



UNDERSTANDING 20 YEARS OF IMPACT

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
ASPEN
GLOBAL
LEADERSHIP
NETWORK

THE AGLN
IMPACT REPORT

Acknowledgements

The Aspen Global Leadership Network (AGLN) Impact Report was made possible thanks to the support of our global community. With special appreciation and acknowledgement of:

- The thousands of Fellows across the AGLN, who participated in 2019 Impact Study and have provided invaluable feedback over the last two decades.
- The 14 global Fellowship programs of the AGLN for their guidance, collaboration, and partnership in developing and advancing AGLN evaluation and learning efforts.
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- Finally, we thank all Fellows, moderators, staff, and partners of the AGLN who humble us with their efforts to realize a more free, just, and equitable world. We are privileged to support and catalyze your efforts.



Table of Contents

2	INTRODUCTION
4	OUR THEORY OF CHANGE
6	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
	THE FINDINGS
8	PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
14	SOCIETAL CHANGE
20	THE POWER OF THE NETWORK
24	CONCLUSIONS


Introduction

Understanding 20 Years of Impact

The Aspen Institute was founded on a belief that leaders, working together, could find common ground to move humanity forward. While the world has changed, the mission of the Institute, at its core, remains more relevant and important today than ever.

The field of leadership development is crowded. While there are many approaches – through skill building, management training, executive coaching, etc. – we believe that leadership is best cultivated through the inquiry and exploration of values. We believe values-based leadership, rather than self-interest or ego, is a pathway to lasting positive good in society.

The development of values-based leaders has been the “*raison d’être*” for the Aspen Global Leadership Network (AGLN). For over 20 years, our Fellowships have gathered leaders for a personally transformative experience that results in Fellows living lives of action to address the world’s most complex problems.



But how do we know a values-based leader when we see one? And what difference do they make in tackling the most “wicked” problems of today and tomorrow?

In 2019, we went on a year-long mission to get these answers. The goal was to better understand what makes a difference – and what difference it makes. We wanted to know if we were producing the intended results we seek, and how might we know this to be true.

We knew this would be a tall order. Measuring social change is messy. It’s complicated. It’s as much an art as it is a science. At the start, we asked ourselves: is measuring transformational change within an individual – and the subsequent effects these individuals have on the world – even feasible? After all, complex social problems and systems don’t yield nice statements like “A made B happen.”

And so, our evaluation efforts were undertaken in the spirit of learning and self-improvement, with the hope they could shed some clarity into what previously seemed elusive and immeasurable. Claiming sole causality was never the intent, but decoding our contribution was imperative.

The study found that personal transformation does indeed lead to societal impact.

It found that the Fellowship experience does change how Fellows lead: how they run their companies, contribute to their communities, and make the tough decisions. It found a ripple effect of change: from Fellows, to their organizations, to systems and fields, to society at large. It found that AGLN Fellows do indeed go on to paint their lives on a broader canvas and take specific actions to realize a more free, just, and equitable world.

What follows is a summary of these evaluation efforts and findings to date. We hope it serves as a contribution to the field of leadership development, defining the many ways values-based leadership translates to societal change.

In the end, the results were both validating and stunning. They showed we were producing overwhelmingly positive and outsized outcomes.

Our Theory of Change

Our evaluation process helps us test our theory – and the assumptions underpinning it – as to how change happens as a result of AGLN Fellowships and Fellows. The study supported our theory of change: **that we create a more just, fair, and equitable society by developing a network of leaders committed to proactively confronting societal challenges, individually and collectively.**

The Ingredients

The Fellowship is grounded in the Aspen Institute model: the curation of a diverse cohort of leaders who take part in time-tested seminars by Aspen-trained moderators. We select proven, high-integrity, entrepreneurial leaders at an inflection point in their lives – those whose focus on, and success in, external achievement has left them questioning “what more is there?” Every Fellow has a requirement to act; they undertake a social venture that puts their values into action.

Resulting in...

The Experience

The Fellowship creates deep introspection within Fellows, challenging them to pause, reflect, and refine how they lead in all facets of their lives. Their cohort and moderators challenge them to think deeply about their purpose, core values, and role in society, while the venture development process provides the impetus to expand their leadership. We support and engage Fellows for the rest of their lives to continue.

