



APCCMPD Fellow Recruitment Committee Recommendations
Geographic/Setting preferences and Experiences
Approved April 30, 2026

I. Geographic Preference

How this works:

Applicants may indicate a preference for training in specific U.S. regions by selecting up to three of the nine U.S. Census divisions. They may also include a brief explanation for each selected region or choose not to provide one.

Visibility:

- If regions are selected, programs within those divisions will see that their region was chosen and any accompanying description. They will not see which other regions the applicant selected.
- Programs outside the selected divisions will see a blank response.
- If "No geographic preference" is selected, all programs will see that response.
- If the section is left unanswered, all programs will see a blank response.

Applicant recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends using geographic preferences only when an applicant genuinely has three or fewer U.S. Census divisions in which they would seriously consider training. Applicants who choose to indicate geographic preferences should generally avoid applying to programs outside those regions unless they intend to signal those programs. Alignment between geographic preferences and program signaling is associated with a higher likelihood of receiving an interview invitation.
2. APCCMPD recommends selecting "I have no preference" rather than leaving this question blank, *if an applicant is open to training in four or more regions*. A blank response may be misinterpreted by programs as indicating a preference for other regions.

Program Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends against using geographic preference as a standalone screening tool to exclude applicants from review.
2. APCCMPD recommends against declining to interview an applicant solely because they did not indicate a geographic preference for your region, particularly if they signaled your program and are otherwise a strong candidate.
3. APCCMPD advises advise that a blank response may indicate that the applicant did not select your program's geographic region, but it may also mean that they chose not to answer the question at all. Therefore, a blank response should carry minimal negative weight.

II. Setting Preference

How this Works:

The setting preferences section is designed to allow applicants to communicate their preference or lack

of preference for urban or rural settings or some combination of the two.

Applicants may choose to answer this question by selecting "No preference" or may opt not to respond at all. Applicants are also given up to 300 characters to clarify their response. Regardless of how an applicant answers, or if they leave the question blank, their response is visible to all programs to which they apply, irrespective of each program's individual settings.

Applicant Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends that applicants ensure that their setting preference aligns with all the programs to which they are applying. A mismatched setting preference may negatively impact an applicant's chances of obtaining an interview.
2. APCCMPD recommends selecting "No preference" unless an applicant strongly prefers one particular training environment. Many programs train physicians to practice in different environments or offer rotations in various locations and environments. Only a small number of programs will see themselves as strictly "urban," "suburban," or "rural."

Program Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends that programs exclude from consideration applicants whose stated setting preference differs substantially from the setting in which the program is located, as this may indicate a "mismatch."
2. APCCMPD recommends against placing significant weight on combined categories (suburban/urban and rural/suburban). These are too vague and open to interpretation to be of great value.

III. Selected Experiences

How this Works:

Applicants can identify up to 10 selected experiences, described as "experiences that communicate who you are, what you are passionate about, and what is most important to you." Each of these experiences must be categorized into one of 8 predetermined groupings. In addition to naming the experience and the organization within which it was performed, applicants have the opportunity to describe how long they were engaged in the activity, the primary focus of the activity, and the key characteristics of their role. Applicants are given the chance to describe the context, roles, and responsibilities of each of these experiences.

Applicant Recommendations:

1. Recognizing that not all applicants have access to the same breadth and depth of experiences, APCCMPD recommends focusing on those opportunities that highlight the diversity of, and commitment to, their interests and achievements as best possible. The applicant should prioritize the quality and authenticity of their experiences over the quantity.
2. APCCMPD recommends keeping this section highly professional. Applicants should focus on experiences and achievements that led to meaningful personal and/or professional growth and demonstrate the qualities that will make them an excellent PCCM physician and colleague. Rather than simply duplicating information included in other sections, applicants should use this space to provide deeper insight into these experiences.
3. APCCMPD recommends applicants identify personal meaningful experiences from at least half of the available 8 experience types. This activity will encourage the applicant to think about the many things they have accomplished and will demonstrate their unique path and diverse abilities and interests to programs.

Program Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends using this section to facilitate and enhance the holistic review of applicants. It is a chance for applicants to distill their many years of training to demonstrate to programs what they find most valuable and important. This should inform the PD about the applicant's goals and values through their actions (both what they did and what they elect to tell you about).
2. APCCMPD recommends against putting significant negative weight on this section and advise that this information be viewed with thoughtful consideration of equity. Some applicants will get better advice than others on how to fill out this section. Some applicants will use fewer than the allotted 10 experiences. While this could reflect limited engagement and passion, it may also indicate significant focus and dedication to a limited number of topics. It may additionally represent an applicant who did not have access to the same breadth of experiences.

IV. Most Meaningful Selected Experiences: What made this experience meaningful?

How this Works:

After selecting up to 10 "selected experiences," applicants can choose three to elaborate on. For each, they are asked to reflect on why the experience was meaningful and how it influenced them, incorporating the focus area or key characteristics they identified. The instructions explicitly emphasize reflection, not a description of activities or a list of skills.

This section is intended to help programs understand which experiences mattered most to the applicant and how those experiences shaped their development as a person and physician. It provides insight into applicants' motivations, values, and drivers beyond a simple accounting of their training. Applicants are given 300 characters per experience to convey this reflection and its impact.

Applicant Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends that applicants select experiences that are relevant to the work they will do as critical care or pulmonary/critical care physicians and that significantly contributed to their personal and professional growth. This is an opportunity for applicants to highlight what is most meaningful to them in their prior experiences and what has been most influential in their life.
2. APCCMPD recommends that applicants get advice from a trusted mentor on the three topics they choose for this section, as it could impact their candidacy.

Program Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends recognizing that applicants will differ widely in the guidance they receive on completing this section and that responses will vary in quality and depth. While this section can be informative, many applicants may not use it to its full potential. Brief or limited responses should not be viewed negatively. It is also important to remember that some applicants may choose not to share personal experiences in their application.

V. Impactful Experiences

How this Works:

Applicants will have the option to provide additional information about disadvantages overcome or significant challenges encountered on the path to fellowship that are not addressed elsewhere in the application. Not all applicants will have relevant experiences to share or may feel comfortable doing so. This section is intended to capture unique information that has not been previously disclosed and is not included in the personal statement. Applicants may describe a range of experiences but should

be aware that any information included in the application may be discussed during the interview. Applicants who choose to respond will have up to 750 characters.

Applicant Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD suggests applicants with relevant experiences who feel comfortable sharing the information respond to this question. Program directors are interested in learning about their unique journeys and the meaningful ways they will enrich their programs.
2. APCCMPD recommends that applicants get advice from a trusted mentor on the best approach to responding to this section, as anything contained within the application may be discussed during the interview.

Program Recommendations:

1. APCCMPD recommends using this section to facilitate and enhance the holistic review of applicants and not as a tool to screen applicants for potential interviews. It is a chance for applicants to share those lived experiences that provide valuable insight into the characteristics that programs can use to support mission-driven holistic review.
2. APCCMPD recommends against putting significant negative weight on this section. Some applicants will get better advice than others on how to fill this out. Some applicants may not have relevant experiences to share, and others may be restricted or elect not to share specific personal information or experiences in their application.