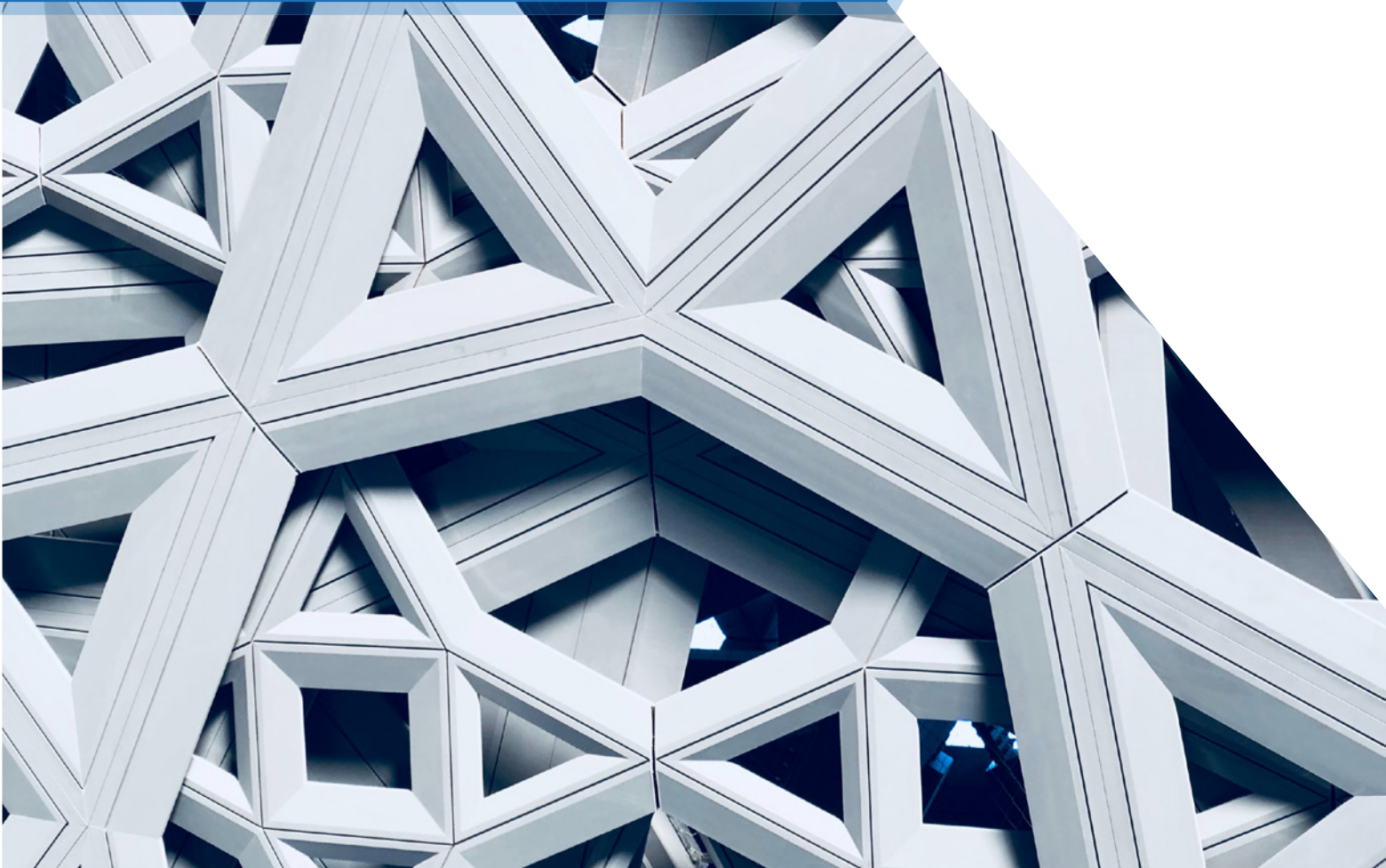




ASPEN TECH POLICY HUB

# Aspen Tech Policy Hub Annual Report 2020

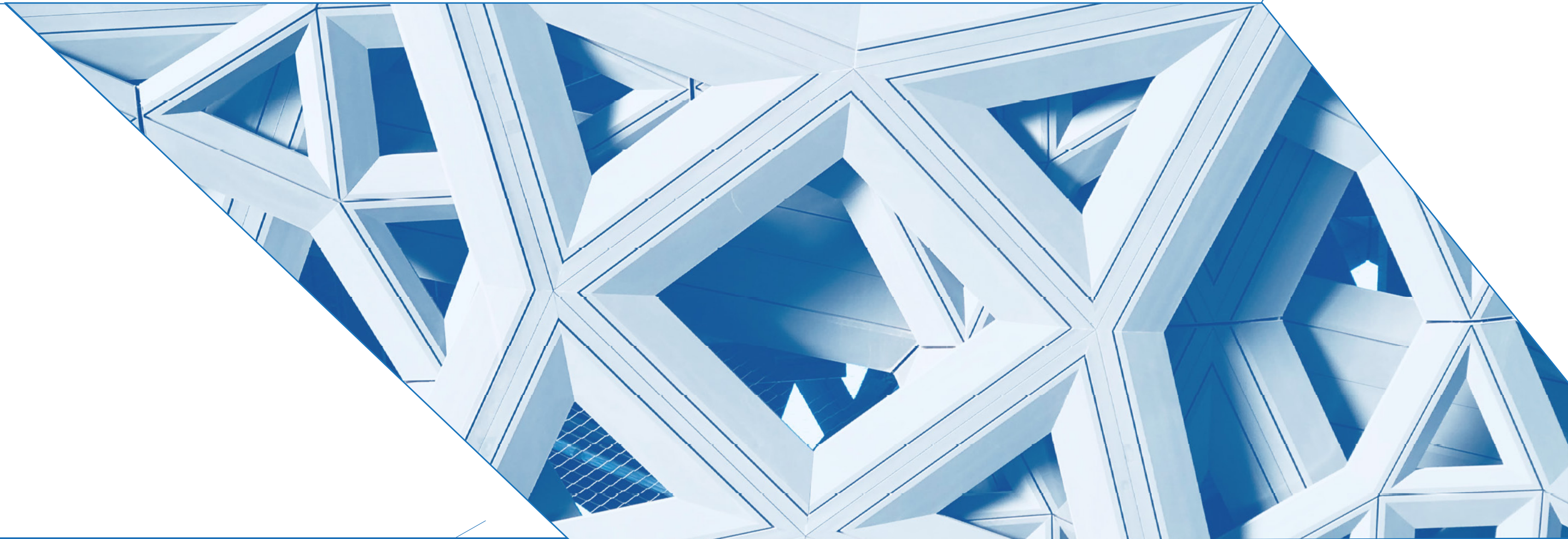
 THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

