

National Dissertation Award for Research on Poverty and Economic Mobility 2022–2023

Application Deadline: 11:59 p.m. CDT **February 13, 2022**

[Optional webinar: January 13, 2022](#)

1:00–2:00 ET | 12:00–1:00 CT | 11:00–12:00 MT | 10:00–11:00 PT

Posted: December 7, 2021

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

As the National Research Center on Poverty and Economic Mobility, the [Institute for Research on Poverty \(IRP\)](#) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison invites applications from dissertators who are from groups that are underrepresented in academia for its 2022–2023 National Dissertation Award for Research on Poverty and Economic Mobility program. This award is provided with the financial support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Office of Human Services Policy (U.S. DHHS/ASPE/HSP).

IRP has established this award to support an outstanding dissertation project that explores issues of poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and access in human services. Competitive dissertation proposals will produce actionable policy research on reducing inequalities in human services administered by HHS (e.g., child welfare, child support, child care, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, youth homeless services, and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program). Research on the broader social safety net programs (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, subsidized housing programs, employment and training programs, and tax credits) will also be considered, especially when those programs interact with the human services administered by HHS.

Research is “policy-relevant” when it informs local, state, or federal law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, or program adoption and implementation in a way that is targeted, timely, and actionable. Policy-relevant research may inform knowledge and understanding of the nature, causes, correlates, and effects of policy issues such as income dynamics, poverty, individual and family functioning, and child well-being with the goal of improving the effectiveness of public policies.

Preference will be given to dissertators with purposeful plans to engage affected populations in their research or dissemination (e.g., collaboratively developing research questions, potential methods, and plans for data collection; working with community members to interpret findings and put them into context; and sharing results in ways that are accessible to impacted individuals such as through visuals, blogs, and videos).

Proposals are welcome from all disciplines by dissertators who are underrepresented in academia. IRP is using the definition of *underrepresented* as outlined by the [National Institutes of Health](#) (see Eligibility section below for more detail).

ABOUT IRP

The Institute for Research on Poverty is a center for interdisciplinary research into the causes and

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consequences of poverty and inequality in the United States and the impacts of related policies and programs.

As the National Research Center on Poverty & Economic Mobility sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, IRP coordinates the [U.S. Collaborative of Poverty Centers \(CPC\)](#). IRP and its partner centers support and train poverty and economic mobility scholars with a special focus on expanding opportunities for scholars from historically underrepresented groups. In addition, IRP and its partner centers provide relevant, cutting-edge research on a wide range of topics with the ultimate goal of improving the effectiveness of public policies to reduce poverty and its consequences.

ABOUT OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION (ASPE), OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES POLICY (HSP)

The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation is the principal advisor to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on policy development. ASPE is responsible for major activities in policy coordination, legislation development, strategic planning, policy research, evaluation, and economic analysis. Within ASPE, the [Office of Human Services Policy \(HSP\)](#) conducts policy research, analysis, evaluation, and coordination on various issues across the Department, including but not limited to, poverty and measurement, marginalized communities, early childhood education and child welfare, family strengthening, economic support for families, and youth development. HSP serves as a liaison with other agencies on broad economic matters and is the Department's lead on poverty research and analysis.

HSP is focused on human services programs and their ability to promote the economic and social well-being of many of America's most marginalized people. Through a variety of programs, services, and benefits administered at the federal, state, local, and community levels, the field of human services provides a range of resources to best support the complex needs of a variety of America's lower income families and individuals.

HSP's work centers on three overlapping goals:

1. **Enhancing equity, inclusion, diversity & access.** We define "equity" as the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality ([Executive Order 13985](#)). To enhance this goal, we are:
 - a. Centering our work in the experiences and needs of individuals, families and communities who are the intended beneficiaries of human services supports and programs.
 - b. Being more inclusive in all aspects of project and policy design and execution—including expanding inclusion in who helps to identify problems and research questions, who informs that work along the way, and seeding opportunities for greater diversity in contractors and staff who are performing the work.

- c. Identifying ways to be systems-focused in our work and identify potential root causes in context setting when presenting evidence.
 - d. Evolving how we talk about groups of people and target populations of programs so that we are accurate, respectful, person-centered and responsive to how people want to identify themselves.
2. **Amplifying evidence around prevention of social welfare challenges and crisis.** Clearly identifying the evidence of what works in preventing social challenges/crises and highlighting the benefits or potential benefits of a prevention framework across programs for individuals and families.
 3. **Identifying aligned well-being metrics for program adoption.** Promoting metrics that could be reasonably adopted across different social programs to highlight multiple dimensions of person/family/community strengths and needs and prompt data-informed dialogue and action about the partners, resources, supports and services that enhance well-being beyond individual program outcomes.

