

VIRGINIA G.
PIPER
CHARITABLE TRUST

Piper Fellows Program

SABBATICALS TO BUILD
LEADERSHIP & EXCELLENCE
IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS





“The Piper Fellows Program came at an important time for succession planning and laid the foundation to see myself as the leader that others in my organization saw in me. My course of study and the resources within the community of Fellows created space for expressing bold ideas, my greatest fears, and everything in between. I credit being a Piper Fellow as the support I continually draw on for the courage to lead our organization and realize unprecedented breakthroughs in performance and organizational impact.”

– Michelle Mac Lennan, General Manager, Chandler Center for the Arts (2006 Piper Fellow)



“I viewed my Piper Fellowship as an ‘investment’ that allowed me time to develop a vision for Chicanos Por La Causa—it helped the organization grow and become one of the largest Latino nonprofits in the country.”

– Edmundo Hidalgo, Community Advocate; former President, Chicanos Por La Causa (2008 Piper Fellow)

Piper Fellows Program

The Piper Fellows Program acknowledges the never-ceasing demands of nonprofit leadership and provides opportunities for leaders to reach, retool, and revitalize. Nonprofit leaders are strengthening our community daily—serving social good and helping address society’s needs and challenges with limited resources and time. Yet, they do this with unparalleled fervor. As such, Piper Trust believes that supporting our community’s nonprofit trailblazers is a smart investment that carries broad impact.

Sabbatical

Piper Fellowships provide nonprofit professionals with financial resources for a holistic and enriching *professional development sabbatical*. Awarded organizations agree to work-release time for the Piper Fellow that can be taken all at once or divided by activity. Candidates are encouraged to explore educational and professional programs and best practice sites across the country.

Six Fellowships

Annually the Trust awards up to six Piper Fellowships of \$30,000 (maximum) each to support the self-designed professional development plans of outstanding leaders of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations serving Maricopa County. Strong candidates for a Piper Fellowship are in leadership roles at nonprofits making a significant impact in the community.

Staff and Board Development

Recognizing the need to stimulate learning and exploration throughout a Piper Fellow’s nonprofit organization, the Trust provides \$10,000 (maximum) to each Fellow’s organization to support professional development for the staff and board.

Organizational Award

Piper Fellows are also eligible to apply for a Piper Fellows Organizational Enhancement Award—a \$50,000 grant (maximum) to support a project that addresses a major opportunity or challenge facing the organization. Fellows may apply for this award at any time during the Fellowship year or up to six months after completion of Fellowships. A Fellow must indicate how the Fellowship connects to the request for this organizational grant. The application process does not disqualify an organization from applying to the Trust for a competitive/responsive grant during the year in which an Organizational Enhancement Award is funded.



“The Piper Fellows Program gifted me the opportunity to more fully understand my personal and professional leadership journey. It was life-changing, challenging, and extremely rewarding. It gave me access to the tools and resources to expand my educational horizons and to connect my personal values and skills to the mission of our organization. The experience opened the door for me to be able to step away and take the time to prepare myself, and the organization, to increase our vision of creating more access and opportunity for all girls.”

– Mary Mitchell, Interim Co-CEO, Girl Scouts-Arizona Cactus-Pine Council (2017 Piper Fellow)



Eligibility & Requirements

Qualified Organizations

The candidate’s employing organization must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has provided services primarily within Maricopa County for at least 10 years* in human services, health, education, arts and culture, or religion. The employing organization must:

- Fully support the candidate’s request for leave to participate in the Piper Fellows Program and submit a work plan for organizational management during the candidate’s absence and upon the candidate’s return.
- Guarantee all salary and benefits and continue full-time employee status of the candidate during the period(s) of leave.
- Be able to sustain regular operations during the candidate’s absence.

Candidates

Leaders who have significant responsibilities for a nonprofit organization serving Maricopa County in the areas of human services, health, education, arts and culture, or religion may apply. Employees of organizations classified as private foundations under Section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code are not eligible. A candidate for the Piper Fellows Program should:

- Be an outstanding leader who has a demonstrated track record of leadership within the organization and service to the community.
- Be responsible for a significant level of management of the organization’s programmatic or operational activities.
- Have worked a minimum of seven years in the nonprofit sector, though not necessarily for a single organization.
- Be a full-time employee of the applicant organization.

Requirements of a Piper Fellow

- Begin Fellowship work plan in January of the year following selection.
- Submit a report to Piper Trust within three months of completion of the Piper Fellowship. Reports should detail the professional development activities during the release period and how the experiences will be applied and help better serve the mission of the organization.
- Participate in various activities and engagements during the Fellowship year and in subsequent years to build on individual and shared experiences, foster continued professional development, and stimulate potential collaboration among the Piper Fellow organizations.

*Each year the selection committee may choose to award a Fellowship(s) to an Emerging Leader(s) whose organization has operated for five or more years; the nonprofit leader must still meet all candidate-specific requirements.

“I can think of no other professional experience that compares to my Piper Fellowship. Every nonprofit leader dreams of having a chance to take a step back, reflect, and reimagine what is possible—but we never seem to have the time. Participating in the Fellowship pushed me to do what was needed for my organization, my teammates, and the families we serve. I am a better leader and a better person for it.”

– Aaron Blocher-Rubin, PhD, BCBA, President and CEO, Arizona Autism United (2017 Piper Fellow)

“Thanks to the Piper Fellowship, Dementia Friendly Communities are growing and thriving throughout Arizona, as we will see the highest increase in people affected in the coming years. Due to the culmination of the Piper Fellowship, the support of Banner Alzheimer’s Institute, and immense community engagement, I am hopeful that people living with dementia and their care partners will receive timely support to live their best lives in their communities.”

