

Policy Fellowships



[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 nonuniversity 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's annual Fellowship has transformed 120 cross sector leaders into effective policy advocates. Following the Fellowships' full-time training bootcamps, Academy fellows have gone on to develop 54 real-world policy proposals for government partners at the federal, state, and local levels. These projects have driven real policy change, from [informing a 2026 Utah law](#) on data center water use to [helping older adults who have been scammed](#) online to [shaping official AI guidance](#) for New York City. Fellowship alumni have also used the program as a launchpad into senior federal and local government roles and founding new policy impact organizations.

BACKGROUND

The Policy Academy's Fellowship model is a first of its kind nonuniversity and nonpartisan training program that leads policy novices through an intensive policymaking bootcamp. Since the inaugural cohort, the Academy has hosted fellowships focused on technology, the environment, and nonprofits, and our Fellows have included startup founders, professors, engineers, medical professionals, researchers, and other field experts new to the policy space. As of 2026, the Academy has hosted a total of 8 cohorts and grown our alumni network to 120 Fellows from more than 20 states across the country.

Throughout the program’s bootcamp phase, Academy Fellows benefit from hands-on learning experiences, immediately putting their policy training into action. For example, Fellows collaborate to develop real policy solutions addressing challenges posed by government clients, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the states of Utah, California, Oklahoma, New York, and New Mexico. Fellows also meet in-person with government officials in San Francisco City Hall and the California State Capitol in Sacramento to gain on the ground insights into state and local policy mechanisms. The cohorts’ training then culminates in the Academy’s signature “48-Hour Exercise”—a project sprint inspired by the tech world’s “hackathon” model, where teams develop concrete policy proposals for local Bay Area government agencies, including the counties of Santa Clara, San Francisco, and Marin. In each of these exercises, Fellows apply their Academy training in defining policy problems, developing outputs, and communicating with stakeholders, and they draw on insights from curated guest speakers leading cross sector policy change.

Following the full-time bootcamp, nearly half of all Fellows go on to complete a 6-month project phase with Academy mentors, pitching their policy solutions to relevant stakeholders, including decisionmakers at the US Food and Drug Administration, the US Agency for International Development, and the Federal Trade Commission. Fellows have debuted these projects at 10 launch events and demo days across New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and they continue to benefit from long-term career support and networking opportunities.

IMPACT

Equipped with the Academy’s tools to effectively advocate for policy change, the 120 Academy Fellows have advanced policy across the country. Their 54 policy projects advocate for innovative policy change at the federal, state, and local levels, spanning topics from [frameworks for auditing advertising supply chains](#), to [fairness metrics for mortgage machine learning algorithms](#), to [tools to aid overseas voter registration](#), and more. Numerous stakeholders have adopted the Fellows’ proposals:

- The [New York City Office of Technology and Innovation incorporated](#) Fellows Hande Güven and Jessica Wang’s policy recommendations to share more user-friendly guidance on how city agencies can responsibly implement generative AI in its latest [AI Action Plan](#).
- Across the country, Rebecca Kilberg, Jonathan Gilmour, and Mary-Clare Bosco’s [Fellowship project ultimately helped inform](#) a 2026 Utah [state law requiring data centers to report their water use](#).
- At the national level, Anil Dewan and Alexander “RoRo” Romero successfully expanded the scope of the [Department of Defense’s Vulnerability Disclosure Program](#), which provides safe harbor to ethical hackers who discover and report vulnerabilities in government systems.

“In a time when it can be difficult to feel a sense of agency, the Fellowship has left me feeling hopeful, empowered, and inspired.”

2026 Science and Technology Policy Fellow Alice Tan

Our alumni have gone on to champion policy change from inside governments as well. Raylene Yung became the chief of staff at the Office of Clean Energy Demonstration at the US Department of Energy, Anil Dewan became the senior advisor to the Chief Information Officer at the Department of Homeland Security, Neal Parikh became the inaugural director of AI for New York City, and Nadia Seeteram became the first chief climate officer for the County of Marin, to name a few.

Beyond kickstarting government careers, the Fellowship has ushered alumni into new leadership roles, both as company founders and public thought leaders. 6 alumni have used the Fellowship as a launch pad for starting their own policy impacting organizations, including Raylene and Jessica Cole cofounding the [US Digital Response](#), a nonprofit that enables governments to harness public interest tech expertise at scale, and Jordan Loewen-Colón and Ayodele Odubela founding the [AI Alt Lab](#), a national nonprofit committed to evaluating AI systems and rebuilding public trust in AI. Academy fellows have also been highlighted as experts in the media over 470 times, using their policy communications training to shape key policy debates with features in [The Washington Post](#), [KQED](#), [The San Francisco Chronicle](#), and [The Hill](#).

The Fellowship continues to grow in influence and impact, reaching new subject-matter experts each year and developing a robust community of policy leaders to ensure the right voices are at the table when transformative policy decisions are made. In the words of 2026 Science and Technology Policy Fellow Rebecca Odim, “The Aspen Policy Academy Fellowship helped me see how I can engage with and influence my government as a citizen and as a technology builder.”