TERMS

Eligibility

Proposals are invited from doctoral students at U.S. universities, other than UW–Madison, who are individuals belonging to groups that are underrepresented in academia and whose dissertation is focused on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and access in human services. IRP is using the definition of *underrepresented* as outlined by the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH). Underrepresentation can exist in various forms, from one’s race or ethnicity, to ability status, gender identity or sexual orientation, or current or past economic disadvantage. Applicants will be asked to share relevant demographic data in their application and describe how they meet the NIH definition of underrepresented in their field of study.

Applicants should expect to complete their required coursework by September 2022 and can reasonably expect to complete their Ph.D. by the 2023–2024 academic year or earlier. Applicants need the support of their dissertation chair as documented through a letter of support provided by the dissertation chair as part of the application package.

All fellowship applicants *must* show proof of application for outside funding support from another source in order to be considered for this award. Include a letter or email from the other potential funder acknowledging receipt of your application for dissertation support or related grant proposal. However, no student will be allowed to receive both the IRP award and a similar award for the same work from another organization, including their home institution, during the same time period.

University of Wisconsin–Madison dissertators are ineligible for funding under this award.

Contract Period

The award contract period is flexible depending on needs of the applicant, but funding must be spent by September 29, 2023. Funding can be used during summer 2022, fall semester 2022, spring semester 2023, summer 2023 or any combination of the preceding times.

Funding

The fellowship provides \$25,000 awarded to a dissertator's home institution to be spent by September 29, 2023. Funding can be used to cover items including tuition, stipend, data acquisition (e.g., data access fees, purchase of data sets, collection of qualitative data, etc.), research assistance, subject payments (including compensating community members or others with lived experience who consult on the project), travel (for data collection or access or to attend a research conference), and supplies. Other research expenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis. University indirect costs may also be billed but IRP encourages home institutions to waive this cost.

Budget

Applicants should provide a draft budget narrative outlining when and how they plan to use the \$25,000. Note that home institutions may have restrictions on how the funding is spent and awardees may have to pay taxes on all or part of the funding depending on how it is used. After the award is announced, IRP will work with the awardee and their home institution to develop a detailed budget including determining the amount of indirect costs applied.

Commitment

Receipt of this dissertation award from IRP will require a commitment to:

- Within the **first 6 weeks** of the award begin date, participate via video conferencing in a meeting with IRP to discuss plans for a public-facing project and how to maximize its policy relevance.
- Submit brief quarterly progress reports (≤ 150 words) of work accomplished during the preceding three months **every quarter** in the established award period except for the last two quarters (see timeline for more details), to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu.
- Submit a draft of the final public-facing project for review and comments to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu **three months before the end of the established award period**.
- **Within two weeks of submitting the draft**, participate via video conferencing in a meeting with IRP to discuss how to maximize its policy relevance.
- Submit a revised final draft by **end of established award period**, to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu.

The public-facing project could be a targeted fact sheet, infographic, brief video or other formats intended for a wide audience of policymakers. This end project, as well as the quarterly progress reports, will be shared with the ASPE Program Officer. All publications associated with the award should acknowledge the support of IRP and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE).

In addition, the funded dissertator will be invited to attend quarterly professional development trainings provided virtually. These trainings are developed primarily for in-residence fellows (both post-doctoral Ph.D.s and Masters in Public Administration/Policy graduates) working at HHS through grants from IRP. Additional IRP grantees will also be invited to attend. These sessions are voluntary but will expose the awardee to a broad range of research and methods topics as well as provide the opportunity to engage with a cohort of early-career researchers focused on policy-relevant research on themes tied to poverty and economic development.

Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed in a three-stage process.