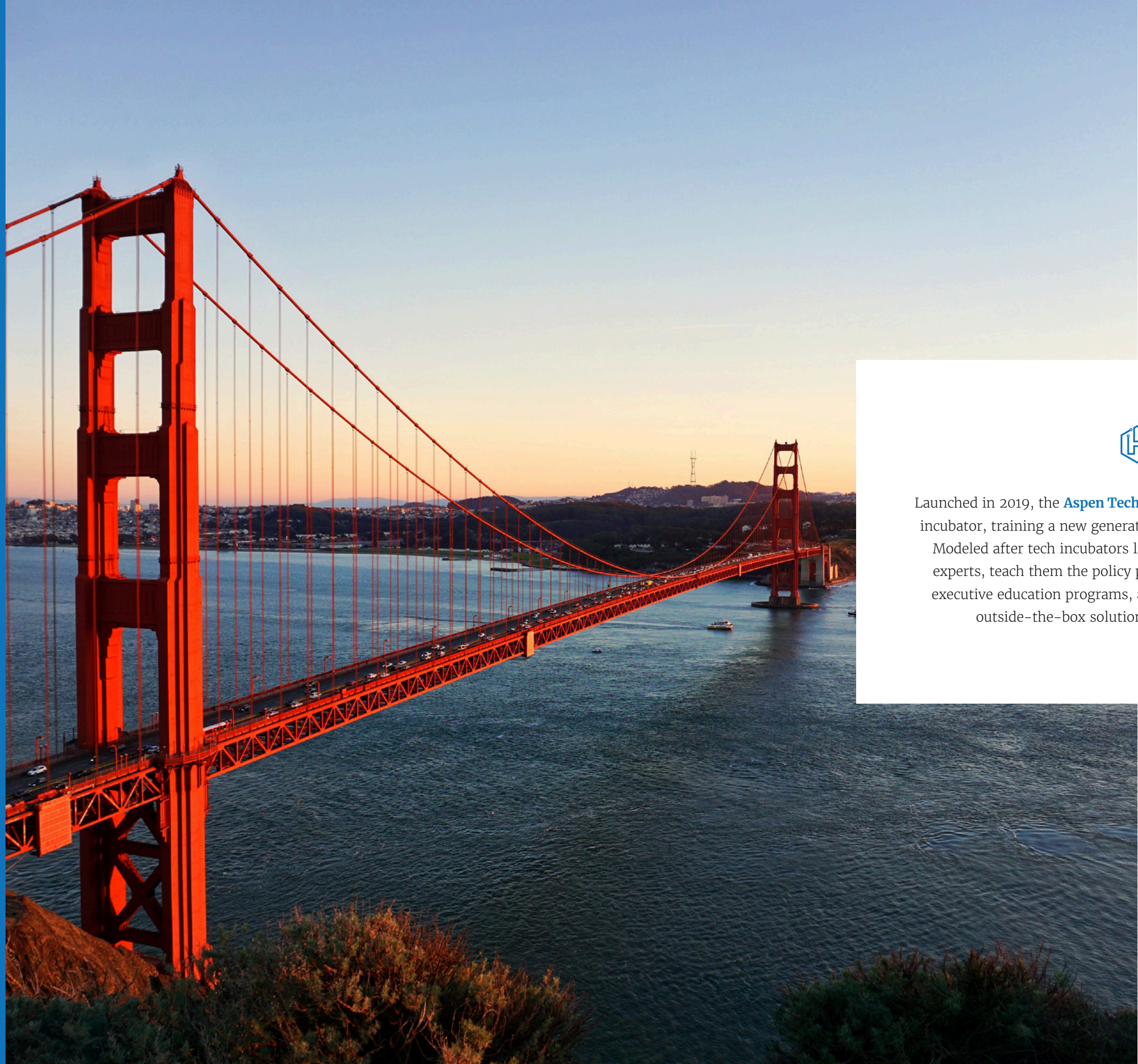




# Aspen Tech Policy Hub Annual Report 2020

 THE ASPEN INSTITUTE





Launched in 2019, the **Aspen Tech Policy Hub** is a West Coast policy incubator, training a new generation of tech policy entrepreneurs. Modeled after tech incubators like Y Combinator, we take tech experts, teach them the policy process through fellowship and executive education programs, and encourage them to develop outside-the-box solutions to society's problems.



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## Letter From The Director

In brief, 2020 unfolded far differently than we could have ever imagined. Building on our momentum in establishing the Aspen Tech Policy Hub as a premier tech policy leadership program, we set ambitious goals for our second year. We planned to run two in-person fellowship cohorts in 2020 to train dozens more tech policy entrepreneurs, and to pilot a challenge grant series to enable us to accelerate the impact of our work.

The year started as expected. In January, we welcomed our second cohort, a talented and diverse group of 15 technologists selected from a pool of over 200 applicants. Over the next 10 weeks, the fellows learned the ins and outs of the policy process through a significantly revised curriculum, engaged with over 60 featured speakers, and applied their training to produce 11 high-impact projects.

It was literally during the January cohort's closing ceremonies that we learned our program would be shutting down. While initially we hoped to be able to reopen in time for our summer cohort, which we had already recruited, it quickly became clear that normal would not be returning for a long time. In April, we made the difficult but necessary decision to defer the start of our third cohort.



***While at the time this felt like a devastating blow to a young program, I am proud to report that we did not rest on our laurels. Instead, we tossed our 2020 playbook aside and began piloting new digital ways of working remotely.***

We mobilized quickly to give oxygen to promising tech solutions by launching a COVID-19 Challenge Grant competition. With generous support from the Ford Foundation and Omidyar Network, we awarded six teams up to \$15,000 each to execute projects that tackled issues at the intersection of technology and COVID-19, from misinformation about the virus to digital cultural arts programming. In addition to these efforts, several of our alumni took the skills they had learned at the Hub to make great strides in the tech policy space. Fellows Raylene Yung and Jessica Cole, executives at U.S. Digital Response, were especially effective at connecting technologists with state and local governments in need during the pandemic.

As for other pandemic-related changes, we also moved our Demonstration Days — a favorite way to engage our community and allow our fellows to show off their work — online. We hosted webinars to share the results of our Challenge Grants and fellowship projects, attracting hundreds of audience members eager to learn from and build on our grantees' work. As we adapted to virtual programming, we appreciated that the online format allowed us to engage many more people live than we could have in-person — a welcome silver lining.

Most importantly, we pivoted our programming to enable us to continue to train talented technology leaders even while our normal fellowships could not go forward. We launched the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative (TELI), an exciting new skills-building program developed in partnership with the Tech Talent Project and the National Conference on Citizenship's Project Redesign. TELI targeted senior tech executives with long track records of entrepreneurship and offered them the opportunity to expand their professional toolkits to tackle public-sector challenges. The program ran from August through October, providing training to an impressive group of 27 leaders. The pilot received high reviews from the participants, who relayed through their exit surveys that they felt much better equipped to transition into government service or to engage more with governments af-

ter completing the program. With such an encouraging response to the TELI experiment, we've begun preparations for a second iteration of the program that will launch in early 2021.

Though this is not the letter I expected to write, 2020 provided us with the priceless opportunity to broaden our approach to the Hub's mission. We launched two new initiatives that extended our impact in the technology policy space and forged lasting partnerships with other organizations. While the pandemic continues to make our 2021 plans uncertain, we are hopeful that we will be able to hold three cohorts of the fellowship or TELI program this year. Important to these efforts is our expansion as an organization, as we doubled our full-time staff in 2020 and hired our first deputy director. With this increased capacity to match our growing programming, and an increased focus on how to scale our impact even wider, we are excited about all we will be able to accomplish in 2021.

This report summarizes the Aspen Tech Policy Hub's achievements for 2020 and identifies short- and long-term goals for what lies ahead. We look forward to inspiring a new generation of tech policy entrepreneurs in 2021 and beyond.



**BETSY COOPER**

Director | Aspen Tech Policy Hub

## The Fellowship Year in Review

### THE INAUGURAL COHORT

In 2019, the Hub welcomed our first cohort of fellows, an extraordinary group of technologists who exceeded our high expectations. At the end of 2019, the fellows had just completed their time at the Hub. Since then, our 2019 fellows have continued tackling social problems with ingenuity, leaning into the policy sphere and maximizing their impact. **For example, this year:**



**Ora Tanner** co-founded and became Chief Learning Officer of the AI Education Project, a non-profit working to center equity and accessibility in AI education. Among other recognitions, she was profiled in a [Forbes article](#) that highlighted her work preparing underserved high school students for the future of work.



**Brandie Nonnecke** was named as a Technology and Human Rights Fellow at Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights, and she became a member of the Day One Project's Inaugural Public Interest Tech cohort. At the Day One Project, she is developing a proposal to leverage data privacy legislation for the public interest.



**Karissa McKelvey** joined Simply Secure, a non-profit that helps build privacy-first technology for vulnerable populations. In this role, she spearheads research on decentralization technologies. Karissa also provided a closed-session briefing to members of Congress on censorship in Belarus.



