



# Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship Program

## Program Overview

Each year, the National ECE Workforce Center recruits **two research fellows** and **two policy fellows** for our Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship. The fellowship is designed to achieve two primary goals:

1. Support the leadership development of individual fellows, and
2. Help fellows build their expertise about the ECE workforce while gaining skills to effectively bridge research and policy/practice.

To facilitate participation, participants receive a **stipend of \$12,500**, which fellows must report as income on their taxes. The program, which includes **15-20 hours per month** of program activities, is structured to allow employed individuals to continue their employment and students to maintain full-time status.

At the conclusion of the fellowship year, fellows will:

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

## Who Should Apply

There are two tracks, each with two fellows. Candidates for the research track must be **currently enrolled graduate students** in fields related to ECE, while policy track applicants must be **current professionals** such as early educators or others active in the ECE sector.

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 has prioritized candidates who are either:

- emerging scholars and leaders with expertise in Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities,
- from an historically under-resourced community,



- first-generation college student (at either the undergraduate or graduate level),
- living in areas with limited access to decision-making systems (e.g., ECE boards, local or state government agencies, policy councils), or
- have limited access to institutions of higher education.

## Structure and Activities

Policy fellows and research fellows participate in all fellowship activities together. The fellowship is designed to integrate research and practice, offering shared learning opportunities across the two tracks to build capacity in the field for applied, policy-relevant research and research-based policy analysis and implementation.

A sample of fellowship activities include:

- Participating in a **half-day virtual kick-off event** to connect with fellow cohort members and outline the program's expectations and goals.
- Attending **virtual learning sessions** as a cohort.
- Attending **one full-day in-person meeting** (expenses paid) for immersive learning and networking.
- Conducting a **capstone project** that effectively bridges research and practice, demonstrating the integration of fellowship learning into a tangible product, under the guidance of a capstone supervisor.
- Meeting with a designated **field mentor** to receive guidance, discuss progress, and gain insights applicable to capstone projects and professional growth.
- Engaging with current, past, and future fellows, fostering a network that supports professional development and collaboration beyond the fellowship term.

## Capstone Project

Fellows individually conduct a capstone project to explore a question, topic, or policy related to the National ECE Workforce Center's key topics of career pathways, compensation, and work environments. Capstone supervisors co-design capstones with fellows and guide project work. Fellows develop a product that includes a series of recommendations for policy, practice, and future research and give a presentation on their project. Products may include a brief report, a series of infographics, or other visual representation of their work.

Questions? Email [WorkforceCenterFellowship@childtrends.org](mailto:WorkforceCenterFellowship@childtrends.org).

