

# Effective Policy Change In Climate: A Case Study

[The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy](#) turns professionals into policy advocates. We offer innovative training programs to equip leaders across sectors – from tech to climate, science to social impact – with the practical policy skills to craft solutions for society’s most pressing challenges. Based in the Bay Area, the Policy Academy is the first comprehensive nonpartisan and non-university training program in the United States offering a step-by-step process to learn practical strategies for policymaking. The Academy's predecessor, the Aspen Tech Policy Hub, has helped more than 500 alumni and staff gain government experience and seek policy impact.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2022, the Aspen Policy Academy has trained dozens of climate scientists and technologists on engaging with policy, beginning with the Aspen Tech Policy Hub’s inaugural [Climate Cohort](#) fellowship program. Of the trainees who have graduated from our full-time programs, more than half have formally transitioned into a government or policy role, or have directly impacted policy. Many of our trainees have gone on to critical government roles, serving as senior [water policy advisors](#) at the State Department, [leading state agencies on climate adaptation efforts](#), and [advising climate tech companies](#) on policy strategy. Others have used their Hub training to garner funding for information campaigns on carbon dioxide removal efforts, advocate for state parks to get more funding for conservation, and to build policy arms within their own climate organizations.

## BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Aspen Tech Policy Hub identified a significant gap in training in the climate space. Although sound policy is essential to helping combat the climate crisis, no program existed to equip climate scientists and technologists with the skills to effectively engage in policy.

To learn more about this project, please visit [aspenpolicyacademy.org](https://aspenpolicyacademy.org).

That summer, the Hub piloted the Climate Cohort: a full-time fellowship program that trained 15 climate technologists and scientists in engaging with policy. During a 10-week on-site program, fellows attended trainings on policy communications and policy advocacy, worked with government stakeholders to pitch solutions to current climate policy issues, and worked on a policy project of their own choosing. Since that program, we have trained many more climate scientists and technologists through broader science and nonprofit fellowship programs and short courses. As we launch the Aspen Policy Academy, we are excited to build on this work.

## IMPACT

More than half of our full-time trainees have transitioned into a policy role or have directly impacted policy since graduating from a Hub program. Graduates have taken on policy roles in both the public and private sectors. For example, [Nadia Seeterem](#) transitioned from academia and is now leading a New York State home buyout program to protect New Yorkers who live in flood-prone communities. [Esther Sosa](#) is now Special Advisor for Policy, IRA Implementation at the US Environmental Protection Agency. [Emily Doyle](#) became the Climate Resilience Program Manager at the California State Parks Foundation. And [Jaida Nabayan](#) is now the Principal Analyst, Climate Resilience Policy and Planning for the County of Sonoma in California. These transformations are examples of how quickly exposure to policy impact can be a galvanizing force in a fellow's career.

Other alums directly credit Hub training with helping them make an impact on policy. Alumnus Emma Crow-Willard utilized her training in policy memo writing and stakeholder mapping to gain the Department of Energy's support and secure \$750,000 in funding from philanthropic foundations for an engagement campaign sharing findings from a groundbreaking [carbon dioxide removal study](#). [Kelsey Whiting](#) used learnings from our nonprofit policy training program to build a policy strategy for her nonprofit organization, [the Land Institute](#), that seeks to advance more sustainable agricultural practices like the planting of perennial grain crops. [Stephen Mushegan](#) is now a Senior Associate at the AdHoc group, where he uses his Hub training on public comments and stakeholder mapping to help his climate-tech clients navigate the regulatory landscape. As the Academy, we look forward to expanding our climate work, building new short courses, programs, and partnerships to support more climate trainees in advocating for better policy.