– Jan Dougherty, President, TravALZ, LLC; former Family & Community Services Director, Banner Alzheimer’s Institute (2014 Piper Fellow)



The Application Process

To apply for a Piper Fellowship, submit an application online at pipertrust.org/pfapply; the application is comprised of the following questions:

1. Why are you working in your field; how did you get there?
2. Why are you applying to be a Piper Fellow and how is this in alignment with your professional goals?
3. How would you use the resources of a Piper Fellowship award and work-release time for personal development to enhance leadership, services, and operational effectiveness within your organization? (Include narrative and specifics about your Fellowship plan that details your professional development activities, study, reflection/ respite ideas, and timeline.)
4. What do you hope to achieve/ gain as a Piper Fellow?
5. How would your experience as a Piper Fellow benefit your organization?
6. What significant lessons have you learned in your work?
7. What do you see yourself doing in five years?
8. Share any thoughts/ considerations you have about how practices that strengthen your organization’s mission could build organizational and/ or community resilience (*community resilience is the ability of people, communities, and systems to rebound from shocks and stressors through proactive planning, nimble actions, and openness to evolution; a resilient community leverages its assets to mitigate economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities*).

Support Materials

- Description of your organization, its mission, and its services.
- Résumé that covers the past 10 years of your career and includes your contact information.
- Proposed budget for your sabbatical expenditures.
- Professional letter of recommendation as to why you would be a strong Piper Fellow. Must include contact information for the reference (Maricopa County-based).
- Names and contact information for two additional references (Maricopa County-based).
- Brief letter of endorsement supporting your proposal as a Piper Fellow signed by your organization’s board chair or other appropriate person, and includes: 1) the plan for organizational management during your sabbatical study and upon your return; 2) guarantee of maintenance of your regular salary and health/ other benefits during the award period.

Deadline

Applications are due via the online portal—pipertrust.org/pfapply on August 1.

Piper Fellows Selection

The selection committee is comprised of Maricopa County leaders who are knowledgeable about the value and contributions of the nonprofit sector. The committee reviews the applications, conducts interviews, and makes its recommendations to Piper Trust’s Board of Trustees for final selection.

“I am forever grateful to Valley of the Sun United Way in supporting me through the Piper Fellows Program. The Fellowship allowed me and the organization to shift conversations about the work of Community Impact. Ultimately the experiences I had through the Fellowship gave me the foundation—personally and professionally—that I needed to take the next step in my journey, leading me to my role at the Human Services Campus. This is where I feel at home.”

– Amy Schwabenlender,
Executive Director,
Human Services
Campus, Inc.
(2016 Piper Fellow)



“My Piper Fellowship started just before the global COVID-19 pandemic and every one of the plans I had for that year shifted. The training and coaching I received throughout this time in my Fellowship

allowed me to release my expectation of things looking a certain way, harness the joy of commitment, and shift into otherwise unseen opportunities. Ultimately, I was able to thrive beyond expectations, and so did the agency! We started new services for our community, increased revenue, and improved staff retention leading to the most successful year yet.”

– Arianne Roy, Chief Operating Officer-Family
Services, RISE Services, Inc. (2019 Piper Fellow)

The Fellowship Experience

The value of a Piper Fellowship relies on creating a well-planned sabbatical program that includes a variety of courses, programs, and projects designed to collectively achieve identified leadership objectives.

Field Work

Sabbatical experiences have included seminars at leading business schools, leadership development programs, best practice site visits, and personal coaching. For ideas and insights about Fellowship activities, applicants are encouraged to review Piper Fellows’ profiles and other application resource materials at pipertrust.org/piperfellows.

Piper Fellows have expressed appreciation for their sabbatical coursework, site visits, and reflection time. Additionally, Fellows often express how the relationships that develop among them are an invaluable benefit of the Program. While some relationships emerge outside of Maricopa County, most develop among the class of Piper Fellows and through organized experiences with the larger community of Piper Fellows. The shared advice and support are invaluable. Through convenings designed specifically for Fellows, such as informal gatherings like Piper Fellows Connects and ongoing opportunities to participate in programs/workshops on timely issues, Piper Fellows have opportunities to stay connected indefinitely.

“Do you have
what you need
to do your job well?”

Virginia G. Piper



The Piper Fellows Program focuses on supporting people who are driven to make a difference, and this is what Virginia Piper was all about. She believed in the potential of investing in people and was known to visit organizations, where she often asked, *“Do you have what you need to do your job well?”*

Virginia with nurses in the Virginia G. Piper Special Care Unit at Scottsdale Memorial Hospital (now HonorHealth)

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust supports organizations that enrich health, well-being, and opportunity for the people of Maricopa County, Arizona. Piper Trust grantmaking areas are healthcare and medical research, children, older adults, arts and culture, education, and religious organizations.

Piper Trust works side-by-side with nonprofit organizations as a partner, helping them to identify problems, build expertise, find solutions, and become continually stronger and more effective. The Trust strives to be a vital part of Maricopa County—not only as a source of leadership and financial support, but as a neighbor sharing a lasting stake in the county’s future. Piper Trust introduced the Piper Fellows Program in 2001 to enable nonprofit leaders to take sabbaticals for renewal and professional development.

Application/Selection Timeline

August 1

Deadline for completed applications via online portal at pipertrust.org/pfapply

September-October

Finalist interviews at Piper Trust offices

Early December

Public announcement of Piper Fellows

Questions? Contact:

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

480.948.5853 | pipertrust.org/piperfellows



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