1. Applications will be screened for completeness, including:
 - a. online application completed;
 - b. application materials uploaded; and
 - c. letter of sponsorship uploaded.
2. Complete applications will be reviewed by an internal IRP panel to assess whether applicant meets the following eligibility requirements:
 - a. is a member of a group unrepresented in academia;
 - b. has a dissertation topic focused on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and/or access in human services;
 - c. application materials, including letter of support, show that applicant is expected to complete their required coursework by September 2022 and can reasonably expect to complete their Ph.D. by the 2023–2024 academic year or earlier; and
 - d. applicant has applied for other funding.
3. Qualifying applications will be evaluated by a panel of distinguished scholars selected by IRP. The panels will use the application and letter of recommendation as the basis for scoring the following:
 - a. The potential of the dissertation to advance the field of study in which it is proposed and make an original and significant contribution to knowledge on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and access in human services;
 - b. The quality of the dissertation proposal with regard to its methodology, scope, theoretical framework, and grounding in the relevant scholarly literature (Please note: IRP welcomes applications that challenge scholarly convention);
 - c. The potential for the dissertation to influence the policymaking process, especially related to programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
 - d. The quality of proposed public-facing project;
 - e. The quality and feasibility of the plan for engaging affected communities in research or the dissemination process;
 - f. The feasibility of the dissertation proposal and the likelihood that the applicant will execute the work within the proposed time frame; and
 - g. The applicant’s record of scholarly engagement and potential for scholarly achievement, taking into account the relative advantages and constraints on resources for the proposed project and over the course of the applicant's doctoral training.

Award Info

IRP anticipates supporting one dissertation research project with a \$25,000 award to be spent by

September 29, 2023 provided to the dissertator's home institution. Award will be made in early April 2022.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Complete applications must include both (1) applicant-provided proposal using [the online Application Form](#); and (2) letter of sponsorship provided by dissertation chair using the [online sponsor submission form](#).

Applicants are responsible for providing the link above to their sponsoring dissertation chair and asking their sponsor to directly submit their letter of sponsorship by the application deadline. Both the applicant and the dissertation chair will receive a confirmation e-mail when the letter of sponsorship is submitted. Note that the letter of sponsorship can be completed before or after the application is submitted but both the application and the letter of sponsorship must be completed by the deadline for the application to be considered complete.

1. **Submit proposals via the [online Application Form](#).** Applicants should provide the materials outlined below as one PDF file, in the order listed, by the application deadline. Your application should include:
 - a. Cover page listing the following:
 - i. Dissertator's name, department, university, contact information;
 - ii. Sponsoring dissertation chair's name, department, university, contact information;
 - iii. Project title and abstract; and
 - iv. Anticipated timeline for dissertation completion and defense.
 - b. Description of proposed work, no more than 10 double-spaced pages, to include:
 - i. Research question, original contribution to literature on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and/or access in human services;
 - ii. Research design, methodology, and data sources;
 - iii. Anticipated results of research, including potential implications for public policy;
 - iv. How the research process or dissemination process will engage affected communities, including a plan for compensating those who consult on the project;
 - v. Brief description of proposed public-facing project;
 - vi. Draft budget narrative outlining when and how \$25,000 will be used; and
 - vii. Current status of dissertation, preliminary work completed to date, and expected dissertation completion date.
 - c. Current curriculum vitae.
 - d. Documentation that the proposal was entered in at least one outside dissertation competition.

2. **Have your dissertation chair submit a letter of sponsorship via the [online Submission Form](#).** The letter of sponsorship should address:
- a. The merits of the dissertation project including its potential to advance the field of study in which it is proposed and make an original and significant contribution to knowledge on issues related to poverty, economic mobility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and/or access in human services;
 - b. Expected dissertation completion date; and
 - c. The applicant’s record of scholarly engagement and potential for scholarly achievement, taking into account the relative advantages and constraints on resources for the proposed project and over the course of the applicant's doctoral training.

CONTACT

All inquiries, including questions on the application process, budget, and research issues, should be directed to irpapply@ssc.wisc.edu

TIMELINE

Call Release	December 7, 2021
Optional Webinar	January 13, 2022 from: 1:00–2:00 ET 12:00–1:00 CT 11:00–12:00 MT 10:00–11:00 PT Webinar link: https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/98550299961
Application Deadline	February 13, 2022
Notification	Early April 2022
Contract Begins	Flexible depending on proposal
Meeting with IRP	Within the first six weeks of award begin date
Quarterly Progress Reports Due	On the 5th of the month of each quarter during the contract period
Complete Initial Draft of Public-Facing Project	Three months before the end of the established award period
Meeting with IRP	Within two weeks of initial draft submission
Final Public-Facing Project Due	By contract end date
Contract Ends	Flexible depending on proposal no later than September 29, 2023

Note: Award dates and reporting requirement deadlines will be specified in the award letter upon notification.