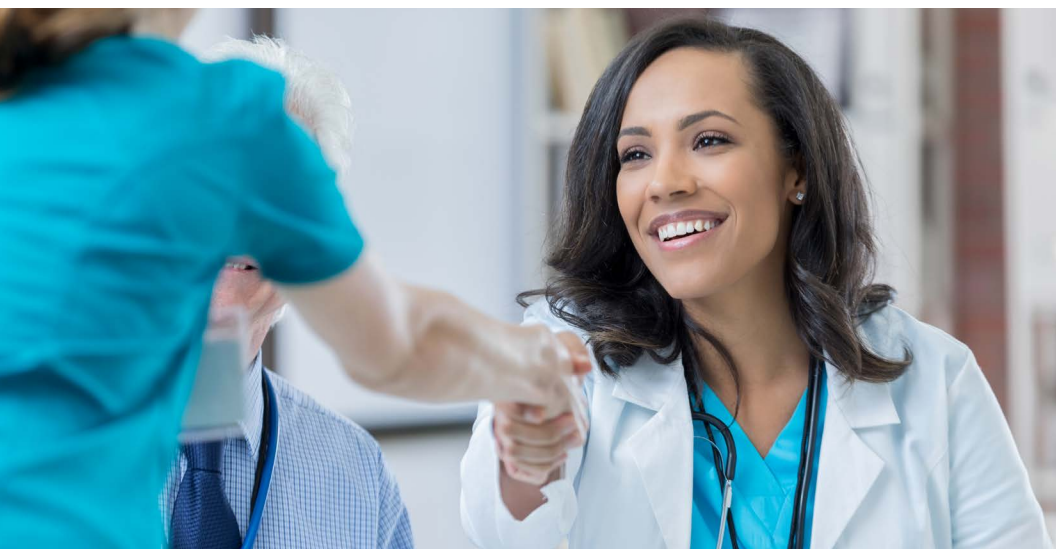


FINDING YOUR **RIGHT MATCH**



**HOW AN ACCREDITED ADVANCED PRACTICE
PROVIDER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CAN EASE
YOUR TRANSITION TO PRACTICE**

**COMPLETE
WITH
INTERVIEW
PREP
QUESTIONS!**

**Shirley Tumang, MSN-Ed, RN, PCCN
ANCC PTAP & APPFA Team**



CONTENTS

Cue Your Inner Sherlock: Discovering Your Right Match.	3
It's Elementary: Advanced Practice Provider Fellowships and APPFA Accreditation	4
Digging Deeper: Examining a Fellowship Program	7
Consider, Investigate, and Inquire:	
Domains of Program Leadership, Organizational Enculturation, and Development and Design	8
Domains of Practice-Based Learning and Program Goals/Outcome Measures	10
Identify Your Fact-Finding Resources	12
Your Perfect Match Awaits!	13
Interview Prep Tool Tear-Out Supplement	17

© 2023 American Nurses Credentialing Center. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission of the publisher. Reproduction or transmission in any form is not permitted without written permission of The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). This publication may not be translated without written permission of ANCC.

CUE YOUR INNER SHERLOCK: DISCOVERING YOUR RIGHT MATCH

Picture this: you have just graduated as a physician associate/assistant (PA) or an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). So many doors are now open, but which is the right door to enter? Whether your graduation date is around the corner or you just recently graduated, many of you are visualizing your first advanced practice provider (APP) job. Before taking the leap and entering your initial employment in the APP profession, you should take the time to unmask the available options and discover which specialty area is your perfect match. Reflect upon your APP career vision and include your values and work experiences.

Reflect upon your APP career vision and include your values and work experiences.

Before you begin dusting off those detective skills, reflect upon your vision for your APP career and include your personal values and work experiences. Think about areas or settings you would like to live in and the types of employment options associated with them. Identifying your preferences will help determine the strong characteristics of an organization, clinical setting, and fellowship program that best align with your anticipated career.

- ▶ **Do you have a specialty or service line in mind for your first job as an APP?**
- ▶ **Consider that the physical location of an organization can affect what jobs in specialty areas or service lines are offered.**

After you compile your potential employer list based on your preferences, compare your values alongside those organizations' mission, vision, and values.

- ▶ **Do the organization's mission, vision, and values align with yours?**

Next, focus on exploring the organization's recognition and awards for APP excellence. Inspect the level of impact and outlook of advanced practice providers within the organization.

