

IMPACT CASE STUDY

Nonprofit Policy Training

[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

The Aspen Policy Academy helped 15 nonprofit organizations learn how to scale their policy efforts through a pilot Nonprofit Impact Fellowship Program in the summer of 2023. The Academy selected 15 Fellows from nonprofit organizations working in a variety of issue areas who were motivated to learn more about policy tools and who were well-positioned in their organizations to put those policy tools into action. These Fellows gathered in the Bay Area for a three week bootcamp of intensive training on what policy is in different contexts, how to influence policy, and how to build capacity to approach their work from a policy perspective when they returned to their organizations. This program enabled participants to engage in coalition-building, better understand the policy landscape and their place in it, and build new advocacy agendas.

BACKGROUND

The nonprofit sector has an opportunity to massively scale outcomes by including policy impact as part of their essential toolkit in approaching major societal problems. In 2023, the Academy selected 15 Fellows from nonprofits in a variety of fields who shared a common drive to take their organizations’ goals and maximize their policy impact. Fellows came in with a desire to steer their organizations towards a deeper and more sustained policy impact but lacking information on where and how to advocate

To learn more about this project, please visit aspenpolicyacademy.org.

for their ideas. Over the course of three weeks in San Francisco, Fellows learned how to scope policy problems, map stakeholders and their motivations, develop relevant outputs, and communicate with stakeholders. Fellows heard from a variety of policy professionals in panel discussions, fireside chats, and at networking dinners.

Fellows then had the opportunity to work with real policy problems sourced from state and local government stakeholders and to present their ideas to these public servants. Over the course of their time together, they formed a support network to take back to their nonprofit organizations as they worked to build more robust plans for impact. Fellows gave the program the highest ratings of any Academy program to date. When asked to rate the program on a scale of 1-10, fellows scored the Nonprofit Fellowship as 9.14.

IMPACT

A number of program alumni have used the skills they learned and the projects they created in the Nonprofit Impact Fellowship to shape policy. Nidhi Rastogi, representing the Global Cybersecurity Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), persuaded RIT to implement her project: a [proposed workshop](#) that will empower students to navigate the social media landscape safely and critically. Saira Khan-Gallo, representing Tidepool, urged the FDA to [update device interoperability designations](#) to provide more avenues for diabetes management. Her proposal led to a successful meeting with the Branch Chief of the Diabetes Division at the FDA where they discussed a partnership on device designations moving forward. Saira also used the skills she learned in the Fellowship to help draft the [DIABETES Act](#), making diabetes care more accessible and user-friendly.

A number of the nonprofits that participated in the Nonprofit Impact Fellowship also developed new advocacy initiatives as a result of the training they received. Thanks to researcher Kelsey Whiting's participation in the Academy's training, The Land Institute was able to [successfully build a policy arm and engage in coalition-building](#) around state and local agricultural policymaking. Public interest organization Pacific Peering [credits the Academy training](#) with critical policy skill-building, such as memo writing and stakeholder management, that helped their advocacy scale and grow; using our training, they successfully responded to a Request for Information to the White House. Korene Stuart of G{Code} [used her policy training to make her pitches more effectively](#), streamlining and scaling her organization's impact.

Impacts go beyond projects, as many Fellows use Academy experiences to explore career transitions. Fellow Lana Ramjit was tapped to create a National Resource Center for Cybercrimes against individuals at [AEquitas](#) in late 2024, and Fellow Theodora Skeadas successfully moved into a [Community Policy Manager position](#) at DoorDash.