**Ginny Fahs** joined Consumer Reports's Digital Lab, where she is leading initiatives that enhance consumer privacy, especially in relation to the California Consumer Privacy Act.

Our fellows also continued developing work they began at the Hub. For example:



**Ginny Fahs, Steven Buccini, Anil Dewan, and Ora Tanner** teamed up with the Cybercrime Support Network to expand the work of their final project, which sought to protect older users from online crime. Our fellows are working with the Network to create a single, easy-to-use system to report online fraud and cybercrime to appropriate law enforcement agencies.



**Erica Greene and Ora Tanner** served as Election Integrity Fellows with the Alliance of Democracies Foundation. They focused on improving disinformation literacy and helping companies alleviate the risk that their products would be used to undermine elections. They first connected with the Alliance of Democracies Foundation while developing policy memos on deepfakes for an exercise during the Hub bootcamp.



**Aloni Cohen** published an op-ed and submitted a public comment about inconsistent language in the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA). Partly due to Aloni's public comment, California executives modified the confusing language in their regulations. Aloni first scrutinized the CCPA as part of his final project at the Hub.



**Liz Ruiz** cofounded Hopper Tech Strategies LLC, a community for women in the technology industry. At this new organization, she advises companies on attracting and retaining top female talent and conducts workshops on overcoming bias in the workplace. Liz's final project at the Hub focused on improving female representation in tech companies.

We have been thrilled to see the inaugural fellows continue to flourish and hone their policy impact in 2020.

2019 FELLOWS:  
**OF OUR 15  
FELLOWS  
FROM 2019**

**2**

founded new organizations

**5**

made career shifts into policy-oriented roles

**3**

continued work on their final projects following their fellowships

**8**

were published or cited by media outlets for their work at the Hub

## Building a Second Cohort

Following the success of our first cohort, we aspired to recruit a similarly promising and thoughtful second class. We selected 15 technologists from a pool of over 200 applicants. The fellows brought a vast range of experience from private companies, government and military service, and nonprofit organizations, as well as unique passions in areas such as cryptography, open source software, and augmented reality.

Throughout our recruitment efforts, we purposefully reached out to groups who have been traditionally underrepresented in technology, and committed to building a cohort that would be diverse in thought, being, and life experience. Over 70 percent of the second fellowship class self-identified as female and almost 50 percent identified as ethnic minorities. Throughout the program, the fellows forged enduring friendships, supported and learned from each other, and enriched the experience for everyone involved.



### WINTER 2020 FELLOWS



**ELIZABETH ALLENDORF**  
Machine learning engineer  
passionate about AI ethics



**JESSICA COLE**  
Public servant using  
technology to build  
better cities



**CECILIA DONNELLY KRUM**  
Civil servant modernizing  
government tech



**OLIVIA ERICKSON**  
Open source engineer  
enabling inclusive  
immersive technologies



**NIDHI HEBBAR**  
Education technologist (re)de-  
signing systems for equitable,  
learner-centered education



**MADISON JACOBS**  
Tech marketer passionate  
about startups solving social  
injustice



**MARIAH LICHTENSTERN**  
Tech-enabled startup  
advisor and impact  
investor



**ANJANA RAJAN**  
Technology entrepreneur ap-  
plying cryptography to social  
justice issues



**ALEXANDER ROMERO**  
Cybersecurity technology  
lead bringing the hacker  
ethos to government



**MATTHEW SCHROEDER**  
Engineer solving for wide-  
spread data privacy and  
protection



**MATT SIEVERS**  
Veteran focused on  
integrating cybersecurity  
and AI



**SAMARA TRILLING**  
Software engineer focused  
on statistical machine learn-  
ing fairness



**MATTHEW VOLK**  
Software engineer tackling  
misinformation and election  
integrity



**AMY WILSON**  
Public entrepreneur  
solving the nation's biggest  
challenges



**RAYLENE YUNG**  
Engineering leader interested  
in building technology for  
social impact

### FELLOWSHIP STRUCTURE

We divide our fellowship program into two blocks: a four-week policy bootcamp, during which fellows learn the basics of policymaking and policy advocacy, and a six-week project, for which fellows apply the lessons they've learned on a topic of their interest.

During the policy bootcamp, fellows receive practical lessons on developing policy skills (such as stakeholder mapping and writing a policy memo); learn about policy structures (such as executive branch and company policymaking); and gain knowledge about specific policy focus areas (such as misinformation and artificial intelligence policy). Interspersed with these lectures are exercises to help fellows practice these new skills, as well as guest lectures from key technology and

policy leaders that provide firsthand accounts of working within these spaces.

After the policy bootcamp is complete, fellows participate in a "48 hour exercise," where they are tasked with brainstorming solutions to a real policy problem in just two days. Fellows then present their results to real-world stakeholders.

In the last phase, fellows work on their final projects. They pick and define a problem of interest, engage a mentor within this topic area, develop a solution, and create materials to successfully advocate for their proposal. Fellows present their final projects to the public during "Demo Days," and also share their work with at least one relevant stakeholder, such as a government official or company executive, who has the power to effectuate their ideas.

## ITERATING OUR CURRICULUM

Between our first and second cohorts, we moved rapidly to rework a large portion of our policy bootcamp curriculum, based on feedback and areas for improvement that we identified in the first cohort. We expanded our content; added additional readings, case studies, and class exercises; amended our policy bootcamp schedule to better facilitate learning and retention; and lined up additional guest speakers. These revisions built on the strong foundation of our first cohort and led to an even more robust and effective second iteration.

## 2020 CURRICULUM MAP

### POLICY SKILLS

- What is Policy & Overview
- Translating Technical Concepts
- Writing an Argument
- Reading and Writing for Policy
- Scoping a Policy Problem
- Assignment: Policy Research and Writing
- Stakeholder Mapping
- Outputs Part 1: Written Policy Documents & Public Comment
- Assignment: Writing Public Comments
- Policy Memo Training
- Policy Memo Workshop
- Assignment: Policy Memo
- Scoping Solutions
- Outputs Part 2: Thinking Outside the Box
- Outputs Exercise
- Implementation and Advocacy

### GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND POLICYMAKING

- Intro to Government
- Intro to White House Policymaking
- Intro to Legislative Policymaking
- Intro to Agency Policymaking
- Intro to Company Policymaking
- The Role of Companies and Nonprofits in Policymaking
- Getting Things Done in the White House
- A Conversation with a Congressional Director

### TECH POLICY SUBJECT AREAS

- Tech Policy 101
- Cybersecurity 101
- AI 101
- Ethics in Tech Policy
- Getting a Job in Tech Policy
- Using Technology for Social Good
- Democracy and Mis/Disinformation 101
- Working with Multilateral Organizations
- Media and TV Training
- Presenting to Stakeholders



### 48-HOUR EXERCISE

Midway through the program, the fellows put their learnings into practice during a weekend-long project with the a Bay Area city. Working on teams of three, the fellows tackled the prompt: “How can the City offer personalized information and services to homeless communities through a mobile app while respecting privacy and security concerns?” In just

48 hours, the groups conducted background research; interviewed experts; ideated solutions; and prepared outputs explaining their proposals. They then presented to a committee of representatives from the city. The officials were extremely impressed with the ideas presented, and followed up with several groups to discuss implementing their ideas.



## 5 FAST FACTS

11

total projects

8

websites

5

projects focused on state-level policies

3

projects focused on federal-level policies

1

projects focused on corporate policies

### FINAL PROJECTS

During the latter six weeks of the program, the fellows focused on developing their final projects. Armed with the skills they had learned during the policy bootcamp, the fellows identified societal problems to tackle and originated implementable policy solutions. Fellows spent 80 percent of their time working on their own projects and 20 percent contributing to each other's. This approach encouraged collaboration and allowed teams to leverage each other's skill sets, generate more ideas, and develop more creative and robust outputs.

The fellows developed 11 unique projects, addressing everything from small business cybersecurity to bias in education technology tools. With each project, the fellows created a wide array of outputs to optimize for policy uptake.



