide feedback to the Foundation on their experiences in the WPI program by filling out evaluations after each training and after completing the Institute.
		11. Following completion of the WPI program, Applicant understands that they are strongly encouraged to stay connected and keep us informed on how their WPI experience is impacting their organizations, fields and/or communities.

**We understand the requirements listed above and agree to them in whole.**

**Employee/Applicant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Employee/Applicant Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Employee/Applicant Affiliation/Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**If applicable:**

**Employer/Supervisor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Employer/Supervisor Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Employer/Supervisor Affiliation/Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_