Resulting in...

An Inside Look: What is in our secret sauce?

What makes the Fellowship model and design so distinct? While the evaluation process does not assess specific program components in a formal way, it does provide insight into what makes our program design effective.

Curating an intentionally diverse mosaic of peers

Providing the space for pause and self-reflection

Embracing creative tensions through Aspen Institute-moderated dialogue

The Outcomes

Outcomes are realized on two dimensions: 1) the individual Fellow and 2) society at large. A Fellow's personal transformation – the ways in which they change internally in thought, belief, and behavior – is the catalyst to compel action and create societal change. Fellows act in their key spheres of influence including their organizations, communities, industries, and regions.

Resulting in...

The Impact

Ultimately, these outcomes result in solving critical challenges facing the world in order to create a more free, just, and equitable society.

Developing the social, emotional, and relational aspects of leadership – not the 'how-tos'

Challenging and awakening fundamental values and beliefs

Illuminating moral injustices to compel action

Using a trusted group of peers to support risk-taking and accountability

Reframing personal leadership in the context of systems change

Executive Summary

This report summarizes findings from the 2019 Aspen Global Leadership Network (AGLN) Impact Study, the first-ever impact assessment of AGLN efforts. The study focused on the experience of AGLN Fellows after the two-year Fellowship, including the types of shifts and changes that happen for Fellows in their lives and leadership, and the actions that they take to create positive change in the world. More than 480 Fellows across 11 Fellowships provided insight and perspective.

In addition to the Impact Study, this report also includes select data that the AGLN captures through its ongoing evaluation process of Fellows throughout their two-year Fellowship experience.

The goal of our impact evaluation inquiry was to better understand the effectiveness of our efforts, to hold ourselves to greater account, to test our own assumptions, and to surface new opportunities for shared impact.

The analysis was undertaken by an independent evaluator to take an objective look at how we were doing.

Over 4,580 survey responses, 15,200 close-ended measures, 17,000 open-ended data fields, and over 10 years of data collection were examined for this report. These data points enabled us to draw robust conclusions based on wide-reaching evidence.

In the end, we distilled this data into 10 key findings which are detailed in the report.

Ten Key Findings



Personal Transformation:
Developing Values-Based Leaders

Key Research Questions:

What change are we having on individual Fellows? As a result of their Fellowship, how is the Fellow “walking differently in the world” as a person and a leader?

As a Result of the Fellowship:

- 01** Fellows become more self-aware, present, authentic, and intentional in their lives.
- 02** Fellows (re)align their life’s focus with personal values.
- 03** Fellows gain a greater sense of purpose and direction.
- 04** Fellows step up in new ways.
- 05** Fellows model high-integrity, purpose-driven leadership.



See more Personal Transformation on Page 8



Societal Change: Creating Lasting Social Impact

Key Research Questions:

What effect are Fellows having on today's most pressing problems? As a result of their Fellowship, how is the Fellow influencing positive change in their company and organization, community, field, sector, or industry, region, and society at large?

As a Result of the Fellowship:

- 06 Fellows lead their companies and organizations with values and purpose.
- 07 Fellows mobilize their resources and platforms to create greater impact.
- 08 Fellows influence leaders, policies, practices or reforms to create positive change, and/or confront societal wrongs.
- 09 Fellows create impactful leadership ventures to address societal need.

+ See more Societal Change on Page 14



The Power of the Network: Mobilizing a Community of Support and Collaboration

Key Research Questions:

What is the contributory value of our global network in supporting Fellows and larger societal change? Is the network more than the sum of its parts?

As a Result of the Fellowship:

- 10 The community of Fellows is a powerful source of support, accountability, and action-oriented collaboration for Fellows.

+ See more The Power of the Network on Page 20



Conclusions

The Fellowship is deeply transformative for Fellows, catalyzing them to become more values-based and purpose-driven in their lives and leadership.

Fellows are influential levers of change, taking action in new, significant ways to create positive change in their organizations, communities, industries, and regions.

The network is a critical platform for Fellows to mobilize support and collaboration for impact.