## SELECTION OF 2020 FELLOW PROJECTS

### COMBATING ELECTION DISINFORMATION

**Elizabeth Allendorf and Matthew Volk**

Every day, tens of millions of Americans view political advertisements on social media that are disguised as unpaid content, also known as “dark ads.” This project proposes two solutions to mitigate disinformation from these ads: a series of actions that the Federal Election Commission and the Federal Trade Commission could take to make online political ads more transparent, and a game that educates potential voters about dark ads.



### DIGITAL AFTERLIFE PROJECT

**Cecilia Donnelly Krum and Olivia Erickson**

While the vast majority of Americans depend on online services to handle critical parts of their lives, few platforms have protocols to enable user information to be safely managed or deleted after a user passes away. This project outlines how state governments can extend existing probate laws in the context of digital assets. It also proposes how companies can better design their products to facilitate custodial access for trusted loved ones.



### EDTECH EQUITY

**Nidhi Hebbar and Madison Jacobs**

Education technologies promise to personalize learning, identify at-risk students, and automate administrative tasks for educators, but many do not take into account the unique challenges facing Black and Brown students. This project proposes a Racial Equity Toolkit for AI in Edtech, which enables companies to uncover and mitigate racial bias at each stage of their product design and development, from ideation to implementation. Additionally, the project puts forward procurement guidelines to help schools assess education technology platforms for racial equity before purchasing.



### CLOSING THE TECH FUNDING GAP

**Mariah Lichtenstern**

Current technology startup capitalization policies put underrepresented tech startup founders at a disadvantage. At the same time, regulations prevent most Americans from qualifying as “accredited investors,” preventing them from supporting these founders equitably. This project recommends that the Securities and Exchange Commission dismantle its discriminatory investor criteria. It also creates a pledge to enable institutional investors to create opportunities for diverse and emerging managers.



## Deep Dive

# Combating Domestic Terrorism

In the wake of tragic mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio, Anjana Rajan became convinced that such attacks were preventable. Anjana was determined to apply her expertise in cryptography to a project focused on preempting acts of domestic terrorism, especially those fueled by white supremacy and misogyny.

As she conducted research, Anjana discovered that for every active shooter in the United States, there are on average three distinct witnesses who observe concerning behavior before the attack. Yet nearly 60 percent of witnesses do not raise their concerns with law enforcement for myriad reasons, including self-doubt, their relationship with the suspect, and fear for their privacy and safety.

Anjana devised a solution that gives witnesses a low-risk outlet for sharing their concerns while upholding civil liberties: a confidential cryptographic reporting escrow. Witnesses can report concerning behaviors into a third-party escrow that is initially inaccessible to government and law enforcement. Their reports remain locked until a credible threshold of risk is met, triggering an alert to law enforcement. Allowing witnesses to combine their knowledge can help law enforcement identify patterns, and ultimately save lives.

Anjana conducted a series of informational interviews with experts in counterterrorism, gun control, domestic violence, privacy and civil liberties, behavioral health, and cryptography to inform her proposal. In addition to a prototype of the escrow model, she also created a technical white paper explaining the credible risk threshold, a trauma-informed design framework, and a policy brief to facilitate implementation of her idea.

Since completing her project, Anjana has continued to work on data-driven systems to prevent acts of domestic terrorism. She partnered with the Soufan Group, which advised on her project at the Hub, to co-author a report on disinformation and extremism caused by QAnon. Soon after it was published, the report was cited in a House Judiciary hearing on the rise of domestic terrorism in America.

### PROJECT OUTPUTS LIST

Design Framework

Policy Brief

App Prototype

Case Studies Book

Infographic

Podcast

White Paper



### IMPACT DURING THE FELLOWSHIP

At the Hub, our theory of policy impact hinges on driving tangible change. We train technologists to gear their ideas toward action and implementation.

During the policy bootcamp, fellows obtained several opportunities to practice policy advocacy. Instead of writing policy memos, as might be normal in an academic course, our fellows instead submitted these proposals to the Day One Accelerator Project, a non-profit initiative that collates proposals for the first day of the next presidential term. The Accelerator accepted seven of our fellows' memos to be shared with the incoming administration.

Our fellows also drove policy impact through their final projects. Samara Trilling, with support from Madison Jacobs, focused her final project on how fair lending mortgage laws should be applied to the algorithms that make loan approval and pricing decisions. She met with New York state officials to propose a challenge contest to improve algorithmic fairness in mortgages. Another fellow, Mariah Lichtenstern, focused her project on advancing equitable tech start-up funding for underrepresented found-

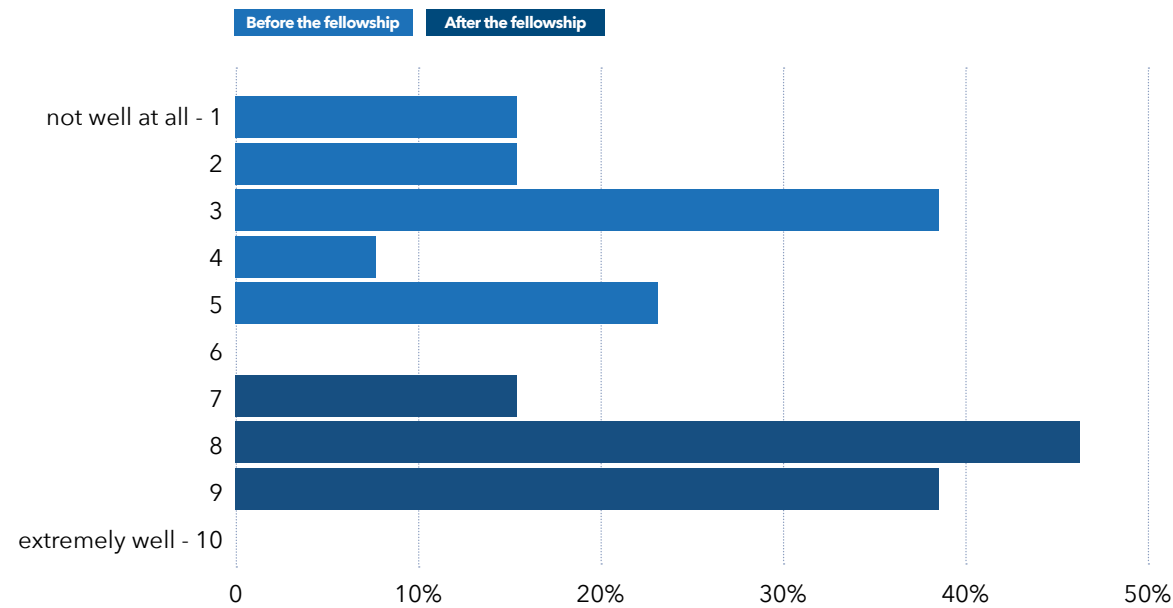
ers. Mariah proposed that the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) dismantle discriminatory investor criteria, and she is spearheading a public petition and meeting with key SEC officials to change the approach to accredited investors to allow more equitable access to capital markets.

Several projects from our first cohort also took on renewed importance in 2020. As California voters considered using a pre-trial risk assessment algorithm in place of cash bail, journalists consulted Allison Day, Anil Dewan, and Karissa McKelvey, who had developed a project investigating strengths and weaknesses in California's criminal justice data pipeline. For his final project, Steven Buccini had advocated for his home state of North Carolina to implement a risk limiting audit system to validate election results. In 2020, the state put this audit system into practice.

