

Frequently Asked Questions: Applying for WPI-State

1. Q: When does the application launch and how can I learn more about what you're looking for in an applicant?

A: The WPI-State application typically launches in early June and closes in late July, and it's always open for at least six weeks. The best way to stay updated on WPI application cycles is to sign up for the Women's Foundation of California's email list, which you can do [here](#). We are always happy to share the previous year's application guidelines, with the caveat that the upcoming application process may be different. If you would like a copy of the previous year's application guidelines, please [contact us](#). Once the application is open, the best way to learn more is to sign up for one of our informational webinars.

2. Q: I'm currently self-employed or unemployed. Am I eligible for WPI?

A: The short answer is that you are eligible to apply for WPI as long as 1) you are rooted in a community that will benefit (i.e., grow in its ability to do policy work) from your participation in the program and to which you are accountable and 2) your employment status will remain the same throughout the WPI fellowship year.

The long answer is that our model is to invest in the capacity of organizations and communities, not individuals, for engaging in policy advocacy. We do this because a) strong organizations and coalitions should be the driving forces behind public policy advocacy; b) we believe that more non-profit and community-based organizations should employ policy advocacy as one of their strategies for social change; and c) it would be impossible and impractical to attempt to train every single potential individual policy advocate in California, as our impact increases exponentially if our fellows are taking their training back to their organizations and communities.

A change in employment status could impact your ability to stay in the WPI program (i.e., your new organization won't allow you to stay in the program, you move out of state, etc.). If you do not plan to remain self-employed or you are actively looking for work during the WPI fellowship year, this might not be the right time to participate in WPI. Teams suffer when they lose a member halfway through the program, so it's important for us to know with a fair degree of certainty that your employer is supportive of your participation and that you plan on being with that employer throughout the WPI year.

Ultimately, you know your own circumstances best, and you are the person who is best equipped to decide whether this is the right time for you to apply.

3. Q: I'm thinking about changing jobs partway through the WPI year. Should I apply now?

A: Please see the answer to question #2 above. Unless you are certain that your new job will be supportive of your participation in WPI-State, this may not be the right time for you to apply.

4. Q: I'm a college student. Am I eligible for WPI?

A: If you will graduate before or during the WPI-State fellowship year and are planning to search for and start a new job, please see the answer to question #2 above. Unless you are certain that your job will be supportive of your participation in WPI-State, this may not be the right time for you to apply.

If you will not be graduating before or during the WPI-State fellowship year, we encourage you to review the retreat and webinar dates and determine whether you will be able to miss class on those days. You may want to speak with an advisor or the chair of your department about whether they can support your full participation in the program, including missing classes and whether retreats fall too close to finals week, etc. If counting your participation in the program as an internship would help secure your time away from classes, please explore that option with your department. We are happy to be supportive of that approach in any way we can.

5. Q: I'm interested in working on a very specific issue within your broad issue area. Should I apply for WPI?

A: As a general rule, we look for applicants who hold deep issue area expertise and are also willing to work on an issue that might not be a priority for them or their organization/community, or an issue that might not be their primary interest. The reason for this is that our objective is not to get a policy win—it is to teach you the legislative process so that once you graduate, you will know what it takes to get a policy win and you can focus on your specific issue. For this reason, while we encourage teams to pick policy projects that are meaningful to them, we also encourage them to pick policy projects that are moveable, maintainable, and manageable for first-time advocates.

That said, we recognize that our issue areas are broad and that there are countless different subtopics and problems impacting our communities within those issue areas (for example, education as it relates to "Economic Justice," or environmental justice as it relates to "Health"). If that's the case for you, we strongly encourage

you to urge as many other people within your field to apply as possible—that way, we are more likely to be able to put together a team of five people interested in working on that particular subtopic.

6. Q: When do interviews for WPI-State take place?

A: WPI-State interviews generally take place within the first three weeks of August.

7. Q: What's the format of WPI-State interviews, what kind of questions do you ask, and how should I prepare?

A: WPI-State interviews are conversational; don't stress about this portion of the process! We ask questions that help us better understand your interests within the issue area under which you applied, your experience with policy advocacy, your reasons for wanting to participate in WPI-State, your organization's relationship to policy advocacy, and the degree to which your organization supports your participation in the program. A good way to prepare is to review your Individual Narrative as well as the selection criteria and participant requirements.

8. Q: If I am not offered an interview, does that automatically mean that I will not be selected for the program?

A: No, we don't necessarily interview everyone before selecting them for the program. Please continue to hold the retreat and webinar dates on your calendar until a final determination on your application is made.

9. Q: What can I do to strengthen my application for WPI-State?

A: First, please keep in mind that our final decisions are based both on individual merit and the overall "fit" of the five people who we have selected for a team. We often receive strong applications from leaders who we would love to admit to the program, but who are not a good fit in the year they applied due to the nature of their interests relative to the rest of the applicant pool, their having recently started a new job, their being in the process of looking for a new job, or other reasons.

Applicants who articulate clear personal and professional reasons for wanting to learn policy advocacy, make a strong case for organizational support, and exhibit deep issue area expertise are always strong candidates for the program. If you have any interest or experience working in other issue areas, please mention that in your application as well—we often consider applicants for teams in issue areas other than the one under which they applied. Good luck!