

Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP™)

“Developing effective leaders to serve in the contemporary policy environment...”

What is EPFP?

The Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) is a 10-month professional development program sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), a national organization based in Washington, DC. EPFP benefits individuals, organizations, and states by helping emerging leaders in education and related fields acquire new perspectives and skills needed to function effectively in the increasingly complex, political, and changing environment of state-level education.

Through EPFP, *individuals* develop their leadership potential, knowledge of the policymaking process, and ability to add value to their organizations at the "strategic" level; *organizations* build the human capital and professional networks that enable them to compete effectively in a strategic environment; and states develop the extensive network of education professionals capable of sustaining and acting on a coherent policy dialogue around the significant issues in education.

Since its inception in 1964, EPFP has produced an alumni body of nearly 7,000 individuals who now hold leadership positions in K-12 and higher education organizations; state, local, and federal government agencies; public policy groups; foundations and non-profits; and the private sector throughout the country. The program combines events of national scope with state and local activities specific to each site to provide a rich professional development experience for approximately 200 Fellows each year.

EPFP works as a partnership between the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) and multiple state-based sites. IEL is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, with national programs and a reputation for effective programs in education leadership and reform. IEL's work unfolds under the auspices of three centers: the Center for Workforce Development, the Center for Family, School and Community, and the Center for Leadership.

State sites conduct local programs independently guided by a coherent national framework and a commitment to a common set of beliefs and concepts. Three program strands—leadership, public policy, and professional networking—organize the learning in EPFP. Each strand contains concepts and materials that sites can implement in a manner designed to fit local circumstances. Each site offers a different emphasis and mix of activities to implement each strand.

In addition, Fellows from all EPFP sites share common experiences through their participation in the EPFP online community, the national reading, and through the national meeting: the **Washington Policy Seminar**. Site and national programming are tailored to fit the professional development needs of participants, addressing issues and needs according to local conditions and resources.

How Is EPFP Organized and Managed?

The state site programs provide the heart of a Fellow's experience in EPFP. EPFP provides a common overall mission and core values, but within those each site is free to, and is encouraged to, create a uniquely relevant program. Each site tailors its program—guiding objectives, content, participants—to a particular locale, political and social culture, constituency, and set of policy problems and pressures.

The quality of a Fellow's experience in EPFP depends first and foremost to the efforts, professionalism, and diligence of a team of Site Coordinators who run and administer EPFP at each state site. In addition to running the regular events of EPFP at a particular site, each team of Site Coordinators attends three meetings each program year sponsored by IEL: a Winter Site Coordinators Meeting (in December); a Site Coordinators Meeting preceding the Washington Policy Seminar (in April); and the Summer Site Coordinators Meeting (in July or August). Site Coordinators also participate in periodic conference calls with the National EPFP Team. The National EPFP Team is the point of contact between IEL and the Site Coordinators and ensures that IEL provides them with training and other resources (such as IEL publications) and also attempts to visit every site at least once during the program year.

Each team of Site Coordinators works at their site with a Partner organization (a university, policy center, foundation or non-profit) that provides a base of operations for EPFP in a particular locale. A Partner provides such crucial resources as office space, a meeting venue, staff support, and curriculum expertise to help the Site Coordinators in running EPFP. At some sites, EPFP is supported by more than one Partner organization. Such a multi-Partner arrangement makes it possible for one Partner organization to provide overhead support (office space, a meeting venue, staff support) while a second partner organization with particular expertise in leadership and education policymaking takes the lead role in putting together the substance of the EPFP curriculum for that site.

Together, the team of Site Coordinators and the Partner organization(s) are responsible for recruiting each year's incoming class of EPFP Fellows for a particular site. IEL, with its national network of EPFP alumni, can be helpful in the recruiting process, but recruitment is an ongoing and year-round primary responsibility of the Site Coordinators and Partner organization(s). Effective recruitment efforts go into high gear during February-March before the program year begins.

Site Coordinators and Sponsors must reach out to various groups and organizations (teachers unions, associations of school administrators, state departments of education, state and local boards of education, school districts, businesses, corporations, colleges and universities, foundations and nonprofits, and corporations) to secure the participation of these entities as Sponsors of EPFP at a particular site. Sponsors are crucial to EPFP, because each Sponsor pays the tuition of one or more EPFP Fellows for a program year. Many Sponsor organizations also pay the non-tuition costs of a Fellow's participation in EPFP (roundtrip travel, plus lodging and some food costs, for the Fellow's attendance of the Washington Policy Seminar). The most successful EPFP sites are those that provide a first-rate experience for Fellows and thus succeed in forging enduring working relationships with a large number of Sponsors.

The network of EPFP sites and their Site Coordinators serves to manage the flow of information and new knowledge across sites. As both information and new knowledge expand exponentially, leaders need to be able to rely upon an infrastructure of trusted contacts and reliable sources to help them sort out and identify sound, relevant data. The Site Coordinators network helps sites exchange lessons of successful practice, share insights gained from experience, and raise questions and issues of interest to others. Programs at each site can become better in less time and at lower cost through the communication across the network.

