

2025-2026 VA/Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program

VA has an agreement to include VA-nominated Fellows as a participation 'track' in The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program, which began in 2013. The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program, funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation with support from West Health Policy Institute, is a unique opportunity for professionals in health and aging to receive the experience and skills necessary to make a positive contribution to the development and implementation of health policies that affect older Americans.

The year-long program has offered Fellows the opportunity to participate in a residential track or a non-residential track. The 'VA track' allows a Fellow to remain based at their local VA institution but work on a policy project that may involve brief placement(s) throughout the year at relevant sites. This VA track has some unique features but largely will mirror the overall program. Core program components focusing on career development and professional enrichment are provided for Fellows in all program tracks.

The deadline for submission of complete application is April 15, 2025.

What is The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program?

This one-year mentored policy program provides:

- Formal sessions in Washington, DC and other locations addressing health and aging policy along with general career development and professional enrichment content
- A nationally recognized mentor identified during the course of the orientation based on discussions with the Directors of the Program and Fellow's area of interest to assist the Fellow's policy and career development
- Participation in an ongoing community of peers and mentors to advance knowledge and practice
- The program curriculum includes an orientation program in Washington, DC that runs for approximately 5 weeks between the end of October through the beginning of December. The program does not schedule sessions on weekends or over Thanksgiving.

In addition, there is a 2-day leadership summit in the fall, a 1.5-day communications workshop in February/March and a 1-day symposium in the spring. During the course of the year, VA Fellows are otherwise at their home institutions with an expectation that approximately 20% of the Fellow's time will be focused on their policy collaboration/project for the year. The travel expenses for these activities will be provided to the participant by The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship.

VA Health and Aging Policy Fellows will participate fully in the program. More information about the program can be found at <http://www.healthandagingpolicy.org/>. Note: The website provides information about the current program but does not accurately describe 2025-2026 deadlines, processes or financial issues of the VA track, which are covered in this document.

Who is eligible?

VA Fellows must be nominated by the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) and will be selected by the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program through a national competition based on the applicant's commitment to health and aging issues, leadership potential and interest in impacting policy. The program has a broad interdisciplinary focus: Fellows have included physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, dietitians, healthcare administrators, epidemiologists, economists and lawyers from academic and practice settings, spanning career stages from newly minted PhDs to senior professors and community leaders. The program is open to U.S. citizens at all career stages, with a focus on those early or midway through their careers.

A paid VA appointment is required prior to starting The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program but is not required at the time of application. Part-time VA appointments are acceptable to meet eligibility criteria. Applicants may be VA staff or trainees (e.g., Advanced Fellows.) The VA track in this program is a curriculum enrichment opportunity and does not include any supplemental salary support for the Fellow's time or effort. All applicants to the VA track must demonstrate that their underlying VA position will allow them the time to participate in this program.

What is the application process?

There are two stages for application to this program.

Stage 1: Eligibility Determination

VA staff/trainees stating interest in applying to The Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program must receive determination of eligibility from OAA. Only those applicants who are determined to be eligible can be considered for program participation. OAA shall provide eligibility determination to applicants generally within 3 working days of our receipt of all required materials. The elements below must be submitted at one time via email to Ms. Deborah Ludke (Deborah.ludke@va.gov) at any time but **no later than March 21, 2025**. Applications involving submissions of partial documentation will not be considered, even if all required materials are ultimately submitted.

The request for eligibility determination shall include the following elements:

1. Cover letter from candidate stating interest in program and describing the following:
 - a. The paid VA appointment that the applicant will have at the time the program begins in Fall, 2024
 - b. Local VA leadership support and commitment for protection of time needed to participate in program
 - c. Current contact information including physical address, e-mail address and telephone number
2. Letter of support from local VA mentor with signatures from local VA mentor, Service Chief, VA medical facility Designated Education Officer (or ACOS/Education) and VA medical facility Director. The letter of support shall address at least:
 - a. Local VA mentor background, including prior mentorship experience
 - b. Local VA mentor time commitment to support this application
 - c. Institutional commitment for participant's time, space, travel (please see details about travel funding below) and equipment required for program participation
3. Applicant CV

Stage 2: Program Application

The deadline for submission of the application materials to The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship Program National Program Office (HAPF NPO) is **April 15, 2025**.

Please see instructions on how to apply here: <https://www.healthandagingpolicy.org/fellowship-application/how-to-apply/>.

All reference letters should be sent directly to The HAPF NPO at hapfell@nyspi.columbia.edu and received by April 15, 2025.

Please email your completed application as one PDF document to hapfell@nyspi.columbia.edu. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Process for Travel Funding for VA Participants in the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program

The Health and Aging Policy Fellowship Program is offering most travel expenses. Participants will work directly with the HAPF NPO leaders to arrange travel, expenses and reimbursement. All reimbursement will be made directly from the HAPF NPO to the Fellow and will not involve exchange of funds or approvals by the VA. Finalists and approved Fellows shall receive detailed instructions about this process from OAA Advanced Fellowships and Professional Development section.

HAPF Information Sessions for the 2025-2026 Class

If you are interested in becoming a Health & Aging Policy Fellow and have questions, information sessions via Zoom will be offered on the following dates and times through March 2025 (all times are EST). Please click on the link below to register. Once you have registered, you will receive an email confirmation from Zoom containing the meeting link.

- Monday, January 13, 2025 from 2–3 PM
- *Tuesday, February 4, 2024 from 3-4 PM - *Session focused on the VA track
- Thursday, March 13, 2024 from 12–1 PM
- Friday, March 21, 2024 from 1–2 PM

[Click here to register for a session.](#)

If you should have any questions about the information sessions listed above, please email the HAPF NPO at hapfell@nyspi.columbia.edu.

For more information on the VA/Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program please contact Deborah Ludke in the Office of Academic Affiliations Advanced Fellowships and Professional Development section at: Deborah.ludke@va.gov.