**Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Applying for WPI-Local**

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-Local application typically launches in early January and closes in February, and it’s always open for at least four 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](https://womensfoundca.org/news/subscribe/). 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.

1. **Q: We don’t have the required four members for a full team; what should we do?**

A: First, WPI-Local does not accept applications from individuals. If you are still searching for that 3rd or 4th team member in your corresponding county, please contact our Program Manager Elizabeth Ayala to see if there are any points of facilitation for team members. (Her email is elizabetha@womensfoundca.org.) WPI-Local emphasizes regional coalition building and should be seen as a jumping off point for a policy project. Pre formed teams are pivotal to the learning of local policy and facilitate the practice of local advocacy.

1. **Q: As an individual member of a team, 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.

1. **Q: As an individual member of a team, 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.

1. **Q: I’m a college student. Am I eligible for WPI?**

A: If you will graduate before or during the WPI 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, this may not be the right time for you to apply.

If you will not be graduating before or during the WPI 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.

1. **Q: When do interviews for WPI-Local take place?**

A: WPI-Local interviews generally take place in late February or the first week of March.

1. **Q: What’s the format of WPI-Local interviews, what kind of questions do you ask, and how should we prepare?**

A: WPI-Local interviews must be done as a team. With that said, interviews are conversational; don’t stress about this portion of the process! We ask questions that help us better understand your team’s interests within the issue area under which you applied, each of your members experience with policy advocacy and how your team came together and plan to create or strengthen a coalition for your policy project as a result of the fellowship. A good way to prepare is to review your Team Narrative as well as the selection criteria and participant requirements.

1. **Q: If our team is not offered an interview, does that automatically mean that we 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.

1. **Q: What can we do to strengthen my application for WPI-Local?**

A: First, please keep in mind that our final decisions are based both on each team and the overall mix of the applicant pool and subsequent class. A central goal of WPI is to build cross movement networks so we take issues, geography and other factors into consideration. We often receive strong applications from teams who we would love to admit to the program but don’t have room to put in the program.

Teams who articulate clearly their capacity to leverage the fellowship to build or strengthen coalitions, a compelling policy problem and that it is a local government problem, and exhibit deep issue knowledge (whether professional or personal) are always strong candidates for the program.

Good luck!