What is the program?

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows® Program is a cooperative initiative of more than 31 scientific and engineering societies, each of which selects and supports highly skilled scientists and engineers for one-year fellowship awards. The fellowships provide the opportunity for accomplished individuals, who have a commitment to applying their science in service to society, to participate in and contribute to the policy making processes within the U.S. Congress, while gaining first-hand experience of federal decision making, policy development, and implementation.

Fellows spend one year serving on the staffs of Members of Congress or congressional committees in areas that would benefit from scientific and engineering input. Fellowships are scheduled to begin in September; a few may begin in January. All Fellows are required to participate in the two-week orientation in September conducted by AAAS before the start of their fellowship.

The overarching goals of the fellowships are to increase the capacity of scientists and engineers to inform the discussions and decisions of individuals and institutions that influence or determine policies, and to provide scientific expertise and analysis to support decision-makers confronting complex scientific and technological issues. The fellowships aim to:

• educate scientists and engineers on the intricacies of federal policymaking;
• foster positive exchange between scientists/engineers and policymakers;
• empower scientists and engineers to conduct policy-relevant research and other activities that addresses challenges facing society; and
• increase the involvement and visibility of scientists and engineers in the public policy realm.

AAAS and the Partnership Societies

AAAS manages the Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows® Program. Management activities include promoting the availability of Science & Technology Policy Fellows to the U.S. Congress, implementing a two-week orientation on congressional, executive branch, and judicial operations, managing the congressional placement process, and providing a year-long professional development program and networking activities. The AAAS Fellowships
program collaborates with its partner societies to maintain overall standards and program coherence.

**What are the criteria for the partner scientific and engineering societies?**

A partner society is a national or international scientific or engineering association that sponsors one or more congressional fellowships (some societies also sponsor executive or judicial branch fellowships) under the umbrella of the AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships. Societies are typically 501(c)(3) organizations with a majority of members at the PhD, or other terminal degree level, who are professionally involved in research and education related to science and engineering. The Fellowships program does not accept as partners any universities or university associations, academic institutions or consortia, trade associations, foundations, or commercial sponsors, or professional societies without a significant focus on science or engineering.

The partner societies conduct their own individual application and selection processes, and may offer different stipends and benefits. However, all agree to abide by a set of common elements for the selection of fellows, and to adhere to the general principles, purposes, policies and ethics guidelines of the AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships. For example, all applicants must have a PhD or an equivalent doctoral-level degree, or a master’s degree in engineering with at least three years of post-degree professional experience, in order to participate.

A list of the societies, with links to their individual programs, may be found at [http://www.aaas.org/page/partner-societies-st-policy-fellowships](http://www.aaas.org/page/partner-societies-st-policy-fellowships).

**How do the AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships differ from other fellowship programs?**

There are many congressional fellowships, assistantships, and internships beyond the Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows® Program in Washington, DC. What makes the Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows® Program distinctive is that it:

- targets scientists and engineers who come from outside the policy realm and can bring external perspectives to the policy process;
- emphasizes policy-oriented learning through direct participation, rather than observation;
- designates its fellows as free agents, not representatives of the sponsoring societies;
- provides PhD or equivalent-level scientists and engineers (Applicants must have a PhD or an equivalent doctoral-level degree. Individuals with a master’s degree in engineering and at least three years of post-degree professional experience can also participate.);
- includes a year-long professional development program; and
- involves 12-month assignments in congressional or committee offices.
In addition, the following common elements of the fellowship programs are agreed to by the societies that partner and participate in the Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows® Program:

**Affiliation:** Congressional fellows sponsored by partner societies will be considered part of the entire cohort of Science & Technology Policy Fellows, and may use the title, Congressional Science and Engineering Fellow®.

**Application:** Each applicant applies on his/her own initiative. The process involves an open competition. No outside nomination is required and individuals are not targeted as pre-selected applicants. Applicants apply directly to the appropriate professional society or societies for which they qualify.

**Criteria:** Candidates must have a PhD or an equivalent doctoral-level degree, and demonstrate exceptional competence in their fields. (Individuals with a master’s degree in engineering and at least three years of post-degree professional experience also may apply.) Regardless of age or career stage, candidates must demonstrate

- solid scientific and technical credentials and the endorsement of two or more qualified references;
- a strong interest in applying their knowledge to the solution of societal challenges;
- awareness of the ways in which science, engineering and technology affect a broad range of non-scientific issues, and sensitivity to political, economic and social factors; and
- willingness and flexibility to tackle problems beyond the scope of their specific area(s) of scientific or engineering expertise.

Other selection factors include: integrity and good judgment; the ability to communicate well, both verbally and in writing, to non-scientific audiences; and the capacity to work effectively with decision makers and others outside the scientific and engineering communities. In addition, candidates are expected to display maturity and self-direction, with the initiative and flexibility to work well independently as well as in groups.

**Selection:** Societies establish an ad hoc selection committee or use an existing committee (e.g., public policy committee) as the screening/selection entity. The selection process is competitive, with professional excellence and suitability for the fellowship as the primary considerations. Selection committees and candidates also must be aware of possible conflicts of interest (see below for clarification).

**Placement:** Fellows will work for one year on the staff of a Member of Congress or a congressional committee on topics relating generally to science or engineering. Fellows are free to choose their own placement and to work without direction, influence or an agenda from their sponsoring organization. AAAS administers the placement process for all congressional
fellow(s). Congressional fellows are not to solicit potential placements before the end of their orientation. (The placement process start date varies depending on the orientation schedule, but usually begins in the third week of September.)

Conflict of Interest: In cases where there may be a real or perceived conflict of interest in connection with a fellow’s placement, the appropriate congressional ethics committee must be contacted, and any guidelines and/or requirements issued from that committee or office must be adhered to.

Some fellows may receive opportunities to consult or advise in a capacity not related to their fellowship (for example, continuing grants, research, or other academic activities). Because of their workload and demanding work schedule, AAAS discourages congressional fellows from taking on assignments beyond their fellowship. If they do, their remuneration must be communicated to the hosting office during the placement process and approved in advance by the host office. The funding must not in any way influence the fellow’s focus or activities and the fellow must adhere to the AAAS ethics policies and the House or Senate ethics policies governing their respective committee or office.

Activities: The sponsoring society may reasonably expect its fellow(s) to furnish information periodically on their learning experience. However, fellows are to be regarded as free agents, not as representatives of their society. In accordance with the ethics policies of the House and Senate, fellows should not be asked to report on specific legislation and they should not meet with governing boards or policy committees of their sponsoring organization while they are serving as fellows.

For more information about the Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows® Program and the AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships, please contact us:

Phone: 202.326.6700
E-mail: fellowships@aaas.org
Web site: www.aaas.org/program/science-technology-policy-fellowships