

ASHG/NHGRI Genetics and Public Policy Fellowship

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility

- **Am I eligible based on my qualifications?**

Candidates are expected to have an advanced degree in human genetics or a related scientific field. We will consider a candidate whose advanced degree is not in genetics per se if the individual has received training in genetics and has acquired an understanding of the science.

- **I am not a US citizen/resident. May I apply?**

The fellowship is designed for individuals wishing to pursue a career in policy in the United States. One does not need to be a U.S. citizen to apply, but one must be able to work legally within the U.S. ASHG and NHGRI cannot sponsor visas to enable a citizen from another country to become a fellow.

- **How do you define early career?**

We do not have a strict definition of 'early career'. Ideally, candidates will have completed their graduate training but be early in the career development path. Most successful candidates are postdoctoral fellows or genetic counselors who have received their terminal degrees in the last few years. That said, applicants are not required to have received their terminal degree within any specific time frame.

The fellowship is not designed for individuals who have already clearly established a career path, such as someone with an assistant professor position at a research institution.

- **I will receive my advanced degree after the application period closes. If I apply, will I be considered?**

We will consider applicants who do not have their advanced degree when they submit their application, but who anticipate receiving their degree before the end of May of the same year. However, we cannot consider applications from individuals who will not have their advanced degree by the end of May. This is because we select the fellow early in June and the applicant chosen needs to have the requisite qualifications when they are awarded the fellowship.

If you wish to submit an application, and anticipate receiving your advanced degree between the closing date and the end of May, please contact us.

Selection Process

- **What is the timeline for consideration of the applications after the application period closes in April? When I will hear?**

The fellowship application period closes near the end of April. In May, the selection panel reviews all the applications and identifies candidates to be interviewed by phone. From this pool, several candidates are then selected for a final face-to-face interview and the fellow is chosen in early June. All applicants can expect to be contacted about their application in May or June.

- **Do you need recommendation letters from my references?**

We do not require written letters of recommendation from your references at any stage of the process. With regard to references, you need only provide us with the reference information requested on the application form. We subsequently contact the references of individuals selected for an in-person interview. Prior to the in-person interviews, we reach out via email to coordinate a time to speak on the phone with each candidate's references. We do not contact the references of other applicants.

- **What makes a competitive candidate?**

Candidates must have appropriate training (see question 2). Competitive candidates express a keen interest in transitioning to a career in science or health policy, and can articulate why they need the fellowship to make this transition. Outstanding candidates will have sought policy-related experience.

- **What kind of policy experience is desirable?**

The selection committee is typically impressed by individuals who have pursued opportunities to become involved in policy or who have taken part in other activities outside of their primary responsibilities. Examples might include sitting on a policy committee at their institution, participating in an organization for early-career scientists (such as the National Postdoctoral Association), contributing to a science policy newsletter, writing for a local newspaper on policy issues, completing a short policy fellowship, volunteering at the local office of a member of Congress, or participating in a day lobbying Congress in support of biomedical research. Pursuing such activities demonstrates that the applicant has been seeking to become engaged in policy and has some sense of what policy work entails.

Fellowship Experience

- **How does this fellowship compare with other science policy fellowships?**

The fellowship is unique in its emphasis on science and health issues related specifically to genetics. It is also unusual because it has three rotations, allowing the fellow to work in and compare different policy environments - the Executive Branch, Congress, and a scientific non-profit organization. Whereas some fellowships are agnostic on the career goals of the fellows, the Genetics & Public Policy Fellowship is designed to enable an individual to transition to a career path in genetics, science or health policy.

- **How is it different from the ASHG/NHGRI Genetics Education and Engagement fellowship? Can I apply for both?**

While both fellowships have three rotations and are sponsored by ASHG and NHGRI, the fellowship experience and goals are very different. The Genetics & Public Policy Fellowship is designed for individuals wishing to pursue a career in science and health policy, and the three rotations are designed for that goal, including a longer rotation in Congress. In contrast, the **Genetics Education & Engagement Fellowship** is for individuals pursuing a career with an education focus.

Candidates are not prohibited from applying for both fellowships. However, any candidate choosing to apply for both is encouraged to articulate in their application materials why they are doing so, given that the goals of the two fellowships are different.

- **How does the fellow choose their office on the Hill?**

Finding a Hill office is a key goal of the fellow's first rotation. Although the fellowship mentors guide the fellow and help facilitate them with this task, there are no fellowship

restrictions on the selection of office. The fellow can go to the office of his or her choosing, so long as the chosen office has expressed an interest in the fellow.

Fellows develop a list of potential offices of interest in September. They do their initial outreach to the Hill and interview with offices in October, and make their final selection in November. The Congressional rotation starts in January.

After the Fellowship

- ***Where do fellows go at the end of their fellowship?***

Fellowship alumni are in diverse areas of science and health policy. For instance, since completing their fellowship, fellows have worked in the Administration (National Institutes of Health, Food and Drug Administration, Office of Science and Technology Policy); patient advocacy groups (Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, American Heart Association); professional societies (American Association for Cancer Research, American Association for Dental Research); companies and industry groups (Affymetrix, Biotechnology Industry Organization), coalitions (Personalized Medicine Coalition, National Pharmaceutical Council), and in the U.S. Senate. To view where alumni are currently employed, see the "Past and Present Fellows" table under Program Overview.

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