



Becoming an Island Fellow – Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to become an Island Fellow?

The Island Fellow program is open to anyone who has graduated within the last 5 years with a baccalaureate or master's degree and who is a U.S. citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident.

What is the application process?

Start by filling out the online application. The link is posted under the [Be a Fellow](#) section on the Island Institute website. Along with the application form, applicants need to provide an unofficial copy of college transcripts, a letter of recommendation, a resume, and a personal statement describing why the applicant wants to be a Fellow. Applications will be considered incomplete until all these pieces have been received.

After the application is received, candidates will go through a preliminary review process. Strong candidates are asked to do an initial virtual interview with the Fellows Project Team who then makes recommendations for on-site interviews. The three top candidates for each Fellowship position will conduct on-island interviews. The island-based selection committee makes the final hiring decision.

What is the application timeline?

The completed Fellow application is due March 23rd. Preliminary online interviews will be conducted the weeks following the application deadline. Top candidates will be invited to on-island interviews the first weeks in April. Final selection of applicants will be done in late May. Candidates must accept the offer to be a Fellow by June 15th. The Fellowship year starts at the beginning of September.

How are the placement sites on islands determined?

Island-based organizations develop the projects based on their need for increased capacity, an emergent community need, or a long-term community identified project that needs an extra set of hands to bring it to the next level. Possible host communities work with the Fellows Project Team to fine tune project proposals to ensure they take into account sustainability and do not displace jobs from island residents. Placement sites are based on need, quality of the project proposal, and how recently the island and/or host organization sponsored an Island Fellow.

What do Island Fellows do?

Each fellowship is very different. Fellows have worked with towns, local nonprofit organizations, local schools, historical societies, libraries and in many other areas on projects incorporating marine science, land-use planning, education, the arts, and health care services.

Fellows provide 'an extra set of hands' to their communities in many different ways because they are able to dedicate their energy and enthusiasm full time to projects that are normally dependent upon the time and resources of volunteers. In addition, as members of communities where everybody wears 'many different hats', Fellows have found themselves doing tasks and projects that go above and beyond the original scope of the fellowship, including serving as members of the volunteer fire department or rescue service, playing music, organizing social events such as weekly movie or game nights, volunteering in the school and much more.

In this spirit of community involvement that we expect Fellows to be flexible and open in their expectations.

Is housing provided?

The Island Institute works with host sites to secure housing for each fellow. Rent and utilities are covered. This does not include TV, internet or phone. We make every effort to find year-round housing, but this is difficult on many islands. In some instances, Island Fellows may be asked to move to a different location during the summer months. Most housing is furnished. We understand that the nature of the fellowship blurs work and life boundaries and to this end we try our very best to secure individual housing for the fellow.

What other benefits come with a Fellowship?

Fellows receive a salary of \$15,000, and two weeks paid vacation. Fellows are eligible for the Island Institute's health care plan, as well as short term disability insurance. The program will reimburse reasonable travel expenses for work and training. Fellows can participate in a laptop buyback program. A professional development fund is available to offset the cost of training and classes for Fellows to increase their professional skills.

I applied to be a Fellow before, but wasn't accepted. Can I apply again?

Yes. Application materials are kept on file for one year. Emailing the Fellows Project Team with an updated resume and a new personal statement is all that is needed to have your application be considered in the next year. If you applied more than one year ago, you would need to resubmit the entire application packet indicating on the application form the year you had previously applied. The process to be a fellow is competitive. We receive very strong applications each year. It is also a selective process because the available sites and the skills and interests they require change each year. So, we strongly encourage applicants to apply again.

I am a Maine Island resident; can I apply to be a Fellow?

Yes. Maine Island residents who meet the eligibility requirements can apply for the Fellows program. However, Island residents will be placed on a different island from their home island.

How do I know what placements are available for the coming year?

Though the number of placements varies from year to year, between three and seven new placements are made every year. We prefer applicants who want to be engaged in the experience of living and working on a Maine Island and are willing to be flexible. Therefore, as an applicant, we will not reveal the site placements until after the initial interview.

Can I apply to a specific island/project placement?

Not within the normal program. Fellows apply to be a part of the program. Applications are sent to the committee which decides who will get the opportunity for an interview. Final project placement decisions are made project stakeholders and the Fellows Project Team based on who they feel best fits the project and the tone of the island.

Occasionally, we will have fellowships outside of our normal geographic region or that require special skill sets. These fellowships will be advertised separately because of their special requirements, and you can apply for those and a regular fellowship.

How long is a typical island fellow placement?

Fellows are placed at their host site for two years. After the first year, the Fellow will sit down with their host site advisor to discuss the direction and focus of their project in order to make sure that all needs are being met and create a work plan for the second year.

Can I apply to be an Island Fellow as part of a couple?

You are welcome to apply with a partner; however, each application is considered independently and we cannot guarantee that both applicants will be selected. In addition, there is generally only one placement per island, so if couples are both accepted they should be prepared to live on different islands.

Applicants who are selected to be Fellows can bring a partner and/or family with them to the placement. The partner will be required to find his/her own employment and will be asked to contribute a monthly utility fee towards housing costs.

I have my own idea for a fellowship with work that I want to do. Do you do this?

No. the Fellows Project Team works closely with communities to design projects that fit a specific community need. Though we try very hard to match an applicant's abilities with the needs of the project, fellows do not design their own project. If you know of a project or need on an island, you can email the Fellows Project Team who will initiate contact with the community to work on a project proposal.

Fellowships are very specific, but life on an island lends itself to creativity—so if you have a particular passion, fellows are encouraged to engage in the community outside of the parameters of the project description. Fellows have started singing groups, revitalized exercise clubs, and coached basketball in their off hours.

Why is an on-site interview required?

An on-site interview allows you to experience the island before committing to live there for two years. Every island is different, and it is important to understand the commitment an Island Fellow makes when they agree to live on an island full time. The on-site interview also gives the community and your advisors a chance to meet you and decide if you would be a good fit for their project and community. We have done virtual interviews if it is absolutely impossible to get an applicant to the island; however, the process of visiting and spending time in the community has proven vital in both the fellow and the interview team in making good decisions.

Can the start date be shifted?

No. All Island Fellows start the first week in September. The timeline is set so that all the Fellows start together and finish together. This provides you with a peer support group and helps streamline trainings and orientation. Sticking to this timeline is an important part of being a Fellow.

Do Fellows have an office?

Fellowships are not traditional 9-5 office jobs, but many Fellows are provided with office space within their host organization. Some Fellows work out of their homes, and this requires that Fellows have high levels of self-motivation and are comfortable completing tasks under minimal supervision. The Institute asks that all Fellows have a local phone number, so that neighbors do not have to call long distance and cell phone service on some islands is limited. Fellows are provided reimbursement up to \$30/month for internet access. Fellows may also work at the Island Institute's office in Rockland for a day or two, if they have to be off island for any reason.