



Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship Program

2024–2025 Program Overview

The National Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Center recruited **two research fellows** and **two policy fellows** for the first year of our Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship. The 10-month program is designed to achieve two primary goals: (1) to support the leadership development of individual ECE professionals and (2) to help emerging leaders build their expertise about the ECE workforce while gaining skills to effectively bridge research and policy/practice.

To facilitate participation, participants will receive a **stipend of \$12,500**. The program, which includes **10-15 hours per month** of program activities, is designed to allow employed individuals to continue their employment and students to maintain full-time status. The fellowship runs from **May 2024–February 2025**. Ideal candidates for the research track are currently enrolled graduate students in fields related to ECE, while policy track applicants are current professionals such as early educators or others active in the ECE sector. Please see full eligibility criteria below.

Disruption of historical patterns of exclusion in the ECE field is a guiding principle of the National ECE Workforce Center. As such, the selection committee will prioritize candidates who are *1) emerging scholars and leaders with expertise in Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities, 2) from historically under-resourced communities, 3) first-generation college students (at either the undergraduate or graduate level), 4) living in areas with limited access to decision-making systems (e.g., ECE boards, local or state government agencies, policy councils), or 5) have limited access to institutions of higher education.* Fellows will explore a question, topic, or policy centered on one or more of the five essential workforce areas that serve as the framework for the National ECE Workforce Center. These include qualifications and educational supports, compensation, work environments, data systems, and financial resources.

Fellows will engage in one in-person and several virtual gatherings to learn skills and network with one another and with leaders in the field. Key to the Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship is participating in **eight learning sessions** related to the ECE workforce and integrating research and policy/practice. Participants will also participate in the National ECE Workforce Center's Learning Through Action Consortium, which brings together the National ECE Workforce Center's staff, partners, fellows, and early educators. By participating in shared learning across research and policy, research scholars will receive support to design and implement practice- and/or policy-relevant research projects, and policy scholars will gain a greater understanding about how to utilize research and data in policy analysis and implementation. Leaders and experts in the ECE field will mentor the research and policy fellows.

At the conclusion of each cohort of the Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship Program:

- Participants will understand the history underlying the current ECE system and the key issues impacting the ECE workforce.
- Participants will develop skills in communication and translating research to policy/practice and will produce a capstone project that bridges research and policy/practice.
- Participants on the research track will gain skills in research and conduct research with relevant datasets and/or original research.
- Participants on the policy track will gain insights into the policy process and identify opportunities to use data and research to influence policy/practice.
- Participants will have an opportunity to build and expand networks and develop leadership skills.

Structure and Activities

The stipend and hybrid structure of the program should allow for employed individuals to continue their employment and for students to maintain full-time student status. **The Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship runs from May 2024–February 2025.**

Participants will:

- Dedicate approximately **10–15 hours per month** to the program's activities, including time spent on individual projects, supervision sessions, and collaborative work with mentors and peers
- Participate in one half-day virtual kick-off event to connect with fellow cohort members and outline the program's expectations and goals
- Attend **one full-day in-person meeting and dinner the night before**, with travel expenses provided. This gathering is an opportunity for immersive learning and networking.
- Participate in eight 75-minute virtual learning sessions. Attendance is crucial for continuous development, and participants are expected to miss no more than one session throughout the program.
- Participate in **two one-hour virtual convenings** of the Learning Through Action Consortium
- Meet with a designated field mentor **four times** to receive guidance, discuss progress, and gain insights applicable to their capstone project and professional growth
- Develop and complete **a capstone project that effectively bridges research and policy/practice**, demonstrating the integration of the program's learning into a tangible product
- Present project work to peers within the program and potentially at other relevant forums to share insights and outcomes
- Engage with current and future participants, fostering a network that supports professional development and collaboration beyond the program's term
- Receive a **stipend of \$12,500** in recognition for commitment and contributions to the program and its goals

Eligibility Criteria

Research Fellow

Candidates applying for the research track must be enrolled in and pursuing some level of graduate study (master's or doctoral) at the time of the application and duration of the fellowship, in the field of early care and education, education or public policy, labor/employment, or a closely related field. They must demonstrate foundational research skills via completion of at least one graduate-level class in research methods or statistics. Applicants currently residing in the United States on F1, J1, M1, or similar student visas are welcome to apply. However, this fellowship opportunity does not provide sponsorship.

Policy Fellow

Candidates applying for the policy track must be employed as an early educator or employed in an organization working on early care and education, education or public policy, labor/employment, or a closely related field. At least one policy fellowship will be designated for a candidate who is currently working as an early educator (e.g., center-based classroom teacher or assistant, family child care provider or assistant, preschool teacher or assistant) or is in a related role (e.g., director, instructional coach) but has been an educator within the past three years.

Capstone Project

Research and policy fellows will individually complete a capstone project that bridges research and policy/practice. They will develop a product that includes a series of recommendations for policy, practice, and future research and give a presentation on their project.

Research fellows will be embedded in a larger research team within the National ECE Workforce Center in which they will undertake a project related to the center's activities. They will develop additional research skills specifically focused on ECE educators.

Policy fellows will engage in a project to answer a policy question facing their community and relating to one or more of the five policy areas of the National ECE Workforce Center. Participants will co-design their project with their program supervisor. They will utilize available data to inform their policy question and identify challenges and opportunities for the ECE workforce.

Commitment and Activity Calendar

The Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship runs from May 2024–February 2025. Participants must be able to commit to program activities, including one virtual kick-off meeting, one in-person convening, eight 75-minute virtual learning sessions, two virtual Learning Through Action Consortium convenings, and the completion of a capstone project. Participants must have the full support of their research supervisor or organization's leadership and are required to provide a letter of support from this individual.

Commitment and Activity Calendar (cont'd)

Q2 2024

- May 29: Virtual Kick-Off Gathering
- June 19: Virtual Learning Through Action Consortium Convening (*this convening is optional)
- June 23: In-Person Gathering in Arlington, VA (expenses paid)

Q3 2024

- July 10, August 14, September 11: Virtual Learning Sessions
- September 18: Virtual Learning Through Action Consortium Convening

Q4 2024

- October 9, November 13, December 11: Virtual Learning Sessions
- December 18: Virtual Learning Through Action Consortium Convening

Q1 2025

- January 8, February 12: Virtual Learning Sessions