MISSISSIPPI WOMEN’S POLICY INSTITUTE
Application for the Class of 2019-2020

PROGRAM OVERVIEW
Application Release: June 3, 2019
Online Application Due: July 1, 2019
Application Status Notification: July 17, 2019

The Mississippi Women’s Policy Institute (WPI) is a program designed to train community-based leaders in Mississippi 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 that they can actively shape and implement policies that affect the lives of women in Mississippi.

Because WPI is an experiential training fellowship, over the course of the program fellows will learn about the policy process by researching, writing, and lobbying for a state legislative bill of their choosing while receiving support and guidance from mentors and trainers with expertise in public policy work. The fellows will be responsible for developing relationships with key policymakers and allied advocates, selecting a problem to solve, and developing and implementing an advocacy plan to move a bill through the legislature. Applicants with varying degrees of past policy experience—from none at all to extensive involvement—will be considered for the program.

Our social justice framework focuses on the structural causes of inequities embedded in public institutions such as government. Although WPI was developed in response to these structural inequities, and while we encourage each cohort to critique institutionalized oppression, the program’s primary objective is to train participants to create progressive policy changes within the current legislative system. Thus, program participants are enacting policies that make Mississippi a more just and equitable place today and are encouraged to work with their communities and organizations toward making our state’s legislative process more open and accessible to all community members tomorrow.

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.

We are now accepting individual applications. Individual applicants selected for the WPI will be placed in teams based on overlapping areas of interest, varying levels of policy experience, differing forms of issue area expertise, and other related criteria.

How is the training program structured?
- We will offer five mandatory in-person training sessions that will last a full day on either a Friday or Saturday each month from August – December. We will also offer one mandatory two-day training session in central Mississippi over a Friday-Saturday between August and December (lodging provided if needed). We will also offer dedicated time for meetings on an as needed basis during the 2020 Legislative session from January – April 2020.
• Additional webinars may be scheduled to supplement the trainings, and fellows will be asked to do everything possible to participate.
• Reading and homework will be assigned in advance of the retreats.
• Between trainings, teams will be expected to coordinate with each other as needed to complete homework assignments and to prepare their plans and work.
• Mentors will be available to guide the teams through the process.

What do WPI fellows do and learn?
By participating in the WPI, our fellows will:
• Develop legislative policy advocacy skills;
• Learn how to conduct policy research;
• Gain knowledge and information about Mississippi’s policy landscape, including current legislative policy processes;
• Overcome perceived barriers and increase their confidence in participating in the policy process as it is today;
• Develop the relationships necessary to do coalition work that advances public policy;
• Increase their participation in state policy formation and implementation;
• Build their communities’ capacity to use the policy process to address problems;
• Strengthen their relationships to and collaboration with other social justice organizations and movements in Mississippi;
• Create a peer learning environment among state-level advocates;

What do the teams do during the training program?
All fellows participate in the WPI as part of a team. Teams will, together:
• Research a state-level policy concern to determine whether an issue of concern can be addressed by state policymakers.
• Help develop and support a state bill by securing a legislator as an author, participating in legislative hearings, and advocating for their team’s bill.
• Develop materials and engage in outreach for supporters for your bill.

What is the time commitment?
The training program includes five in-person trainings (one session will be two-days), webinars, various written assignments, and ongoing teamwork between the trainings. 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. In addition to the monthly training, a couple of hours each week will likely be needed for research and reading time between sessions. During the legislative session from January – April 2020, 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.

When will the training take place?
The WPI training is scheduled from August – December 2019. Applicants are asked to put these dates in their calendar now and hold these dates until a final determination on their application is made. Key dates include:

August 23 – 24, September 20 – 21, October 11 – 12, November 15 – 16, December 6 – 7 (note: most trainings will be Friday only but one session will be two-day on Friday and Saturday. Please hold these times if you want to participate. A final schedule will be available to finalists.)
Full participation in all sessions is mandatory. Additional webinar dates throughout September – December may be scheduled and fellows will be asked to do everything possible to attend.

Meetings will occur January through April as needed.

**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 also provide stipends of $1,000 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.
- Meals will be provided during the trainings.
- Participants are required to have computer and internet access.
- Costs associated with regular teamwork that takes place outside of the trainings (phone calls, etc.) will be paid by the participants.
- Each team can access up to $1,500 of additional funding earmarked to support its policy project.
- Please note that all reimbursements must be submitted by the participant within three weeks of incurring the costs. Checks may take up to 30 days to arrive after the Women’s Foundation of Mississippi receives a complete and accurate reimbursement request.

**APPLICATION INFORMATION**

**WPI Application Eligibility**
- Cisgender and transgender women, non-binary and genderqueer people, and transgender men.
- Individuals living 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; or
- 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.