REFERENCES

- American Nurses Credentialing Center. (2022). *2023 Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Application Manual*. Silver Spring, MD: Author.
- Erickson, C.E., Steen, D., French-Baker, K., & Ash, L. (2021). Establishing Organizational Support for Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant Transition to Practice Programs. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, 17, 485-488. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nurpra.2020.11.018>
- Institute of Medicine. (2011). *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- White, M., Cosme, S., & Church, C. (2020). *Detecting the Right Fit*. Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Credentialing Center.

- ▶ Has the organization been recognized for its nursing excellence through the ANCC, including Magnet®, Pathway to Excellence®, Practice Transition Accreditation Program®, primary/joint accreditation? Has it been recognized for its APP excellence through Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation™ (APPFA)?
- ▶ Does the organization have an academic affiliation?
- ▶ What is the applied model of APP care and the culture of the employment setting?

IT'S ELEMENTARY: ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDER FELLOWSHIPS AND APPFA ACCREDITATION

Now that you have ignited that detective spark to determine the best organizational match, it is time to discover how an advanced practice provider (APP) fellowship program supports role transition.

PAs and APRNs in clinical settings have become part of the normal day-to-day to meet the increased demands in health care organizations, such as acute care settings and primary care clinics. With the growing number of APPs in health care, there is a great need for organizations to have a solid structural foundation to offer support and adequate resources for APPs to practice at the top of their licensure.

The number of fellowship programs for APPs has increased since the Institute of Medicine's (2011) report: *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. The report acknowledged the need for transition-to-practice programs as the number of nurses pursuing advanced degrees immediately following their baccalaureate degrees has increased. APPs may require extra support as they move toward building their competence and confidence. Fellowships are comprehensive programs that allow APPs to obtain knowledge, skills, and confidence to provide safe, high-quality care in their specialty (ANCC, 2022). Fellowship programs further build on the foundation of the APP role and allow APPs to focus on and specialize in specific skills needed to perform their jobs safely and effectively.

- ▶ **As you take on your new role and face both highs and lows, fellowship programs are designed to polish the transition process for you.**



Although APP fellowships share the same purpose of increasing support, knowledge, and skills during the transition period, not all APP fellowships are built the same, predominantly regarding program implementation. APPFA accreditation was developed to help improve structures and processes for creating robust, comprehensive programs while evaluating existing programs' quality (ANCC, 2022).

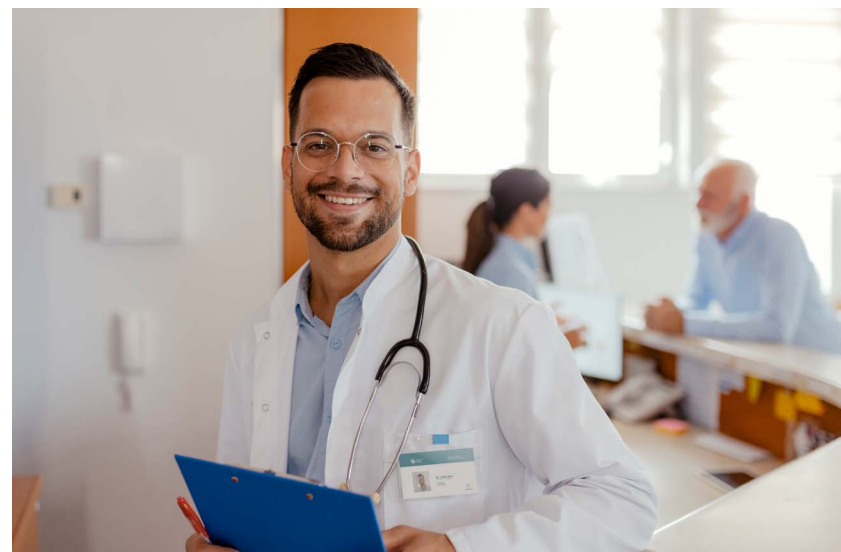
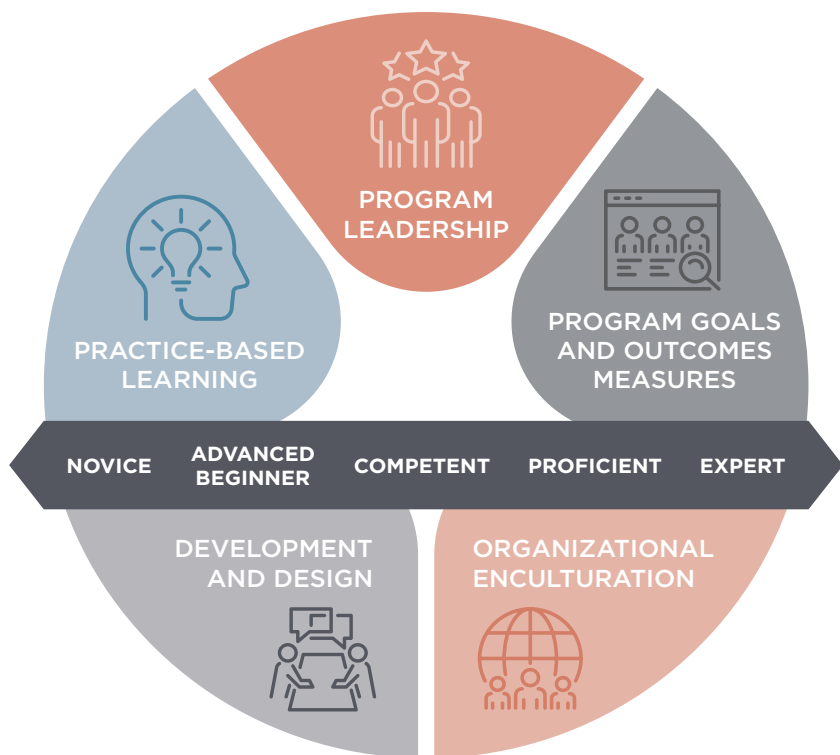
APPFA accreditation is a peer-reviewed process offered to all organizations transitioning APPs within their environment regardless of size, location, or setting. ANCC has long been recognized as the voice of excellence for nursing practice and now continues to raise the bar as the gold standard for transition-to-practice programs for APPs (ANCC, 2022).