Personal Transformation:

Developing Values-Based Leaders

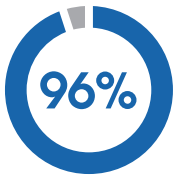
Throughout the study, Fellows resoundingly spoke of the inner changes they experienced as a result of the Fellowship. Fellows reported that these changes lead to further shifts in the ways that they see themselves and their leadership – more focused on values, taking on bigger challenges, more driven by purpose, having a greater desire to act and create social change. These results appear immediately in their Fellowship experience.

Rather than provide a ‘how-to’ manual of leadership, the programs’ value, as described by Fellows, is their focus on awakening the fundamental values and beliefs that underscore leadership. In turn, they report to gaining

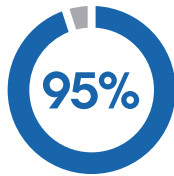
“ This was a moment where I could actually stop, reflect, and think in a bigger, more profound way than ever before. ”

greater self-awareness, intentionality, empathy, purpose, and values-centric mindsets. AGLN Fellowships are uniquely effective at unlocking these types of leadership capabilities.

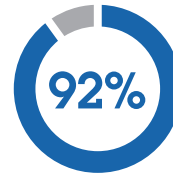
01 As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows become more self-aware, present, authentic, and intentional in their lives.



became more intentional or mindful in the way they live



became more self-aware



became more empathetic and understanding of different viewpoints and perspectives

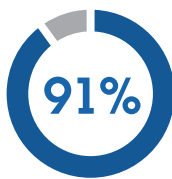
“ I focused much more on the inner journey, and the alignment of inner values and outer actions. ”

“ I have a greater understanding of the importance of being reflective as a leader. I now understand that sometimes you need to slow down to speed up. ”

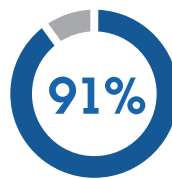


Personal Transformation: Developing Values-Based Leaders

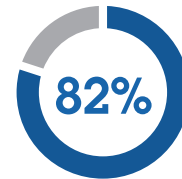
02 As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows (re)align their life's focus with personal values.



became clearer about the values by which they lead and make decisions



changed how they allocate their time or resources to align with their values



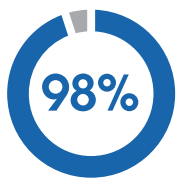
elevated the role that values play in their life

“ The Fellowship has caused me to be far more intentional about the decisions I make and the way I walk in the world. ”

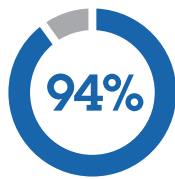
“ I consciously place values at the center of my decision making. ”

03

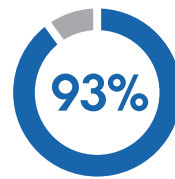
As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows gain a greater sense of purpose and direction.



increased their desire and/or confidence to have a positive impact



thought about how their actions today could impact the future for the better



had a greater sense of urgency to make a positive impact

“ I have a much better sense of my place in history. I am much more confident in my ability to make a difference at scale. ”

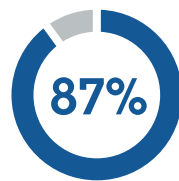
“ I felt a greater sense of responsibility to demonstrate leadership in addressing the problems I saw. ”



Personal Transformation:

Developing Values-Based Leaders

04 As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows step up in new ways.



took on risks or new challenges that they would not have pursued had it not been for the Fellowship and the support they received from other Fellows

What are the risks and new challenges Fellows undertake?

Here are the most common patterns:



Launching new ventures for impact

A majority of Fellows cited their AGLN leadership venture as the new challenge they would not have pursued. As a key part of the AGLN experience, a Fellow's venture is an impactful initiative to address a social need. Fellows cited that the venture reawakened entrepreneurial passion and confidence.



Elevating their leadership in the public arena

Fellows reported to stepping up civically and politically, specifically pursuing or holding a role in government. Others stretched their leadership role to advance a policy or advocacy agenda.



Speaking up and out for change

Fellows reported pushing harder for internal change in their organizations based on their values. Many cited examples of challenging organizational culture and/or structures to bring about change in ways they would not have done before. Others reported to feeling compelled by a moral imperative to address system failure and/or injustice.