**WPI Fellowship Criteria**
Individual applications will be judged based on the following criteria:

1. **Depth of Issue Expertise**
   - Individuals must possess deep content knowledge in their chosen issue area and connection to those affected by the issue, 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**
   - Individuals should demonstrate an openness to collaboration, a love of learning, a high level of emotional intelligence and an appreciation of diversity and innovation;
   - Individuals must be willing to work to bridge differences in personality and work styles; and
Individuals must be willing to work on a team with others who have varying interests, collectively develop a policy project and actively work on the project, even if it is not their organization’s or community’s top priority.

3. Commitment to Policy Advocacy Work
   • Individuals must be able to articulate the value of learning about state policy to their employer, sector, the broader social justice movement and their own future work; and
   • Individuals must be able to articulate why now is a good time to go through the program (i.e., have the time, support, interest, etc.).

4. Organizational Support (if applicable)
   • 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
   • 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
   • 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
   • Individuals must have the ability and desire to bring the training back to their organization and community.

6. Time Availability
   • 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 to their team’s bill (excluding the scheduled trainings, time will be determined by the legislative calendar and needs of the bill); and
   • 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. Though no payment to the organization will be made (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. In the event an expense needs to be reimbursed, Employer/Applicant understand that reimbursement requests are due three weeks from the date of the expense and that checks may take up to 30 days to arrive after the Foundation receives a complete and accurate reimbursement request.

3. 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.

4. Employer will ensure that the Applicant shares what they are learning with other staff, volunteers, and Board (whenever possible).
5. 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 five in-person training and participating in all webinars is a requirement.

6. 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.

7. Applicant will work actively with their team on their chosen state-level policy project during and between retreats, including participating in conference calls, doing work on their project, engaging community input (if applicable), advocating for their project and staying in regular communication with the team regarding availability and potential barriers to participation.

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, county employees, policy advocates and community members.

10. 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 Institute.

11. Following the Applicant’s graduation from the Institute, 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.

**WPI ISSUE AREAS**

This year, WPI aims to feature teams working in the following specific areas:

**Economic Justice**

WPI will accept individual applications from women interested in and with experience in protecting low-wage and informal workers, advocating for the expansion and improved implementation of safety net programs, strengthening the diversity and size of the state workforce, and establishing standards for economic security. In this context, economic security policy projects may include, and are not limited to:

- Equal pay and gender equity in the workplace;
- Boosting funding for and access to quality childcare;
- Strengthening workforce development programs focused on job placement, retention and advancement; or
- Improving access to education, vocational and training services including basic skills training, computer literacy, and life skills training.

**Healthy Women: Improving Maternal and Child Health Outcomes in Mississippi**

WPI will accept individual applications from women interested in and with experience in issues related to positive maternal and child health outcomes 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. In this context, policy projects may include, and are not limited to:

- Comprehensive sex education;
- Access to care: health insurance, quality improvement, health information technology;
- Maternal mortality prevention efforts; or
- Supporting mothers in the workplace such as pregnancy nondiscrimination and breastfeeding.
HOW TO APPLY—APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Application Requirements

1. **Required:** Each applicant must complete and submit in its entirety their application online at: https://www.womensfoundationms.org/womens-policy-institute/.

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):
      https://www.womensfoundationms.org/womens-policy-institute/
   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 July 1, 2019.**

Online Application questions:

Full name:

Email address:

Cell phone:

Work phone:

Mailing address:

How did you hear about the Mississippi Women’s Policy Institute?

Do you know of other applicants who share your specific issue area interests? If so, what are the names of those applicants and what interests do you share?

What issue area are you applying under? The following are the possible issue areas to choose from:

- Economic Justice
- Healthy Women

What are your gender pronouns?

Your employer/organization name, website:

Your title/position:

Your office/work-related contact information (email and phone number): phone already included above

Name and contact information of your supervisor:

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.

Race/ethnicity, Age, Disability
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).  https://www.womensfoundationms.org/womens-policy-institute/

Your Individual Narrative should include one-inch margins, headers for each question below, 12-point type and single spacing.

1. Individual Narrative Introduction. On page one of your Individual Narrative, include your name, organization/affiliation, email and phone, and the issue area under which you are applying. Please also list the district numbers for your current representatives for your personal/home State district.

2. 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 the issue area under which you are applying (economic justice or healthy women).
   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.
   h. If you are unemployed and not able to answer items (f) or (g), please share how you plan to use this experience in the future as a community member.

2. 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. That program has trained more than 450 grassroots leaders throughout California contributing to the passage of 29 new state laws in California improving health, safety, and economic well-being of women and their communities.
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.

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**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:**