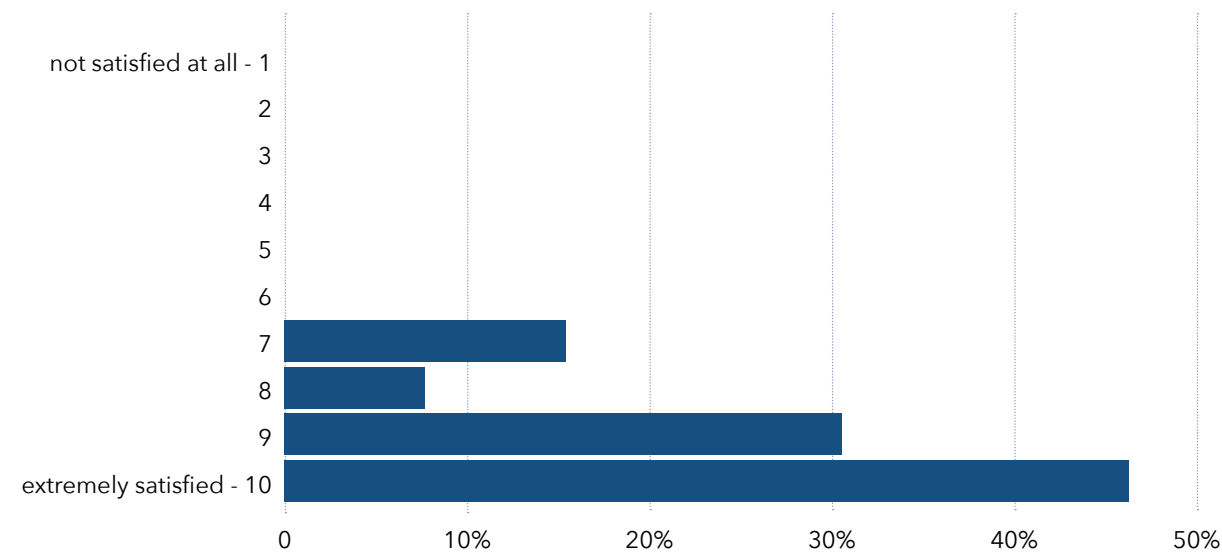
Beyond these examples, fellows have given confidential briefings to Congress, contributed to executive branch agencies' technology policy reports, and authored articles in major publications pushing for policy change. The impacts outlined here are just a small slice of what our fellows achieved in 2020.



**How well would you say that you understood the policy process options before and after the fellowship?**



**Overall, how satisfied were you with the fellowship program as a whole?**



**IMPACT SINCE THE FELLOWSHIP**

Though it has only been a few months since our second cohort graduated from the Hub, our alumni have hit the ground running with tremendous force. Fellows have co-founded social impact tech nonprofits, taken on greater policy leadership roles within their jobs, and made career shifts into tech law and policy.

Just a couple of weeks after the end of their fellowship, Raylene Yung and Jessica Cole teamed up with other friends of the Hub, including Jen Pahkla, to co-found the U.S. Digital Response, an organization that connects experienced, pro-bono technologists with government agencies, small businesses, and nonprofits to assist their COVID-19 responses. [Since its inception, the U.S. Digital Response has mobilized 6,000 volunteers to support 180 government nonprofit partners in 36 states.](#)

**Other fellows have pivoted to policy-oriented jobs since leaving the Hub:**



**Madison Jacobs** assumed the role of senior communications manager at the Public Rights Project, a nonprofit that empowers state and local governments to protect their constituents' legal rights.



**Anjana Rajan** became Chief Technology Officer at Polaris, a nonprofit organization that uses technology-based tools to combat and prevent modern-day slavery and human trafficking.



**Nidhi Hebbar** transitioned to a project manager role at Google, where she works on reducing the spread of misinformation and improving media literacy.



**Alexander Romero** became a civilian cybersecurity consultant to the Department in Defense, and continued to serve as Director of the Product Security Incident Response Team at Intel.

Others fellows have moved to Washington, DC to actively pursue careers at the intersection of technology, policy, and law. We are eager to see what our fellows continue to accomplish in the months and years to come.



## Deep Dive

# U.S Digital Response

The end of the second fellowship coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we wrapped up our curriculum, many of our fellows wondered how they could contribute to preventing the worst effects of COVID-19 by deploying their newfound tech and policy skills.

Within days of completing their fellowships, Raylene Yung and Jessica Cole connected with other technologists and founded the U.S. Digital Response (USDR), an organization that places experienced, pro-bono technologists with governments and organizations responding to crisis to quickly deliver critical services and infrastructure. Raylene became the organization's CEO.

USDR has since implemented more than 250 projects for 180 government and nonprofit partners across the country. Their projects include:

- ▶ Enabling the Louisiana Department of Health to match hospitals facing staffing shortages with qualified workers;
- ▶ Assisting the State of Kansas in improving its unemployment insurance application system after it crashed from a sharp increase in applicants;
- ▶ Facilitating two state-wide COVID testing sites for the City of Seattle;
- ▶ Creating a non-partisan "Elections Toolkit" to help states rapidly stand up informational election websites, recruit and manage poll workers, and automate voting by mail; and
- ▶ Developing an app to help local food retailers launch and run their own e-commerce sites.

USDR's work has been celebrated by media and policymakers alike. The organization was awarded the *New York Times*' "Good Tech" honor by tech writer Kevin Roose, and Raylene was named one of *Financial Times*' [six digital changemakers](#).

## FUTURE COHORTS

In early 2020, we ran a recruitment cycle for a third fellowship class. After hosting a series of informational events and conducting widespread outreach, we received 288 applicants — our largest response yet. A group of professional reviewers then assessed 91 of the top applications and helped us select 54 candidates to invite for interviews. As with previous cohorts, we aimed to select a cohort that represented a diverse set of backgrounds and life experiences. After a thorough interview period, we were thrilled to select a class of exceptional fellows. While we had hoped to host a cohort in Summer 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led us to make the difficult decision to defer our admitted fellows to mid-2021, and, as we describe below, to pursue other activities instead.