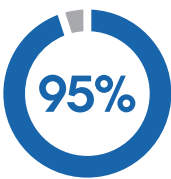


Pivoting their career trajectory

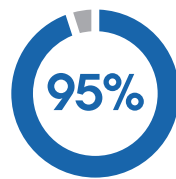
Fellows reported that the Fellowship led them to change directions professionally, such as leaving their jobs for ones better aligned with their values or shifting sectors and/or roles entirely with the goal of effecting positive change. Fellows also stated that they were compelled to launch new business ventures that integrated values and social impact.

05

As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows model high-integrity, purpose-driven leadership.



became more focused on the role and example they can be for others



modeled new leadership mindsets and practices, including:

- Incorporating values or aligning decision-making around values
- Increasing focus on diversity and inclusion of different perspectives
- Modeling more open, reflective and responsive leadership

“ I became acutely aware of the example I was setting for other employees, throughout the organization, in all of my actions large and small – and adjusted my behaviors accordingly. ”



Societal Change: Creating Lasting Social Impact

Fellows are influential levers of change. Each takes action in different ways, based on their spheres of influence, systems in which they operate, passions that drive them, and issues that concern them.

How do Fellows do this? Fellows report to creating a ripple effect of change in their companies and organizations, their communities, their fields and industries, and society at large.

Ultimately, these actions and influences result in improvements in key problems facing our world.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Fellows Influence Change on the Following Levels



Fellows are motivated to step up in significant ways and focus on their roles as leaders in service to others.

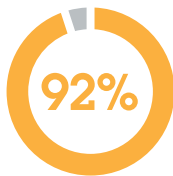
Their Companies and Organizations are led with greater clarity of values and greater clarity of purpose.

Their Communities are advanced through policies, practices, resources, and reforms for positive change.

Their Fields, Sectors, and Industries are advanced through policies, practices, resources, and reforms for positive change.

06

As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows lead their companies and organizations with values and purpose.



led their companies and organizations with values and greater clarity of purpose

What do Fellows do to lead their companies and organizations differently?

Here are the most common patterns:

Increase Company Focus on Societal Impact:

Reduce company's environmental footprint

Develop new impact-driven business lines or corporate responsibility strategies

Undertake efforts to encourage clients and suppliers to be more responsible and purpose-driven

Leverage the talents and assets of their workforce to serve communities, local and global

Embed Values into Company Culture and Policies:

Engage more stakeholders in company decision making and increase transparency

Advance a range of policies to address topics such as sexual harassment and gender equity

Evolve their companies' missions and values statements

Incorporate Values into Hiring and Talent Development Practices:

Launch new initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion

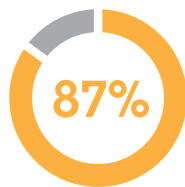
Improve hiring practices, compensation, and professional development to align with values

Establish values-based leadership programs, featuring text-based dialogue, for their employees

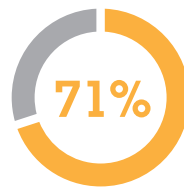


Societal Change: Creating Lasting Social Impact

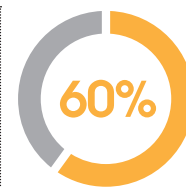
07 As result of the Fellowship, Fellows mobilize their resources and platforms to create greater impact.



mobilized resources such as time, money, platforms, and networks at the **community level**



mobilized resources such as time, money, platforms and networks at the **field, sector, or industry level**



mobilized resources such as time, money, platforms, and networks at the **regional level**

What do Fellows do to mobilize resources and platforms?

Here are the most common patterns:

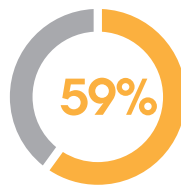
- **Launch** a new nonprofit or expand an existing initiative in significant ways
- **Serve** as a thought leader to raise visibility of an issue
- **Raise** significant philanthropic capital for social good
- **Leverage** their platform to advance a practice or policy in their sector
- **Take** action politically

08

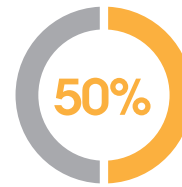
As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows influence leaders, policies, practices, or reforms to create positive change and/or confront societal wrongs.



influenced leaders, policies, practices, and reforms at the **community level**



influenced leaders, policies, practices, and reforms at the **field, sector, or industry level**



influenced leaders, policies, practices, and reforms at the **regional level**

What do Fellows do to influence leaders, policies, and practices?

