THE ARCHER CENTER
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE POLICY RESEARCH PROSPECTUS

As a Graduate Archer Fellow, you will examine a current federal policy challenge and propose a realistic solution that addresses this challenge. Throughout your Fellowship, a policy expert will support your research and writing in a collaborative group setting alongside Fellows focused on similar policy challenges.

Your research may include archives and libraries, think tank events, conferences, congressional committee hearings, interviews and oral histories, direct experiential learning in your internship, and other sources that are relevant to your topic.

By the end of the Fellowship, you will complete a ten-page paper and presentation that both addresses the policy challenge and advances your own academic and professional goals.

YOUR POLICY RESEARCH PROSPECTUS

As an applicant, you should craft a policy research prospectus that encapsulates not just what you want to research, but *how* you want to approach your research question and why it matters for your academic and professional trajectory.

To be competitive, you must focus on federal policy — that is, a policy challenge that you believe the federal government can and should address. You are welcome to address any federal policy area. During the selection process, your selection committee will not express preferential treatment for any policy area.

1. Analyze a policy challenge for the federal government and tell us why it is important

Maximum of 250 words; Weighted 50% of your prospectus.

As a Graduate Archer Fellow, you will spend significant time examining the policy challenge. In your prospectus, you should describe the policy challenge. Rather than a broad topic, identify a specific policy challenge that you could meaningfully examine during your Fellowship and propose realistic recommendations to address.

- **Too broad:** intimate partner violence in the U.S.
- **More specific:** inadequate victim services for survivors of intimate partner violence in rural communities

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Your prospectus should also clearly articulate why this policy challenge matters. You might argue for its importance on various grounds, for instance:

- Economic costs or gains at stake
- Impacts on individual, community, and societal quality of life
- Benefits or harms to the environment
- Ethical considerations

2. Describe how you would approach research while in Washington, D.C., including the research methods that you would apply and the knowledge resources (e.g., archival collections, congressional committee hearings) available in Washington that you would use. *Maximum of 125 words; Weighted 25% of your prospectus.*

As a Graduate Archer Fellow, you will refine and advocate for your recommendation to address the policy challenge.

In your prospectus, focus on a specific, realistic recommendation that could meaningfully address the challenge. For instance:

- **Too broad:** a policy recommendation intended to eliminate domestic and dating violence throughout the United States
- **More realistic:** a policy recommendation that enhances victim services and the criminal justice response to intimate partner violence in Tribal communities

3. Describe how you would approach research while in Washington, D.C., including the research methods that you would apply and the knowledge resources (e.g., archival collections, congressional committee hearings) available in Washington that you would use. *Maximum of 125 words; weighted 25% of your prospectus.*

As a Graduate Archer Fellow, you will conduct research in Washington, D.C., to deepen your knowledge of the policy challenge and inform your recommendation. The research you conduct will reflect your topic and your approach to examining it. Describe the skills and expertise that you will apply to your research project. For instance, specific quantitative or qualitative analysis skills that you have developed in your graduate program.

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In your prospectus, indicate the resources that you would access in Washington. These might include:

- Archival and library collections at the National Archives, Library of Congress, or Smithsonian Institution
- Talks and conferences hosted by think tanks and other organizations
- Congressional committee hearings or other meetings
- Interviews or oral histories with experts and other stakeholders
- Experiential learning in your workplace

To the extent possible, be specific. For instance, identify the congressional committees and subcommittees of interest or the think tank experts you would ask to interview.

4. Explain how this policy research project would support your personal academic and professional aspirations. *Maximum of 125 words; weighted 25% of your prospectus.*

As a Graduate Archer Fellow, you will craft a research paper that is more than an end in itself. Your prospectus should identify a topic that is significant to you, reflects your academic interests, and aligns with your professional aspirations.

In your prospectus, explain to your readers how you will use, apply, or build on the research paper in your endeavors beyond the Archer fellowship. For instance:

- Adapting the paper to a memo or talking points that you deliver to a policymaker
- Excerpting the research paper in an op-ed or other public-facing project
- Refining the paper as a writing sample for future internship and job applications
- Expanding the paper into an article for submission to a journal
- Developing the paper into a writing sample for a Ph.D. application
- Incorporating the paper into a thesis or dissertation

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

To be effective, your prospectus must cite supporting evidence when relevant. For instance, you might cite evidence that supports your claim about the importance of the policy challenge. You must correctly format your citations using a citation style such as MLA, APA, or Chicago. If you have questions about citing evidence, please reach out to your academic supervisor or research librarian at your university for help.

Citations do not count toward the 500-word limit for the policy paper.

CONTACT US

Questions about the Graduate Archer Fellowship Program application can be directed to the Archer Admissions team at archeradmissions@utsystem.edu.