## Pivoting Due to COVID-19

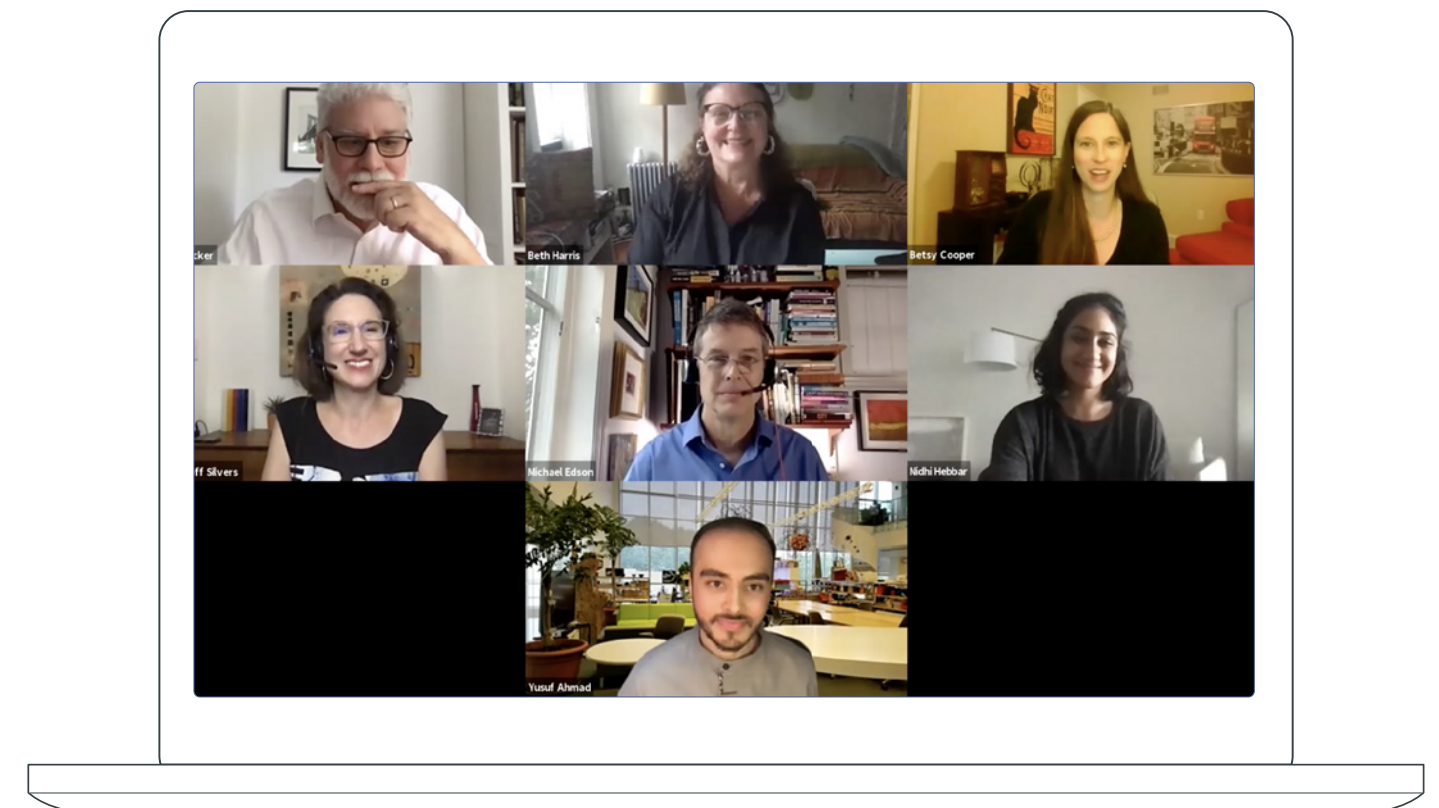
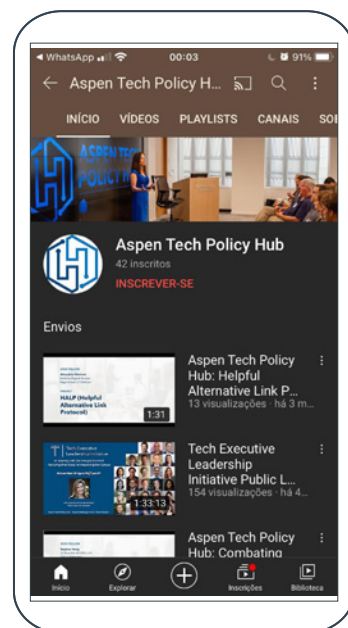
The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic hit just as we were finishing our second in-person fellowship cohort and preparing to kick off our third. In fact, the Aspen Institute announced its transition to remote work on the last day of our winter fellowship cohort. Though the pandemic disrupted many of our plans, we were determined to find creative ways to continue advancing our mission while heeding public health and safety guidelines. At the same time, we also set out to support important work being done across the country to mitigate the widespread effects of the coronavirus. In addition to these initiatives, we launched an entirely online training program, described in more detail below.

### VIRTUAL FELLOWSHIP DEMO DAYS

Fortunately, our second cohort had just completed the core of their fellowship by the time in-person convening restrictions were imposed. However, as the virus spread, it quickly became apparent that the remaining component of the program — in-person project demonstration days scheduled in San Francisco and Washington, DC — could not go forward. We thus moved the Demo Days online and broke them into five hour-long public webinars.

From June to August, with invaluable support from our colleagues at Aspen Digital and the Aspen Institute’s audiovisual team, we hosted bi-weekly webinars featuring project presentations, guest keynote speakers, and question-and-response sessions. The online format enabled us to expand our audience capacity,

and we welcomed more than 860 viewers over the course of the series, an impressive turnout given how many competing online events were offered at that time. To watch recordings of our demo webinars, visit the [Aspen Tech Policy Hub YouTube channel](#).



### CHALLENGE GRANTS

From the forced closure of museums and performing arts venues to the seemingly uncontrollable spread of COVID-19 misinformation, it quickly became clear to us that creative technology solutions could help facilitate our national pandemic response. With quick-turn support from the Ford Foundation and Omidyar Network, we announced our COVID-19 Challenge Grant in March, with a goal to fund projects that could help solve some of the pandemic’s most

challenging problems. We received 100 submissions, and after a rigorous review process involving technologists and health professionals, awarded six teams up to \$15,000 each to carry out their proposals. Winning ideas included a global platform to help journalists track accurate information about the virus and a communication toolkit to help schools navigate reopening plans. We are honored to have played a small part in the execution of these timely projects.

## SAMPLE OF CHALLENGE GRANT PROJECTS



### COVID-19 DATA DEFICITS DASHBOARD

#### Grant Recipient: First Draft

The COVID-19 Data Deficits Dashboard draws on data science to generate powerful visualizations highlighting the global flow and voids of credible coronavirus coverage. The dashboard enables journalists and researchers to better understand where to focus their communications and guidance.



### THE CROWDMETER PROJECT

#### Grant Recipient: The Human Computation Institute, Cornell University

During a pandemic, isolating people from each other is key to controlling virus transmission. To help people stay away from densely populated areas, CrowdMeter is a demonstration navigation app that shows users sets of similar destinations and their estimated transmission risks based on crowdedness. The project team conducted a series of epidemiological and behavioral simulations to inform the app's algorithms and identified the best deployment strategy to balance usage and data freshness.



### COVID-19 DATA COLLECTOR

#### Grant Recipient: MuckRock

Building on MuckRock's existing Assignments tool, the COVID-19 DataCollector enables journalists, researchers, and community organizers to divvy up large information gathering and cleaning tasks into "data quests" that volunteers can tackle. Bringing together MuckRock's network of 3,000 newsrooms, the new tool harnesses public interest to solve pandemic data challenges.



## CHALLENGE GRANT DEMO DAYS

To spread awareness about our grantees' work, we hosted three webinars between September and October:

- ▶ "Responding to Social Isolation through Education and the Arts," with keynote speakers Steven Zucker and Beth Harris of Smarthistory
- ▶ "Mapping On- and Offline Risks in a Pandemic," with keynote speaker Rachel Coldicutt, former CEO of UK-based technology think tank Doteveryone
- ▶ "Informing COVID Response and Communication through Tech," with keynote speaker Ryan Panchadsaram, former White House Deputy Chief Technology Officer.

To watch recordings of our demo days, visit [Aspen Tech Policy Hub](#).



## Tech Executive Leadership Initiative

Although the pandemic required us to defer our traditional fellowship program, we knew we could not suspend our efforts to train technologists; the demand for leaders in government who understand technology has never been greater. In 2020, we worked with partners to launch a new program to train technologists who are uniquely qualified for these roles.

The pilot Tech Executive Leadership Initiative (TELI) was an eight-week, online skills-building program to prepare senior technology executives for public-sector challenges. Co-hosted with the National Conference on Citizenship's Project Redesign and the Tech Talent Project, the TELI pilot ran from August through October, with an inaugural class of 27 executives.

### A NEW PIPELINE

To lead high-stakes digital transformations, the government needs leaders with established track records managing teams and large-scale tech projects. We sought to tackle a small piece of this puzzle by recruiting tech executives uniquely positioned to lend their skills to taking on difficult government problems. Our partners at the Tech Talent Project led recruitment for the TELI pilot, ultimately selecting 27 leaders with deep experience in entrepreneurship and innovation from a wide range of companies and nonprofit organizations.



