

APPLICATION FOR CLASS OF 2026-2028

Fellowship Overview

The Jim Bernstein Community Health Leadership Fellows Program prepares future leaders to work in and improve the health status of rural and underserved communities in NC. Fellows carry on the legacy of rural health pioneer, James D. Bernstein, who led efforts to support community-driven care of low- and moderate-income, isolated, and underserved populations for over 30 years.

The Fellows Program seeks to elevate and amplify the work of outstanding individuals who share Bernstein's beliefs that:

- Everyone has a right to health care.
- Care should be respectful, effective, and efficient.
- Each health care system belongs to the communities where people live and providers practice.

IMPORTANT DATES:



Application Opens: April 3rd
Informational Webinar: April 24th @ 12 pm
Deadline to Apply: May 15th
Interview: June 16th
Orientation: October 2nd-3rd

Eligibility Criteria

Fellows are mid-career health professionals from various disciplines: primary care, behavioral health, pharmacy, oral health, public health, social work, etc. Eligible applicants:

- Work in an administrative or clinical capacity in a rural and/or underserved community in NC, or work with an organization that focuses on rural and/or underserved communities.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to underserved populations and community-driven care.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to remaining in NC.
- Demonstrate leadership potential (such as being a self-starter, resourceful, industrious, motivated, mature, resilient, a good communicator, problem-solver, and team player).
- Be sensitive to cultural diversity among client populations in health care settings and programs.
- Hold realistic expectations about working with vulnerable populations in rural or underserved communities.



KEY DETAILS

Length: October 2026 through
October 2028

Fellowship Includes:

- Educational component
- Individual project
- Mentoring on leadership, the NC health sector, rural life, and partnerships

Fellowship Requirements:

- Fellows will spend 10-12% of their work time on Fellowship activities
- Funds awarded through the program may not be used to supplement the salary of a Fellow

Funds: Financial stipend available for project support

FHLI Board of Directors

The Fellowship Program is administered by the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation and is overseen by the Jim Bernstein Health Leadership Committee of the Foundation's Board of Directors.



BERNSTEIN FELLOWS

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Program Specifics

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Fellowships will be awarded to up-and-coming health professionals (administrators, practitioners, etc.) from various disciplines (primary care, pharmacy, behavioral health, oral health, public health, social work, etc.).

Fellowships are awarded for two years and include an educational component, an individualized project, and an ongoing relationship with a mentor centered on:

- Building leadership capabilities
- Understanding the health sector in NC
- Recognizing the strengths and challenges of rural communities
- Collaborating effectively with local and state partners

EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

Educational sessions will be held over the two-year fellowship to enhance each Fellow's overall understanding of rural health and develop professional skills related to the health climate.

During the fellowship, approximately 12 days will be dedicated to educational programming (in-person and virtual). The Fellows program is not part of a degree-granting program.

PROJECT COMPONENT The project will be individualized by the Fellow's professional interests and goals and the goals of the Fellow's employer. Each Fellow will have an opportunity to work with a mentor relative to their identified project.

During the fellowship period, each Fellow will submit project progress reports. At the end of the program, each Fellow will submit a project summary and share their summaries with their local communities and the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation.

COMMITMENT

Fellows will be expected to spend 10-12 percent of their work time on fellowship activities.

CONTACT

To speak with someone regarding the Fellows Program or the application process, contact:

Amari Bass, MHA, CHES

Program Coordinator, Program Solutions, Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation
amari.bass@foundationhli.org

Apply by May 15th



TO APPLY...

Email complete submission packet:
amari.bass@foundationhli.org with the subject line "Bernstein Fellowship Application"

Interviews with select applicants will take place on **June 16, 2026**. If extreme circumstance prevents an applicant from interviewing on this date, arrangements can be made to ensure the opportunity for interview.

*Fellows will be notified of selection to the program by **July 1, 2026**.*

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Program Specifics

FELLOWSHIP FUNDING

Financial stipends are available to develop an individual project and cover travel and registration costs for required educational sessions. The Fellow's employer is expected to provide salary support, and awarded funds cannot be used to supplement the salary of a Fellow.

However, in unusual circumstances, the Foundation may choose to provide a greater level of funding for those working in financially-stressed organizations to ensure no qualified applicant is denied participation.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS Interested applicants must submit the following in a single pdf to amari.bass@foundationhli.org:

- Curriculum vitae or resume (to serve as your cover page)
- Written statement (see the prompt below)
- Letter of support from the employer
- Letter of recommendation from a professional source
- Signed Statement of Understanding and Commitment (attached)

Your written statement should address your interest and goals for the fellowship program and answer the following:

1. Why are you interested in participating in the Fellowship?
2. What is your understanding of what the fellowship program can offer you as a health professional?
3. What are your strengths and challenges as a health professional?
4. What personal and professional goals, relative to developing the leadership skills stated in this request for applications, do you hope to achieve?
5. What does the achievement of those goals look like (how will your goals be measured) at the end of the Fellowship?
6. What are some areas of interest you wish to pursue in the development of your fellowship project?
7. What communities and agencies would be affected by your project interests?
8. How can your project work bring positive and lasting change to these communities and agencies?



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Webinar: April 24th @ noon
Deadline to Apply: May 15th
Interviews: June 16th
Notice of Acceptance: July 1st
Orientation: October 2nd-3rd

MORE INFORMATION

Register for the Webinar:
<https://bit.ly/3PUM2Iz>

Apply for the Fellowship:
www.foundationhli.org/programs/bernstein-fellows



Jim Bernstein Community Health Leadership Fellowship Statement of Understanding & Commitment

By my signature below, I state that I have:

- Reviewed the mission, vision, and scheduling commitments of the Bernstein Fellowship;
- Informed my immediate supervisor that I will devote 10-12% of my work schedule to the Fellowship to attend educational opportunities, and work on my project;
- Obtained a letter of support from my immediate supervisor to participate in the Fellowship and a letter of recommendation from a professional other than my immediate supervisor; and
- Prepared a written statement and curriculum vitae or resume.

Applicant's Printed Name

Applicant's Signature

Date

Supervisor's Printed Name

Supervisor's Signature

Date

Please include this statement with your Fellows Program application.