Site Coordinators design programs to provide a unique mix of learning formats and opportunities (seminars, site visits, book clubs, electronic discussion groups, etc.) according to schedules designed to suit local needs (one day-long training session per month, two four-hour meetings per month, weekend gatherings, etc.). Each site organizes a program designed to maximize the Fellows' learning experience, focusing on the professional needs and interests of participants and capitalizing on local assets and Site Coordinators' resources and expertise. Program events enable Fellows to examine such issues as effective leadership, implications of demographics for policymakers, the role of interest groups in the policymaking process, delivery of comprehensive services to youth and their families, and collaboration as a strategy and leadership skill.

Most sites begin the 10-month program year with an inaugural event, such as a retreat, for the purposes of orientation, leadership assessment, identifying learning priorities, setting ground rules, and building group cohesion. Site programs generally begin in the fall, run for approximately ten months (building on the national meeting) and culminate in a summer graduation ceremony. While state sites operate independently, they are linked by collective goals and objectives, a common curricular framework, and joint national activities.

Learning formats: Fellows participate in varied programs that enable them to develop and refine their leadership capacities and to learn about policy. Program sites use some or all of the formats listed below to enhance the learning opportunities provided to fellows:

- Seminars and guest lectures
- Small group discussion techniques
- Informal dialogues with critics and advocates, doers and thinkers
- Group work and special projects
- Site visits to the state capital and exemplary programs
- Simulations, assigned readings, case studies, workshops, and discussions
- Overnight retreats at the beginning and end of the program year
- Prominent speakers and panels of experts
- Listserv discussions and other forms of electronic dialogue and conferencing
- Co-sponsored sessions with other leadership development activities

Delivery models: Each Fellowship site uses the program model that best meets its needs. Where Fellows work and live in a concentrated geographic area, shorter, more frequent meetings may be emphasized. Where Fellows must travel long distances, fewer but longer meetings (perhaps overnight) may be the order. Current approaches include the following:

- Two four-hour training sessions per month, held at the end of the work day, and two extended seven-hour sessions;
- Evening sessions once a week;
- One day-long training session each month (arrangements for food and refreshments vary across sites); or
- One training session per month that begins with an evening seminar, includes an overnight stay at a conference center, and concludes with a day-long meeting.

Sites mix and match these approaches with retreats, one- or two-day visits to the state capital, occasional conferences, and special invitations to attend events sponsored by other organizations.

IEL and the EPFP sites collaborate as partners to provide a program that is both nationally coherent and locally responsive. All EPFP sites look alike structurally but have the flexibility to plan and implement a program that is congruent with local and state leadership needs. This flexibility ensures that the professional development needs of Fellows are met and that relevant and timely issues are addressed on-site. This arrangement also enables Fellows to use their work settings as the context for examining leadership and policy issues important to them and to their organizations and as the context for examining their own leadership.

The National Perspective:

IEL's annual national meeting—the **Washington Policy Seminar** (in April)—brings Fellows from across the nation into contact with ideas and experts Fellows could not easily encounter at their sites alone. The national meeting programs for example, have engaged Fellows in exploring demographics with Leobardo Estrada and Harold

"Bud" Hodgkinson, dialogue processes with Daniel Yankelovich and Mark Gerzon, leadership and organizational culture with Terry Deal and Ellen Schall, "inside" Washington politics with Norman Ornstein, and state politics with Neal Peirce. Fellows have met informally with former U. S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, debated education and welfare policy with key Congressional staffers and policy analysts Ron Haskins and Wendel Primus and been privy to the behind-the-book researches of Peter Schrag, Jonathan Kozol, and Robert Dallek.

To ensure that Fellows get the real low-down in a city known more for its concern with its own image and power than pesky facts, the Capitol Steps comedy troupe have brought their own special brand of truth to a highly entertained Washington Policy Seminar audience for several years. As the Steps are wont to say, "The only thing funnier than we are in Washington is the U.S. Congress."

These are but a small portion of the many expert resources Fellows meet at national meeting. Influential Congressional, agency, and association staff members are present in abundance. Media experts, innovative leaders in education and human service programs, gurus in pedagogical and public policy reform, academicians, and business trainers share their expertise. The special relationship so many of these resources have with IEL and their commitment to better public policy brings, literally, a world of experience and expertise to the EPFP Fellows each year.

The national perspective of EPFP offers the following additional benefits:

- ***Focus on intergovernmental policy and governance:*** Public policy in most areas can best be understood as a product of intergovernmental interaction at state, local, and federal levels. Given the variety of conditions and political cultures across the country, many policy problems differ by region and locale. The combination of state sites and national coordination allows participants in any site to develop both site-specific and national perspectives on problems of interest. The apt student of immigration policy and education reform, school vouchers, finance equalization, and state curriculum standards and assessments, for example, must develop an appreciation for both the uniform national policy dimensions and the unique local identities of these issues from one place to another. The IEL-state site synergy helps make this possible.
- ***Expanded network and resources:*** A hallmark of effective leadership is the leader's ability to draw upon and put to effect a constellation of resources that extend beyond the leader's own, immediate capacity. Expertise, information, and richer resources are available to members of the EPFP national network. The EPFP online community provides a searchable, dynamic database of all program alumni as well as numerous social networking features that allow for ongoing idea sharing, resource exchange, and meaningful collaboration.