# TELI FALL 2020 LEADERS



**Ossama Alami**  
Engineering leader solving problems at scale



**Ravi Bala**  
Technology leader solving for the financial wellness of individuals



**Chuck Borges**  
Veteran focused on digital strategy and transformation



**Barbara Cohn**  
Chief data officer advancing public policy for social good through data literacy



**Mark Conlin**  
Engineering leader modernizing corporate travel



**Alyssa Harvey Dawson**  
Lawyer enhancing the small business workplace



**Mark Day**  
Product and strategy advisor in education



**Marcela Escobar-Alava**  
Customer- and service-oriented executive tackling technological and organizational challenges



**Anirma Gupta**  
General counsel enabling high-growth technology companies



**Linda Lannen**  
Seasoned leader enabling technological change for social good through humanity and humor



**Steve Leibman**  
Engineering executive building startups for the public good



**Ann Lewis**  
Engineering leader using technology to power collective action



**Mimi Liu**  
Health tech leader making quality care accessible for all



**Ashley Llorens**  
Artificial intelligence and robotics research director



**Bob Mallon**  
Product leader focused on the future of mobility and healthcare



**Lia Moeser**  
Legal strategist delivering solutions for high-growth companies through technology, policy, and law



**Mechie Nkengla**  
Executive working at the intersection of data and technology



**Katy Pusch**  
Product director driving understanding and conversation with data



**Tim Reilly**  
Analytics leader turning data into actionable information



**Jessica Rossman**  
Experienced legal and compliance executive



**Leonard Speiser**  
Founder of multiple start-up organizations, including Clover, the largest point-of-sale platform



**Shelina Taki**  
Strategic intelligence executive leveraging human insights



**Dee Vig**  
Technology executive harnessing technology for social good



**Rogers Weed**  
Clean technology executive pursuing energy innovation



**David Weekly**  
Veteran Silicon Valley founder, investor, and advisor



**Julie Yarosh**  
Business and technology leader delivering breakthrough results



**Sharon Zezima**  
General counsel committed to human-centered technology policy



TELI:  
**5 FAST FACTS**

**3**

Partner organizations

**27**

Leaders

**8**

Weeks

**14**

Guest speakers

**10**

Projects

**CURRICULUM**

Over the course of eight weeks, the TELI leaders received government, policy, and human-centered design skills to equip them to tackle public-sector problems. The cohort met as a full group one evening per week for interactive lectures and engagement with guest speakers. The lectures were based on two core teaching streams: human-centered design, led by Dana Chisnell of Project Redesign, and policy and government, led by the Hub’s Director, Betsy Cooper.

Outside of class, the groups also worked on two real-world service delivery challenges. Teams of TELI leaders worked on eight-week projects, developing proposals for improving state unemployment systems and improving naturalization rates for green card holders. The leaders also engaged in a 48-hour challenge sprint exercise, modeled off the Hub’s 48-hour exercise; they spent a week-end working to address gaps from this year’s decennial census data collection.

**PUBLIC EVENT**

In November, we hosted a public webinar to mark the end of the TELI program and highlight the leaders’ work on the census. Amanda Renteria, CEO of Code for America, delivered a keynote address. The public webinar was followed by a closed-door session with national and California census leaders, who gave the teams copious feedback on the creativity, delivery, and viability of their proposals. Since the event, several leaders have been in touch with California census officials to continue discussing their ideas.

**FUTURE COHORTS**

After the TELI pilot concluded, we took stock of the circumstances again; with a new presidential administration on the horizon and the pandemic still in full force, and having received extremely positive feedback from the first TELI cohort, we decided to launch a second TELI cohort and continue to defer our fellowship to a future time when we can reconvene in person. In partnership with Tech Talent Project, we are pleased to host the second Tech Executive Leadership Initiative, a ten-week program spanning from late January to April 2021. Based on the feedback we received from the first cohort, we made several changes to the program, including lengthening the program to ten weeks; creating specialized tracks for technology and policy to accommodate different skill sets; and eliminating the 48-hour exercise to allow leaders to focus on the final projects.

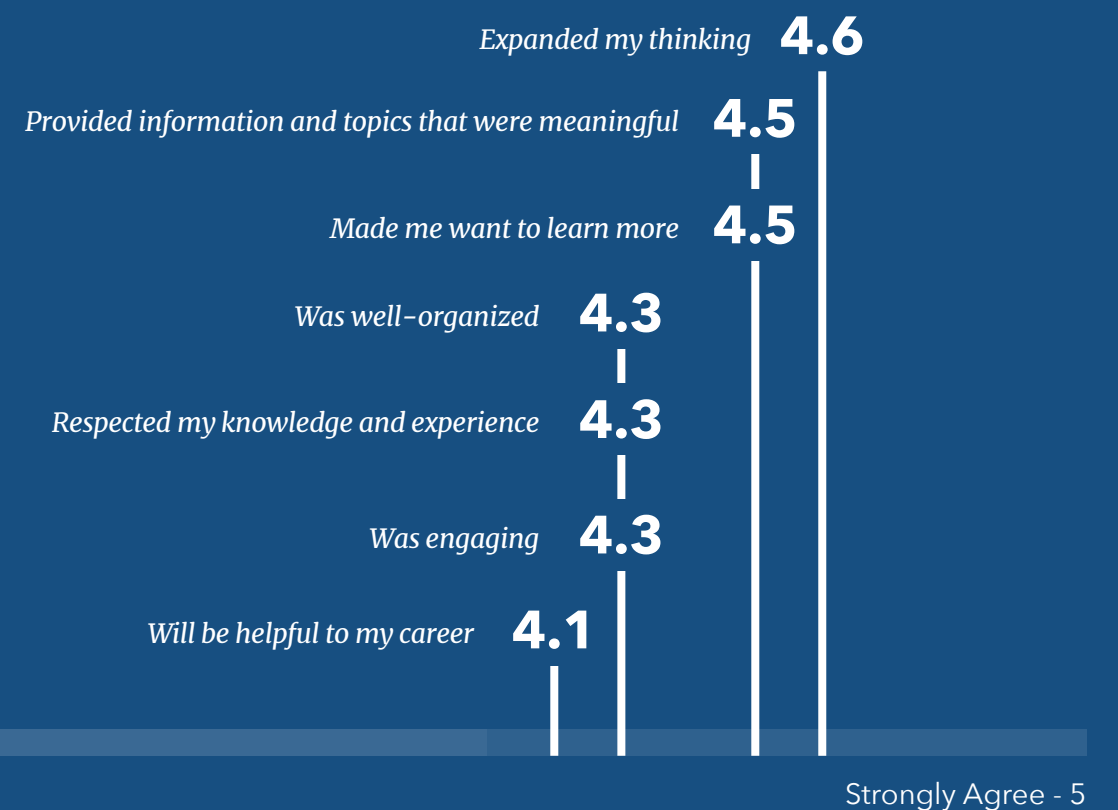
**OUTCOMES**

Overall, how satisfied were you with the leadership program as a whole?

**8.7**



Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about the TELI program



1 - Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree - 5

## External Engagement

In 2020, the Hub continued to extend our reach in the tech policy space, grow our public presence, and expand our programming with the support of valued partners, vendors, and funders. Our fellows and staff were cited in more than 70 media publications over the course of the year.

### MEDIA APPEARANCES

Following are a selection of the outlets that featured Hub fellows, programming, and staff in 2020.

ABOUT HUB PROGRAMMING	HUB AREAS OF INTEREST (Cybersecurity, AI, Tech for Good)	FELLOWS AND FELLOW PROJECTS
Associated Press Daybook	Boston25	CyberWire
CyberWire	Business Insider	Entrepreneur
IP Watchdog	CNet	Fast Company
Politico: Morning Consult Tech	FedTech	FedScoop
Politico: Morning Tech	LA Magazine	Financial Times
Washington Post: Cybersecurity 202	KCBS SF Radio	Forbes
VentureBeat: AI Weekly	NPR: All Things Considered	Harvard Business Review
	NPR: Up First	Long Island Weekly
	NPR: Morning Edition	Morning Consult
	The New York Times	Politico: Morning Cybersecurity
	Reuters	Politico: Morning Tech
	Salesforce Blog	Protego Press
	Washington Post: Cybersecurity 202	VentureBeat
	Washington Post: Technology 202	VRScout
		Wall Street Journal
		Yahoo

### SOLIDIFYING OUR PLACE IN THE TECH POLICY ECOSYSTEM

This year, several of our colleagues featured the Hub in reports on the importance of tech policy expertise and training. In its guide, *Building a 21st Century Congress: Improving STEM Policy Advice in the Emerging Technology Era*, Harvard’s Belfer Center named the Hub as a crucial pathway for tech professionals into government. Our director, Betsy Cooper, was also featured in *All Tech is Human’s Guide to Responsible Tech*, where she lent her advice on paving a career in public interest technology.

