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**The Canadian Science Policy Fellowship: Lessons from the Inaugural Year**

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**Takeaways and recommendations**

* Inaugural year of Mitacs’ Canadian Science Policy Fellowship (CSPF) program resulted in some fellows remaining to work at the departments and agencies that hosted them or found employment in other departments or agencies.
* The fellowship program is an excellent opportunity for science-based departments and agencies to benefit from fresh thinking and a new pipeline for employment.
* Fellowships are an important tool for dispelling pre-existing beliefs about how science policy works in government.
* At least one fellow was surprised at how reactive government is, as opposed to acting strategically.
* Fellows benefit from learning on the inside how their government works. For many fellows, the one-year internship is the first desk job they have held, as many come straight from a laboratory environment.
* The CSPF is modelled on the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Policy Fellowship, which places 250-300 fellows annually in the administrative and executive branches of government. The AAAS program has an option for fellows to propose their own work to fill unmet needs.
* The AAAS fellows program has more than 3,000 alumni, creating a powerful informal network that is one or two degrees away from policy development.
* A key role for fellows is to synthesize and reduce meeting proceedings down to one-page briefing notes, developing communications and knowledge translation skills, learning to process information quickly, utilizing critical thinking and judgement, and working under pressure.
* The Mitacs program could benefit from developing a clearer picture of expectations for incoming fellows.
* One agency host said fellows demonstrate a strong desire and willingness to learn and come to appreciate that science policy can work slowly or quickly and has many moving parts.
* One fellow had a long list of ideas of what they wanted to learn but was able to achieve only one or two. The process is much slower than initially thought.