ASPEN POLICY ACADEMY

Transforming Expertise Into Impact

AT A GLANCE

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.

"We believe that solving society's biggest challenges starts with equipping leaders with the tools to drive real change."

Betsy Cooper
Aspen Policy Academy
Director

WHY WE NEED A POLICY ACADEMY

In a world that's changing quickly, crafting smart policies is more important than ever. Companies and governments alike are struggling with how to ethically deploy artificial intelligence. States and local governments are trying to allocate tens of billions of dollars in federal clean energy and infrastructure funds. 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; doctors and nurses in the health system; teachers and principals in education – need to be in these conversations to inform the best possible policy.

Why is it so hard for domain experts to join the policy conversation? One reason 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 aims to democratize policymaking: bringing new voices into the policy conversation. In the wake of the Supreme Court's *Loper Bright* decision that gives courts and Congress additional power over how federal agencies make policy, having outsiders with deep subject matter knowledge is more important than ever. We make sure people with the right expertise – on everything from artificial intelligence to local education – have the right tools to contribute to key decisions that affect the direction of our society.

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POLICY TRAINING IN PRACTICE

Aspen Institute fellows Anil Dewan and Alexander "RoRo" Romero used policy training to expand the Department of Defense's Vulnerability Disclosure Program (VDP), which enables researchers to find and report vulnerabilities in Department systems without getting in trouble for meddling in them. The Department's original policy only allowed researchers to disclose vulnerabilities in public-facing DOD websites. Anil and RoRo sought to expand the policy to include a broader array of DOD information systems, such as databases and industrial control systems. In January 2021, Anil and RoRo's proposed changes were signed by the acting Secretary of Defense.

BUILDING THE POLICY BACKBENCH

The Aspen Policy Academy builds on the success of our predecessor organization, the Aspen Tech Policy Hub. Over the last five years, the Hub, which is now an initiative of the Policy Academy, has trained more than 500 technology experts (engineers, startup founders and the like) on policymaking.

- **People Impact:** More than 100 of our alumni have taken on government positions, from the White House to the NY State House of Representatives.
- **Policy Impact:** We empower our alumni to impact policy, from helping the City of Oakland deploy an app that provides services to its homeless population to supporting a race equity centered product certification for education technology tools.
- **Resource Library:** We are building a database of resources on important policy topics, such as on regulating data brokers and developing skills for new government hires.

POLICY TRAINING FOR BUSY PROFESSIONALS

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. We also work with nonprofits to help them translate their direct services work into impact, and with funders to train their grantees and manage multi-stakeholder engagements.

Our teaching 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. We teach skills such as how to put "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 how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches work. We also explore corporate, nonprofit, and state and local policymaking.

Through engaging lectures and realistic exercises, we ensure our alums are prepared to take on society's toughest problems.

The Policy Academy will allow us to expand our reach beyond science and technology, training anyone with deep subject matter expertise how to advocate for change. Visit **aspenpolicyacademy.org** *to learn more about how we can partner to build a future in which anyone can impact policy!*

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PARTNER WITH US

We are actively seeking partners interested in offering our courses 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? A fellowship with new students to train on policy advocacy? We can help!

To the right are details on our existing core course offerings, which we can tailor for partners depending on their needs and interests.

In addition to these offerings, we work with partners to develop bespoke policy trainings. For instance, we can provide tailored 1:1 feedback on policy documents, as well as develop tailored short courses and individual sessions for partners. We are particularly interested in working with partners in 2025 to develop short courses on:

- Policy impact for state and local governments;
- Training artificial intelligence professionals to communicate with policymakers; and
- Policy impact for climate professionals.

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 101
- Reading Policy Documents
- Translating Complicated Concepts Into Plain Language
- Giving Governments Feedback
- Writing a Public Comment
- Writing a Policy Memo
- Pitching 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.
- Federal Government 101
- Legislative Branch Policymaking
- White House Policymaking
- Agency Policymaking
- Judicial Branch Policymaking
- State and Local Government Policymaking
- Corporate Policymaking

Miscellaneous Segments *(2 hours each)*
- Policy Ethics
- Procurement
- Budgeting
- Tech Policy 101
- Climate Policy 101
- Nonprofit Policy Advocacy