

Architects of Change The Experiences and Impact of Schott Fellows

Gain New Skills and Confidence

The Schott Fellowship provides an opportunity to learn and practice policy skills such as how to:

- Identify policy gaps
- Collect and analyze data
- Work collaboratively to develop policy solutions
- Frame an issue
- Facilitate community dialogues
- Advocate for policy solutions

Fellows learn and practice policy skills through a year-long policy project and through community roundtables.

Some outcomes that fellows report include:

Greater awareness of policy issues

"I have a much greater awareness about policy issues and I'm much more concerned. Before I would participate but I was not personally engaged to the level I am now. I was not really thinking about how those policies affect my work on a day-to-day basis. Now I can't be part of meetings or advocacy efforts without being actively engaged. I have more responsibility because of the fellowship program. It taught me that I have to be an active player." – Nicole St. Victor

Increased confidence to step into leadership

"I just became a director of a state agency department that is very policy-focused. The Fellowship gave me the confidence to apply for this position. We were always told that we could take on high-level positions of policy development." – Lisa Sockabasin

Working more effectively in a team

"As a result of the Schott Fellowship I have gained a deeper understanding of how to take responsibility for a project and work it through to completion. Having to "learn how to get along" with a strong group of individuals, like myself, in order to complete this project helped me to see myself less personally and more professionally." -- Paula Bowie

Expand Your Network

Schott Fellows meet and develop strong relationships with a highly diverse group of early education and care leaders. They bond with each other and build bridges with leaders and policymakers to become a powerful force for change.

Through an opening retreat, monthly meetings, and collaborating on policy projects, Fellows develop deep trust with one another. Through community roundtables and policy project presentations, Fellows reach out to share information and mobilize support around policy issues.

The fellowship network provides:

Honest support

"I have developed relationships with people that I know will always be there. We can be honest with each other even if we have differences. I know I can go to the other fellows and bounce ideas off of them, and feel that I can do that in confidence, and they will understand." -- Lori Cox

Affirmation and community

"I live on the Cape and am often one of the only people of color in a group. To be in a group where there was equal representation of people of color was huge for me. You don't feel like you have to explain everything. You also learn not to assume that because someone is a person of color they share your perspective." -- Marie Enochty

Diversity of perspective

"It was so nice sitting in an incredibly diverse group. It was so comfortable. Let's be honest, quite often we sit with the same white middle-aged people that we've seen so many times before." -- Maureen Farris

Lead Organizational Change

Fellows are leading their organizations to become more involved in the policy process. Through policy dialogues and sharing their fellowship learning, they mobilize staff, board members, and clients to take a greater interest in policy solutions and to consider how they can improve their own policies and procedures to better support children and families.

"The fellowship invited me to look at the mission of my work, and the goals and objectives of my organization. For instance, I personally know how to provide children with a safe environment, but now I am looking at how we can do that through our policies and procedures. I am asking about what is missing in our policies and procedures that can be changed to better support children and families." -- Nicole St. Victor

"Before when we met with legislators my boss always provided the technical information. Now I feel comfortable meeting with them independent of her and bringing the information back to her. She's been very vocal that we all need to take a piece in the policy work, and the fact that I'm now on board is beneficial to the whole agency." -- Mal Hughes

Impact Public Policy

Fellows are researching policy gaps, and developing innovative solutions to address these gaps including:

- Regulations to ensure that early educators receive training to increase their cultural competence
- Quality standards that apply equally to all programs that serve young children
- Program practices and training that actively encourage family involvement and support

"I have a new two-part workshop I am doing on cultural diversity and sensitivity. I'm trying to perfect this workshop so that it might be a model that can be replicated by the new EEC department." -- Marcia Farris

"We presented our policy to the EEC Department, and in the January issue of their newsletter they recommended 'developing a core set of regulations that brings together all common elements of our current system, for any type of care setting and age of child.'" -- Joe Martin

"We were able to get language into the Early Education and Care bill that all providers need to have a family involvement program. The Schott fellowship helped make that happen. Now we have to watch for implementation." -- Maureen Farris

Be an Architect of Change

During the fellowship year and beyond Schott Fellows move into leadership positions with policy responsibilities, train and coach policy

leaders, run for office, and speak passionately and publicly on behalf of children and families in Massachusetts.

"My participation in the fellowship helped me to be a stronger advocate for teachers and providers to get more training with fewer barriers. I am more actively trying to increase people's awareness about the need for professional development and get them interested in helping me with this issue." – Wendy Luk

"I'm working with another fellow to put together a curriculum to train the next generation of leaders to take up the cause of quality care for children and families, not just because it's important to them but because it is a global cause. Giving them basic training, and supporting them to apply what they learn, is a really good way to support them." -- Maureen Farris

"As a result of our policy presentation, I am consulting with WGBH on their early childhood literacy curriculum that targets American Indian Children in the West. I have talked with them about how they can become more culturally sensitive, reach out to Native communities, and be more successful." -- Lisa Sockabasin