Elements of APP fellowship structures and processes that best support APP role transition have been indicated through research and evidence-based practices. These elements constitute the five domains developed under the APPFA conceptual model. Those APP fellowship programs that succeed in achieving APPFA accreditation demonstrate excellence in the APPFA standards and commitment to APP transition to practice.

When considering a program, why is accreditation important?

Accreditation ensures several key elements exist, including a high-quality transition program that meets national standards of excellence, a significant organizational commitment to professional development, and program engagement in continuous quality improvement through reaccreditation processes. If an organization you are researching does not have an accredited program, focus on the presence of key characteristics of transition support in place. Ultimately, your detective skills will help influence your decision for the best fit.

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDER FELLOWSHIP ACCREDITATION™ CONCEPTUAL MODEL



DIGGING DEEPER: EXAMINING A FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

APP fellowships may use the APPFA conceptual model as a framework to develop or revise their programs. The APPFA standards guide fellowship programs through a peer-review process that helps develop a vigorous infrastructure to expand the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to effectively transition from a competent entry-level toward proficient and expert levels of practice for APPs (ANCC, 2022). The duty of developing high-quality fellowships rests on the shoulders of health care organizations, and the responsibility for protecting your professional practice transition rests exclusively in the scope of your investigative analysis.

- ▶ **Comparable to choosing a college, selecting the ideal organization and fellowship program requires a diligent approach involving research into their academic offerings, tuition fees, and additional incentives that might attract you. Therefore, honing your research skills can help you identify the most suitable match.**

Referring to the five APPFA accreditation domains and the interview prep tool supplement at the back of this booklet can further guide you as you solve the mystery of your future APP career and grow your skills as a fellowship program reviewer and APP consumer.



CONSIDER, INVESTIGATE, AND INQUIRE: DOMAINS OF PROGRAM LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL ENCULTURATION, AND DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

The following APPFA domains, Program Leadership, Organizational Enculturation, and Development and Design, focus on fellowship program leadership and its processes for successful onboarding and organization socialization. Refer to the questions associated with these sections in the interview tool supplement to help you determine the basic features of organizational and fellowship program fit.

Browse the organization's website, locating relevant information on the APP fellowship program. Take detailed notes and prepare a list of pertinent questions to ask during your interview regarding the program's leadership structure, and key stakeholders. Developing a comprehensive understanding of the fellowship program, including its curriculum, will facilitate a better perception of its current state.

Consider the program length, how the curriculum was designed and chosen, and whether the fellowship program has achieved accreditation.