Here are the most common patterns:

- **Play** a leadership role to advance a policy or advocacy agenda
- **Launch** a new organization to build coalitions and do systems-level change
- **Pursue and/or hold** a role in government
- **Convene** key influencers and stakeholders to enlist them to act
- **Serve** as a thought-leader to raise the visibility of important issues



Societal Change: Creating Lasting Social Impact

09 As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows create impactful leadership ventures to address societal need.

Every Fellow launches a social venture to address a social challenge or opportunity. Ventures range across issues and sectors. Our evaluation efforts did not assess the impact of individual ventures – an effort we deemed as complex as comparing apples and oranges. As a proxy measure, the evaluation asked Fellows to estimate the number of beneficiaries reached through their ventures. While ‘beneficiaries reached’ is certainly not the sole indicator of impact, we were intrigued by the finding: the study found that, on average, **Fellows reported their ventures were each reaching 24,000 people. One Fellow, launching one venture, creates a ripple effect of change.**

Fellows’ leadership ventures range across key issue areas, with the 5 most common areas being:



Quality Education



Good Health and Well-Being



Gender Equality



Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions



Decent Work and Economic Growth

Case Study: What does the ripple effect of change look like?

Improving the Livelihoods of Families in Rural India

Milk Mantra, a sustainable and new-age for-profit dairy company in Eastern India, is disrupting the dairy industry in India and changing the lives of families across the region. Sri's venture is to reinvent the supply chain with technology by procuring dairy directly from farmers and providing them with holistic support services to bolster their revenue streams and lift their families out of poverty. These efforts are now fully integrated into Milk Mantra's core business, baking socially responsible impact into its DNA.



Srikumar Misra

Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship
Founder and CEO, Milk Mantra

As a result:

60,000 farmers saw an **80% increase** in their incomes



300,000 rural lives positively impacted



Bold plans to reach over **1 million people** within the next 5-7 years



The Power of the Network:

Mobilizing a Community of Support and Collaboration

10

As a result of the Fellowship, the community of Fellows is a powerful source of support, accountability, and action-oriented collaboration.

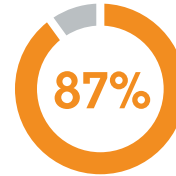
The global network of Fellows plays a critical role in the Fellowship experience - in both the support it provides and the opportunities it creates. The study revealed the power of the network in terms of trust, belonging, accountability, and fellowship. Moreover, it showed Fellows find collaborators to tackle the hard work, together.



felt that other Fellows had become important advisors and/or confidants in their leadership journey



asked for advice or support from other Fellows when facing an important and/or difficult decision



had other Fellows push them towards personal, professional, and societal impact goals

“ The most valuable part of the Fellowship was gaining a trusted group of advisers and a reference point on all matters. A great support system in challenging times and a source of strength and encouragement. ”

“ The roles my Fellows have played for me include becoming friends, confidants, colleagues, and more importantly, authentic thought partners in confronting and undoing injustice. ”



worked together with another Fellow(s) to address a critical issue, confront a societal wrong and/or create a positive change in their community, field, or sector

“ I’m being held accountable by fellow Fellows, inspired to achieve more in my work and in my community. ”



collectively acted with a group of Fellows to pursue and generate a collective effort for positive change, including:

- Working to advance a policy together
- Working on a specific program or initiative to advance an issue
- Engaging in local, regional, or national political issues
- Serving as thought leaders together on values-based leadership

Conclusion

The AGLN Model is a Powerful, Unique Approach for Creating Social Change

After more than 70 years of delivering Aspen Institute seminars and over 20 years of Fellowship programs, we were struck by the efficacy of our programs' impact. The evaluation presented strong evidence that the philosophical underpinning of our Fellowship model is sound: **societal impact is accelerated through the development of values-based leadership**. Additionally, we now know that this impact is significant and measurable; Fellows change the way they lead, creating a ripple effect in their organizations, communities, industries, regions, systems, and to society at large.

