

IEL Program Spotlight:

EPFP is a Premier Program That Develops Cross-Boundary Leaders

Transformative, visionary, inspiring, life-changing, empowering... These are words [alumni](#) of the [Education Policy Fellowship Program \(EPFP\)](#) use to describe their EPFP experience, whether they were in the program last year or fifty years ago.

What makes the [Fellowship](#) unique is its intentional focus on three pillars—policy, leadership, and networking—an approach that invites leaders within and across systems and sectors to hear and learn from each other and experts in the field:

- **Policy** - Fellows learn about specific policy issues; policymaking and implementation processes; the interface of local, state, and national policies; and the practices effective leaders use to function in the policy environment.
- **Leadership** - Fellows develop familiarity with different types of leadership, become aware of their potential as leaders, and learn from interactions with proven leaders.
- **Networking** - Fellows learn to establish action-oriented and mutually beneficial relationships with colleagues, expand their range of strategies for developing and using power and influence, and build and sustain a larger and more diverse range of professional resources and contacts.

As part of the EPFP experience, most Fellows start in the early Fall with a welcome retreat and a regional forum (Gettysburg/Army War College Strategic Leadership Forum, Civil Rights Bus Tour, or the Rural Education Bus Tour), spending the Winter in their state capitols learning about the policy-making process. By Spring, Fellows gather for a four-day [Washington Policy Seminar](#) in Washington, DC, to connect what they have learned on the local, state, and regional levels to the national and federal scene.

A real-world problem solving policy project caps the EPFP experience. Recent Fellow-driven topics included: food insecurity in college, segregation of public schools, whole child education, dropout prevention, and supporting transgender students. Throughout the experience, Fellows learn from and with each other about pressing education and public policy issues, reflecting on their leadership, and learning how to mobilize networks for change, building trusting and lasting relationships within their cohorts along the way.

Its roots and legacy: EPFP is a 53-year old program, the foundation on which the [Institute for Educational Leadership](#) (IEL) was built. It remains one of the premier education leadership programs in the country. In the true spirit of IEL, EPFP is a bellwether, one of the first fellowships to approach leadership development from a cross-sector/cross-system perspective, to actively recruit minorities and women, and to recognize the power of networks.

A study of EPFP confirmed that the Fellowship benefits individuals, their employing organizations, and states by:

- increasing Fellows' knowledge base and refining their leadership skills;

- creating an enduring impact on Fellow's work efficacy and careers by developing their human capital and creating social capital;
- enhancing employees' ability to make research-based contributions to policy and practice;
- expanding the use of professional networks for gaining access to people and resources previously unknown or unavailable to an organization;
- developing over time a larger, savvier systemic leadership capacity in a state.”

Over [8,500 leaders for education](#) have graduated from EPFP, a cross-boundary, interdisciplinary network that reaches into all fifty states and across the preK-16 sector and complementary sectors such as public administration, labor, health, justice, business, and philanthropy. And, the network is poised to grow into the future.

EPFP Today: EPFP is a partnership between IEL’s National EPFP Office and [16 site partners](#). Some sites have been with EPFP for over 40 years, such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Minnesota. This year, New York celebrates its 35th anniversary. Driven by alumni efforts, EPFP is adding a new state each year, toward its goal to be 25-states strong by 2025.

In the [2016-17 cohort year](#), EPFP recruited 315 Fellows across 16 states (CA, CO, CT, DC, GA, LA, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NY, NC, OH, PA, SC), tying last year’s record. Our cohort exemplifies our hallmark feature, cross-institutional diversity: a third are school and district leaders, a third two- and four-year college faculty, staff, and administrators, and a third leaders in diverse sectors including community-based organizations, state-level nonprofits, and government agencies.

EPFP’s future: 2017 is a time of great transition in education, from the new administration and pending passage of post-secondary legislation, to the implementation of Every Student Succeeds Act. Leaders in our states and communities will need to work together to create opportunities that support all children and youth. Experiences like EPFP facilitate knowledge sharing and meaningful partnership across stakeholders, nurturing leaders who can move the needle on equity-driven systems change on all levels. Visit us at epfp.iel.org to learn more.

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