### CULTIVATING PARTNERSHIPS

One of our ongoing priorities is to create lasting relationships with other organizations and experts in the tech policy sphere. This year, for the first time, we launched a program — the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative — in collaboration with partners from the Tech Talent Project and Project Redesign. We also joined a working group of tech policy organizations to assemble a robust set of resources for civic technologists, an effort that will continue into 2021. In addition, our fellows also created partnerships to continue building on their final project with groups such as the Cybercrime Support Network and the Global Cyber Alliance.

Our training programs also would not be possible without the many guests who teach, mentor, motivate, and give feedback to our participants. We are especially thankful to the individuals who returned to the Hub this year after assisting our first fellowship cohort in 2019. We would not be able to accomplish our mission without their gracious support.

### We are enormously thankful for the 75+ guests who donated their time and expertise to teach, provide feedback, and share their experiences with our fellows, grantees, and leaders in 2020.

REDIET ABEBE	ADDISU DEMISSIE	DITAS KATAGUE	DAVE RECORDON
JENNIFER ANASTASOFF	ANIL DEWAN	KEVIN KILEY	LIBBY REDER
ALLISON BENDER	RENEE DIRESTA	ZVIKA KRIEGER	AMANDA RENTERIA
LAURA BISESTO	LISA DYER	HARLAN LIBERMAN-BERG	CHRIS RILEY
BRANDON BJERKE	CASEY FARMER	MARK LERNER	JUDY ROBINSON
CATHERINE BRACY	SARAH FATHALLAH	SCOTT LUCAS	MONICA M. RUIZ
SAMO BURJA	KYLA FULLENWIDER	ANDREW MAYOCK	DAVID SANGER
KRISTA CANELLAKIS	MAI-LING GARCIA	KARISSA MCKELVEY	VIVIAN SCHILLER
CARLOS CASTILLO	VICTOR GARCIA	BRIAN MILLER	MARK SCHWARTZ
ROBERT CLINTON	LILI GANGAS	SAM MILLER	RAJ SHAH
RACHEL COLDICUTT	LISA GELOBTER	KARLA MONTERROSO	ELI SUGARMAN
KATE CONGER	JILL HABIG	TRAVIS MOORE	NICOLE TISDALE
JOSH CONSTINE	JOSEPH HALL	HANNAH MURPHY	AMY TONG
DAN CORREA	KATIE HARBATH	MUTALE NKONDE	GEORGIA WELLS
ELIZABETH CULLIFORD	KIP HARKNESS	RYAN PANCHADSARAM	STEVE WEIS
MARIANO-FLORENTINO CUÉLLAR	BETH HARRIS	DJ PATIL	LOUIS WILSON
JENNIFER DANG	ALEX IFTIME	KARI PAUL	DENISE WISE
JEFFREY DASTIN	DAVID INGRAM	DAN PORTERFIELD	CORI ZAREK
ALLISON DAY	TOM KALIL	ARATI PRABHAKAR	STEVEN ZUCKER



### Social Media blurb

To follow the Hub’s programming and alumni community in real-time, find us on Twitter at [@aspenpolicyhub](https://twitter.com/aspenpolicyhub). We are also active on LinkedIn as The Aspen Tech Policy Hub.

## Organizational Development

### GROWING A TEAM

The Hub significantly expanded our team in 2020 to support the year’s new initiatives. At the beginning of 2020, our team consisted of only two full-time staff members — our founding Director Betsy Cooper, and a full-time program coordinator — along with a part-time events coordinator, Savilla Pitt, and two part-time student assistants.

Since then, we have onboarded a new deputy director, Mai Sistla, to oversee day-to-day management of our programming. Mai has worked alongside Betsy to lead the Hub’s operations, provide guidance to our fellows and TELI leaders, help revise our curriculum, and assist with strategic thinking. As Betsy took maternity leave in the fall, Mai also oversaw the Hub’s programming, operations, and strategy in her stead.

This year, we additionally onboarded a new part-time program assistant, Maddy Libbey, and a full-time program coordinator, Meha Ahluwalia. Both Maddy and Meha have provided invaluable support to our team, ensuring that our events run smoothly, programs stay organized, and that our fellows and leaders have all the resources they need. Meha joined our program after we said a sad goodbye to our inaugural program coordinator, David Albán Hidalgo, who moved on to take a teaching position.

### ENGAGING WITH THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

In 2020, the Hub also changed our position within the broader Aspen Institute ecosystem. Our team is now part of the newly formed Aspen Digital program, which built on the Aspen Institute’s legacy programs in cybersecurity, technology policy, and media. Aspen Digital is led by Vivian Schiller, a longtime executive at the intersection of journalism, media, and technology who has previously held top roles at NPR, Twitter, and the New York Times.

### PHYSICAL SPACE

We hosted our second fellowship in SPACES, a coworking environment near San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf. This location proved to be a great home base for our second cohort, providing ample teaching space and open areas for group collaboration.

A key goal for 2020 was to secure a permanent office space for the Hub in the Bay Area. Unfortunately, as the pandemic forced our operations to become remote, this was not possible. For 2021, we plan to explore alternative locations in the Bay Area that can allow us to resume some safe and outdoor programming until the pandemic is resolved.

### OUTSIDE SUPPORT

We rely on a host of external vendors and supporters to bring our programming to life. Our work would not be successful without the help of our web developers, designers, photographers, professional application reviewers, and copyeditors. In this unique year, we are also especially appreciative of everyone who helped us manage the transition to webinars and virtual programming, including the AV team at the Aspen Institute and our colleagues at Aspen Digital.

### MAKING THIS WORK POSSIBLE

Without the support of our funders, our ideas would never be able to come to fruition. Craig Newmark Philanthropies, the Hewlett Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Omidyar Network provided funding for the Hub to continue our work in 2020. We were excited to add Schmidt Futures as a new supporter of the Hub in 2020.

As we pivoted to add more programming throughout the year, the Ford Foundation and the Omidyar Network provided additional funds for our COVID-19 Challenge Grants. Donations from the Ford Foundation, the Beeck Center for Social Innovation, and Schmidt Futures made the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative possible. We are deeply grateful for all their generosity and confidence in our mission.



## Our 2020 Team



**BETSY COOPER**  
Director



**MAI SISTLA**  
Deputy Director



**DAVID ALBÁN HIDALGO**  
Program Coordinator



**MEHA AHLUWALIA**  
Program Coordinator



**MADDY LIBBEY**  
Program Assistant



**RYAN OLSON**  
Design Assistant



**SAVILLA PITT**  
Events and Partnerships Manager



## The Way Forward

In 2021, we are excited to welcome promising technologists into each of our programs and continue solidifying the Hub as a key nexus for policy impact.

We will kick off the next year with the second iteration of the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative in January. By the second half of 2021, we hope to finally welcome our third class of Hub fellows, and we hope to welcome a cohort of one of our programs in the fall. Building on our COVID Challenge Grants, we also plan to pilot new ways to support civic tech innovation, possibly through a call for solutions to a pre-identified problem.

Finally, we hope to continue broadening access to our programming by hosting

public events and creating publicly accessible resources. The most inspiring part of our work is seeing what our fellows, leaders, and grantees go on to accomplish after completing our training programs. In 2021, we hope to scale our ability to train leaders by several orders of magnitude, empowering even more people to drive policy change.

The ongoing pandemic means that we are unable to lay down a definitive plan for 2021. But our accomplishments in 2020 have shown us that we are capable of adapting quickly to administer high-quality programming amidst change and uncertainty. We are encouraged by what we have achieved so far, and optimistic about what lies ahead.







**ASPEN TECH  
POLICY HUB**

The Aspen Institute  
2300 N St. NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20037  
202 736 5800