- ▶ You should mainly investigate the fellowship program length, how the curriculum was designed or chosen, and whether the APP fellowship is accredited.
- ▶ It's important to note that programs may use a curriculum purchased from a vendor such as ThriveAP or Versant.
 - It's a common misconception that programs using a vendor curriculum automatically achieve accreditation of their fellowship.
 - Although vendors offer support for structuring and operating a fellowship program, accreditation requires a separate review process to be conducted, evaluating the overall program against standards. APPFA accreditation does not require the organization to use vendor curricula.

APP fellowship programs can also differ in structure, as some offer specific placement and hiring directly onto a specialty or service line. At the same time, others may require APPs to rotate through all specialties or service lines during the program before determining clinical placements for employment.

You may also want to investigate what professional learning activities you will be exposed to and/or projects you are expected to complete as part of the fellowship. Many programs may require the fellows to participate in an evidence-based practice project in their final months. Lastly, inquire about your transition support team members.

- ▶ **How are you supported by the program director(s), educators, preceptors, managers, and/or mentors?**
- ▶ **Whom will you interact with throughout your experiences in the fellowship program?**

Again, some information may be publicly available on the organization's website or by contacting their APP department leaders.



- ▶ Investigate how your practice-based learning will be structured.
- ▶ Ask how you will be assigned a preceptor in your specialty or service line.
- ▶ Find out how your performance will be evaluated and how often you can expect feedback about your progress.
 - Consider asking whether specific tools are used to guide expectations of your progression.

Next, examine the support available to assist you through the many common challenges with role transition for new APPs that are well-documented in APP literature and research. Transitioning into the APP role can cause increased stress, low confidence, and increased turnover rates. A pilot study, with support from senior leadership, found that a transition-to-practice program for APPs increased engagement, retention, and productivity (Erickson, Steen, French-Baker & Ash, 2021). Strong support from faculty, preceptors, and leadership while learning and developing necessary skills creates a positive working environment and diminishes these common barriers.

- ▶ Seek out how the fellowship will help you prepare for the challenges of APP practice and support your well-being.
- ▶ Find support in areas to address common challenges for APPs, such as practice efficiency, interprofessional teaming, and ethical dilemmas, to develop and sharpen your critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills over time.

The last few questions in this area of the interview tool supplement are designed for you to explore opportunities that are available to keep you connected and growing in your organization. It's important to explore whether participation in the fellowship program requires a contract. Lastly, you'll focus on maintaining your professional development within the organization.

CONSIDER, INVESTIGATE, AND INQUIRE: DOMAINS OF PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING AND PROGRAM GOALS AND OUTCOME MEASURES

The last two APPFA domains of Practice-Based Learning and Program Goals and Outcome Measures, along with the overarching concept of APP professional development, focus on developing your knowledge, skills, and abilities as an APP. These APPFA domains help reinforce your commitment to the organization as they establish the fellowship as the foundation for lifelong learning as an APP. Refer to the last sections of the interview supplement to help you determine aspects of organizational support necessary for your initial transition to practice and uncover tools for future use when navigating your subsequent career choices.

A vital area to explore, both before and during your interview, centers on practice-based learning or the “learning that will take place in the practice setting(s) under the guidance of preceptors, mentors, or other experienced healthcare professionals” (ANCC, pg. 35, 2022). Questions in this domain of the interview prep tool will help you explore how the organization and fellowship program can build your competence regarding standards of practice and professional APP performance.



IDENTIFY YOUR FACT-FINDING RESOURCES

It seems scary to consider the various qualities of your future employer; however, you do not have to go in blindly. There are many resources available to aid you on this journey.

- ▶ **Start by investigating organizational websites to locate answers to your basic inquiries. Navigate to the APP department, education, or APP excellence pages of the site, where you may find materials relating to the fellowship program.**
- ▶ **Ask your contacts about their experiences with the organization or fellowship to gather insight into the program's culture and reputation.**
 - **Explore and uncover other print and local news sources for information about the organization and its impact on the community.**
 - **Identify any personal connections you may have with the organization—converse with current or former APP fellows who have participated in the fellowship to get an insider's perspective on program strengths and areas for improvement.**

Finally, look for the organizational statistics on recognitions or awards for APP excellence. Refer to the websites provided in the interview tool supplement on the following pages to determine whether the organization is recognized for nursing and APP excellence through the ANCC. We have provided a list of ANCC credentialing programs for your exploration in the interview tool supplement.

YOUR PERFECT MATCH AWAITS!

You control your future, and opportunities are boundless when you find the right organization and APP fellowship program.

