



Where Citizens Become Changemakers

At a Glance

The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy helps community leaders and experts across the political spectrum elevate their voices, influence key decisions, and strengthen democracy from the ground up. We believe that the people closest to problems are best positioned to come up with solutions, so we work to empower citizens to have a say in the decisions that affect them. Our innovative training programs and resources equip people across sectors – from tech to the environment, science to civic engagement – with the skills to shape critical policy efforts. We're building an America where everyone is engaged in our democratic process—and has the power to make a difference.



Why We Need a Policy Academy

We need better policy, and we need people to feel that their voices matter in government. By equipping new voices to enter the policy arena and elevating their voices to have an impact, the Aspen Policy Academy builds both.

In a world that's changing quickly, crafting thoughtful policies is more important than ever. Companies and governments alike are struggling with how to ethically deploy artificial intelligence. Communities are struggling to manage rising housing costs. School districts are debating whether to fund more charter schools. The people with the most knowledge on these topics – artificial intelligence experts on tech policy, home builders and realtors in the housing market, teachers and principals in education – need to contribute their experience to inform these policy decisions.

At the same time, we need to help people get involved in policy for another reason: so that they believe in the power of a republican form of government. Only 22% of US adults trust the federal government “to do the right thing just about always or most of the time.” Yet the more people engage with government institutions, the more likely they

are to have confidence in them. By giving citizens the tools to not just study civics but to participate in the democratic process, we're helping rebuild public trust.

One reason that outsiders struggle to join the policy conversation is that there is no easy way to learn how to advocate for policy change. The difference between the *Schoolhouse Rock!* version of government and the reality of day-to-day lawmaking and rulemaking is vast and, too often, opaque. The nuts and bolts of policy skills are most often shared by osmosis, passed from person to person in wonky government circles. Being able to successfully impact policy is often a matter of luck and privilege – you happen to have the right connections, meet the right mentor, stumble into the right job, or be in the right room at the right time.

The Aspen Policy Academy democratizes policymaking by bringing new voices into the policy conversation. We will make sure that people with the right experience – on everything from artificial intelligence to local education – have the right tools to contribute to key decisions that affect the direction of our society.

Policy Impact In Practice

Aspen Policy Academy fellows Jordan Loewen-Colón, Ayodele Odubela, and Jeanette Jordan used policy training to help ensure that AI is implemented for the public good. They recommended that the Utah Office of Artificial Intelligence Policy (OAIP) take steps to help the public understand the legal, ethical, and technical risks associated with developing and deploying AI systems. In 2025, [the OAIP adopted several of their recommendations](#) and created a new web page listing companies undergoing AI risk mitigation. The fellows also founded the nonprofit [AI ALT Lab](#) to continue their work.

Policy Training for People On the Go

At the Aspen Policy Academy, our “special sauce” is our curriculum. We teach participants how to engage in policymaking in a practical, engaging way — without requiring our participants to join a degree program or relocate to Washington, DC. We have offerings for participants at every level of commitment, from webinars to part-time short courses to full-time in-person programs. Our offerings fit into three buckets:

- **Policy Impact:** We teach participants how to change policy (without lobbying) through practical interactive sessions. Students learn how to develop and refine policy solutions, map stakeholders, and effectively advocate to those decisionmakers.
- **Communicating for Policy:** We teach participants how to effectively communicate with policy stakeholders. Students learn skills such as how to put the “Bottom Line Up Front” and translate complicated concepts into plain language. We also teach students how to write policy memos and public comments, or draft op-eds and give government briefings.
- **Policy Stakeholders:** We introduce participants to key policy stakeholders and structures. We teach participants not just how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches work, but how they can personally engage with them.

In addition, we offer curriculum on specific topics such as government ethics, procurement, and budgeting, and on specific subjects such as getting a job in policy. Through engaging lectures and realistic exercises, we ensure our alums are prepared to take on society’s toughest problems. [See their work.](#)

Our Program Areas

While our policy trainings can be used by people across industries and specializations, we primarily help policy newcomers across 3 core program areas.

Tech

For cyber, AI, and other STEM professionals

Environment

For climate and sustainability leaders

Civic Engagement

For anyone looking to make an impact

Our Program Formats

We have programming to fit anyone’s schedule and interest, from public webinars to part-time short courses to full-time in-person programs and 1:1 mentoring.

Webinars

Short Courses

Fellowships

1:1 Coaching

Building the Policy Backbench

Since its beginning, the Academy has trained thousands of people to learn how to engage in policymaking across 3 core focus areas: technology, the environment, and civic engagement. **We are thrilled that 20,000 people have registered for our programs to date.** And our training works!

- Our Fellowship program **increases fellows' understanding of policy by 160%** on average.
- Our alumni have reported more than **50 instances of successful policy impact**, including [convincing the State of Utah to require data centers to publish their water usage data](#) and [guiding generative AI use across New York City](#).
- **94% of our alumni** say that their Academy training has influenced the trajectory of their career. **More than 120 have taken on new policy jobs**, from the White House to their local school board.



Partner With Us

We are actively seeking partners interested in offering our courses to their membership, or partnering to deliver them. Are you a nonprofit looking to expand the reach of your work? A funder with grantees seeking more policy impact? An educational program with new students to train on policy advocacy? We can help!

As examples, we have:

- Worked with a fellowship program to design a customized policy writing course;
- Partnered with a nonprofit to provide training to private sector executives interested in going into government;
- Trained faculty members from universities on building a Public Interest Technology policy agenda;
- Taught wildfire prevention experts how to use policy as a lever for change; and
- Partnered with funders to support policy training for their cybersecurity grantees.



A list of our existing course offerings follows, which we can tailor for partners depending on their needs and interests. We can also design customized programs to meet your needs, whether it's a full-scale training program or a short workshop.

Please visit aspenpolicyacademy.org or email us at aspenpolicyacademy@aspeninstitute.org if you'd like to discuss a partnership.

Our Core Courses

Policy Impact

Full course: 14 hours | Abbreviated course: 6 hours | Individual segments: 2 hours

This course teaches students how to develop an effective policy idea and how to successfully advocate for its adoption.

- Introduction to Policy Impact
- Defining Policy Problems
- Researching Policy Problems
- Stakeholder Mapping
- Scoping Solutions
- Building Effective Outputs
- Advocacy (Or Getting It Done)

Communicating for Policy

Full course: 14 hours | Short course on writing basics: 10 hours | Short course on policy memos: 8 hours
Individual segments: 2 hours

This course teaches students how to effectively communicate their policy ideas. It provides practical training on policy speaking and writing.

- Communicating for Policy
- Reading Policy Documents
- Translating Complicated Concepts Into Plain Language
- Giving Governments Feedback
- Writing a Public Comment
- Writing a Policy Memo
- Briefing a Stakeholder
- Writing an Op-Ed
- Testifying Before Congress

Policy Stakeholders

Full course: 14 hours | Short course on government stakeholders: 6 hours | Individual segments: 2 hours

This course teaches students the basics of policy structures, both inside and outside of government.

- How to Tell Governments What You Think
- Federal Government 101
- Legislative Branch Policymaking
- White House Policymaking
- Agency Policymaking
- Judicial Branch Policymaking
- State and Local Government Policymaking
- Corporate Policymaking

Other Policy Fundamentals

Individual segments: 2 hours

- Tech Policy 101
- Environmental Policy 101
- Nonprofit Policy Advocacy 101
- Policy Ethics
- Procurement
- Budgeting
- How to Pass Legislation
- How to Run for Office
- Building Nonprofit Advocacy Capacity
- Policy for Funders