

## IMPACT CASE STUDY

# Developing Systems to Evaluate AI Innovation

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[The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy](#) turns citizens into changemakers. We offer innovative training programs to equip leaders across sectors – from tech to environment, science to civic engagement – 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

2024 Science and Technology Policy Fellows [Ayodele Odubela](#) and [Dr. Jordan Loewen-Colón](#) drew from their Fellowship experience to found the [AI Alt Lab](#)—a national nonprofit committed to evaluating artificial intelligence (AI) systems and rebuilding public trust in AI. During the Fellowship, Ayodele and Jordan combined their AI algorithm auditing and AI ethics expertise to develop a standardized framework for Utah's Office of Artificial Intelligence Policy (OAIP) to evaluate AI tools. After the Fellowship, the duo sought to broaden their impact beyond the OAIP, founding the AI Alt Lab to reach governments and organizations nationwide.

## BACKGROUND

Before joining the Fellowship, data scientist Ayodele noticed the government's need for technical expertise to inform AI regulations under development. With experience supporting the National AI Advisory Committee and as an auditor for AI algorithms in various roles, she felt drawn to further develop her policy skills to fill this technical gap. Jordan similarly saw an opportunity to apply his AI expertise working with Indigenous communities to impact governance. An AI, Ethics, and Data Justice Fellow at Canada's Centre for Health Innovation and CEO of a digital therapeutics startup, Jordan was motivated to employ his ethics and philosophy training to implement creative AI solutions in government.

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

During the Fellowship, Ayodele and Jordan connected with the Utah OAIP to streamline the Office’s assessment of AI tools and help promote transparency into the office’s adoption of these systems. Fellowship lessons reframed Jordan’s understanding of policy impact as an accessible process, and the Academy’s policy communications curriculum supported Ayodele’s transition from technical writing to stakeholder advocacy. Equipped with a new communications toolbelt, Ayodele and Jordan undertook community-level research, interviewed Utah residents and government officials, and investigated the OAIP’s public announcements to uncover a gap in residents’ understanding of the State’s work with AI.

*“The Fellowship taught us that when you’re presented with something the government is doing and it’s frustrating or unclear, that is an opportunity to bring your expertise into the space. And, even more importantly, it taught us how.”*

Dr. Jordan Loewen-Colón

## IMPACT

Ayodele and Jordan’s research culminated in publishing a standardized [framework to evaluate AI-enabled tools](#) that Utah might use. Ayodele and Jordan designed these evaluation guidelines to help Utah adopt transparent processes that build public trust in AI and ensure that the OAIP balances AI innovation and compliance. Jordan credits the Academy staff’s mentorship and weekly, iterative feedback in supporting his learning journey and guiding the project’s evolution to its final form. Since their recommendation in 2024, [the OAIP has adopted aspects of the fellows’ framework](#) and developed a [webpage listing companies in regulatory mitigation](#).

The team’s work with the OAIP modeling responsible state-level AI development and AI partnerships in the state inspired them to co-found the [AI Alt Lab](#) and expand their impact to communities beyond Utah. A nonprofit “think-and-do tank” dedicated to rebuilding public trust in AI, the AI Alt Lab uses research, education, and evaluation to review, verify and validate AI policies. Through this organization, Ayodele and Jordan aim to ensure AI serves the public good through community-rooted frameworks, integrity-based guardrails, and values-aligned governance.

Since its launch, the AI Alt Lab has been featured in the [Harvard Business Review](#), established its own fellowship, published reports such as “[Beyond Surface Collaboration: How AI Enhances High-Performing Teams](#),” and worked with policy experts in the European Union to propose changes to international [AI and data extraction legislation](#). Jordan and Ayodele look forward to continuing to expand their partnerships and help governments and organizations both evaluate and responsibly implement AI tools.