Look for a high-performing organization that has these key markers of APP excellence beyond just their fellowship program.

- ▶ **When interviewing potential APP fellowship programs, inquire about professional progression or career expansion within the organization.**
- ▶ **Examine nursing continuing professional development (NCPD) and PA opportunities within the organization.**
- ▶ **Investigate whether the ANCC accredits the organization.**

We hope that you will see value in using the tips and interview tool supplement to help you navigate the first steps of your professional APP journey. Establishing a strong professional foothold through an accredited APP fellowship will help you grow deep roots in your community and organization.

You determine your future career path as an advanced practice provider. Your right match is waiting.

You are ready.

LOOKING FOR YOUR FIRST APP JOB?

Consider and investigate these elements of an APP fellowship program:

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

CONSIDER

Look for APPs in executive roles to hold high-level leadership positions in administration. Do APPs hold leadership positions in the organization?

INVESTIGATE

Who is leading the APP fellowship program?

ORGANIZATIONAL ENCULTURATION

CONSIDER

What are you looking for in an organization?

- Search for indicators of nursing or APP excellence:
 - Magnet® recognition
 - Pathway to Excellence® designation
 - Accredited provider of NCPD
 - Accredited APP fellowship program
- Academic affiliation or teaching hospital?
- Community hospital or large, urban medical center?
- Faith-based mission of organization?
- Union or non-union environment?
- Models of APP care
- Geographic location of the organization

What is the average age of the APP staff?

What is the social culture of APPs in the specialty or service line, organization, and/or fellowship?

INVESTIGATE

What are the mission, vision, and values of the organization and the APP fellowship program? Do they align with your values and vision for your APP career?

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

INVESTIGATE

What is the curriculum and layout of the APP fellowship program?

- When was the program started?
What is the length of the program?
- How was the curriculum chosen? Note: Programs may use a curriculum that they purchased from a vendor. Use of a vendor curriculum alone does not indicate accreditation of the fellowship program.
- What type of learning activities will you participate in? What projects are you expected to complete?

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

What type of learning activities will you participate in? What projects are you expected to complete?

PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

INVESTIGATE

How does the organization structure your specialty-based learning? Will you be assigned a specific preceptor in your specialty or service line? What processes are used to evaluate your progression as a resident? How often will you be given feedback about your progress?

- Are there specific competencies you are expected to achieve?
- How long is your specialty-based orientation?
- What is the process for learning remediation? (i.e. what happens when you or your preceptor identify a knowledge/skill/attitude gap in your learning?)

LEARNER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CONSIDER

Are there contract expectations with becoming a fellow? What other APP opportunities are present within the organization in addition to the fellowship program? How will the organization help you grow throughout your lifespan as an APP?

INVESTIGATE

Does the organization offer tuition reimbursement or loan forgiveness? Is the organization an accredited provider of NCPD?

QUALITY OUTCOMES

CONSIDER

How is the program designed to impact your transition to practice? Is the fellowship program at this organization accredited?

- APPFA raises the bar as the gold standard for transition-to-practice programs for APP.
- Download the full list of accredited APPFA programs at www.nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/accreditation/find-an-accredited-organization.

INVESTIGATE

How is the fellowship program evaluated? Will you be given the opportunity to provide feedback about all aspects of the program?

Check the full lists of ANCC-recognized organizations
www.nursingworld.org/organizational-programs

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

Whom will you report to as an APP?

- Program Director(s)
- A Specific Specialty Coordinator

ORGANIZATIONAL ENCULTURATION

Are you hired directly to a specific specialty or service line or will you rotate through on numerous specialties or service lines during the fellowship?

DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

Who will be involved in supporting your professional and practice needs as a fellow?

- Program Director
- APP Educators
- Preceptors
- Managers
- Mentors

PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

What support structures are in place to assist you with common issues related to practice transition, including:

- Well-Being Initiatives
- Practice Efficiency
- Communication Skills and Interprofessional Teaming
- Ethical Decision-Making
- Critical Thinking and Clinical Reasoning Skills

LEARNER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What formal or informal support systems exist in the organization as you transition into different roles throughout your APP career?

What potential growth opportunities exist for APPs within the organization?

Is the APP fellowship accredited? Yes No

QUALITY OUTCOMES

What outcome data does the program track and report?

How does the fellowship evaluate quality outcomes? How has the program grown over the years?





8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3492
1.800.284.2378
nursingworld.org/appfa

© American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). ANCC is a subsidiary of American Nurses Association.