As a result of the Fellowship, Fellows reported that they:

- 01 Become more self-aware, present, authentic and intentional in their lives.
- 02 (Re)align their life's focus with personal values.
- 03 Have greater sense of purpose and direction.
- 04 Challenge themselves to step up in new ways.
- 05 Model high-integrity, purpose-driven leadership.
- 06 Lead their companies and organizations with values and purpose.
- 07 Mobilize their resources and platforms to create greater impact.
- 08 Influence leaders, policies, practices, or reforms that create positive change.
- 09 Create impactful leadership ventures to address societal need.
- 10 Support, hold accountable, and collaborate with other Fellows on critical issues.

And yet there is more work to do.

The report highlights opportunities for increased impact, specifically in how we activate the power of the network for even greater good. Collaboration among Fellows and collective action are areas in which Fellows have already seen organic success, and we now imagine what is possible to catalyze more action together.

As we move into the next chapter of the Aspen Global Leadership Network, we do so with a clear understanding of where we uniquely and most powerfully have impact. Our rapidly changing world demands that we act with urgency, and reaffirms our commitment to the work. With over 3,000 Fellows in 60+ countries, and growing, our work to realize a more free, just, and equitable world has just begun. We are excited for what the next 20 years of impact and beyond will bring.

“ AGLN Fellows have had impact that stretches across a number of different areas. I would compare it to an impressionist painting. If you look at the small and large activities in which Fellows are involved and step back, then you really get the bigger picture of how we've been able to influence change in the communities where we live and serve. ”

Report Methodology

This report summarizes evidence from an extensive review of: the inaugural AGLN Impact Study (2019), the AGLN's ongoing evaluation process (2019 - current), and the AGLN's historical data.

AGLN Impact Study

The 2019 AGLN Impact Study was the first-ever study of the global network. It was conducted by an independent evaluator, The Silver Line. The study is based on an evaluation framework which includes 11 outcomes with corresponding indicators and measures. It utilized a survey tool that captured quantitative and qualitative data from approximately 480 Fellows who represent 11 of 14 Fellowships. Study participation represented approximately 30% of all Fellows who have completed the seminar experience from 1999-2018. The Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership, Liberty Fellowship, and the Civil Society Fellowship did not participate in the study. The study also draws upon data from the 2018 Pajara-Aspen Education Fellowship Impact Study, which included 152 study participants. The AGLN Impact Study is the data source for Findings 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

AGLN Ongoing Evaluation Process

The report incorporates data from the AGLN's ongoing, systematic evaluation process of Fellows throughout their two-year Fellowship experience. At the time of this report, more than 300 Fellow responses were captured and analyzed. Based on the evaluation framework utilized by the AGLN Impact Study, the ongoing evaluation survey tools assess change over time, including a pre-fellowship survey, post-seminar surveys (four across two years), and a post-fellowship survey. The AGLN ongoing evaluation survey tools are the data source for Findings 1, 2, 3 and 10.

AGLN Historical Data

In addition to the data above, 3,800 seminar survey responses, 2,100 close-ended measures, 9,000 open-ended data fields, and over 10 years of data collection were coded and structured to support the development of the AGLN evaluation framework. This effort utilized the robust library of data to develop a more aggregated view of Fellows' perspective and experience, and to map existing AGLN data to uncover data gaps needed to be studied.

About the Aspen Global Leadership Network

The Aspen Global Leadership Network's (AGLN) mission is to develop authentic, high-integrity leaders committed to proactively confronting societal challenges, individually and collectively, in order to create a more free, just, and equitable society.

The network has fostered a worldwide community of more than 3,000 high-integrity, entrepreneurial leaders from business, government and the nonprofit sector in over than 60 countries. Because of their demonstrated accomplishments and abilities, they have been selected to join one of 14 geographic or sector-specific AGLN Fellowships around the world.

The Fellowships of the AGLN are:

- Africa Leadership Initiative - East Africa
- Africa Leadership Initiative - South Africa
- Africa Leadership Initiative - West Africa
- Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership
- Central American Leadership Initiative
- China Fellowship Program
- Civil Society Fellowship
- Finance Leaders Fellowship
- Health Innovators Fellowship
- Henry Crown Fellowship Program
- Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship
- Liberty Fellowship
- Middle East Leadership Initiative
- Pahara-Aspen Education Fellowship



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

About the Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners.

For more information, visit [aspeninstitute.org](https://www.aspeninstitute.org).



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