

Hiring a Research & Strategy Consultant

Seeking an Expert on Broadband Connectivity and the U.S. Digital Divide

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Aspen Institute is building an initiative to equip young people with the tools, protections, and skills they need to safely and effectively leverage the internet to become informed citizens and bring about societal change. We aim to influence the creation of policies that both solve for inequities in accessibility and establish a safe internet for minors, pairing this work with programming that trains and inspires young people in online expression and civic engagement.

We will partner with government and industry decision-makers and civil society leaders, working across three pillars: [Include](#), [Protect](#), and [Empower](#), as defined below. Many organizations are already making progress on these fronts, yet there is not a unified effort to stitch together the great promise of advancing digital access and online expression with efforts that also address risk.

[Include](#) all youths by solving for connectivity, tools, and skills, while also galvanizing the public, private, and social sectors to close the divide.

- Ensure access to high-speed internet for all families with school-aged kids.
- Provide computers, tablets, or other tools for all students.
- Train kids and their guardians in digital literacy.

[Protect](#) minors by influencing industry policy changes and developing a set of technology access and use protocols for all guardians.

- Establish stricter data collection practices.
- Give guardians control over search history and timeline.
- Build common sense safety and support frameworks for kids.
- Protect minors from content designed to keep people attached.
- Provide data literacy programs for guardians.

Empower young people to use their voices effectively and responsibly to expand civic engagement and build a better world, as defined by the digital generation.

- Ensure all youths have tools to achieve their full potential as civic leaders.
- Build skills and dispositions that allow kids to become agents of change.
- Influence adult thinking to value and learn from youth-led efforts.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Aspen Digital seeks to hire one senior consultant to lead the planning phase of the **Include** pillar. This individual must have deep subject-matter expertise in the policies, landscape, and needs associated with broadband connectivity and access in the U.S. The role assumes significant experience in the intersection of technology, public policy, and ethics.

A successful applicant will demonstrate the following qualities:

- Comfort and ability to manage highly complex content, representing diverse stakeholders
- Experience in legislative issues pertaining to broadband connectivity and access
- Knowledge of technical issues and their policy implications
- Trusted relationships with key stakeholders
- Strategy and execution in public policy planning
- Strong writing and editing skills

DELIVERABLES BREAKDOWN

The consultant will own research and strategy development under the supervision of Aspen leadership. We foresee this requiring three months of work, as detailed below.

Month 1 - Landscape analysis/research

- Define current needs
- Map researchers and nonprofits working in the space
- Map government agencies and industry leaders that touch the area
- Identify existing policies and approaches
- Synthesize findings to pinpoint gaps

Month 2 - Consultations and industry interviews

- Field insights internally from various Aspen programs and teams
- Identify 15-20 external stakeholders to brief and consult on the project
- Identify 10-15 industry leaders to interview
- Develop tailored questions for each stakeholder group based on findings from previous month
- Conduct outreach to and hold consultations with researchers
- Conduct outreach to and hold consultations with nonprofits
- Conduct outreach to and hold interviews with industry leaders
- Synthesize findings from each stakeholder group to pinpoint core insights and recommendations

Month 3 - Drafting and editing

- Develop construct to convey learnings from analysis/research/interviews
- Craft well-written synthesis of findings from months 1 and 2
- Articulate strategy development and correlating timeline, per items A through C below
- Create a budget to capture all workstreams within the pillar
- Refine and finalize proposal for external audiences

The final deliverable, due at the end of the three months, will be a proposal that includes a detailed budget and timeline and provides a rich and actionable playbook to guide the execution of this pillar. This roadmap will achieve the following.

A. Recommend the (1) processes to use, (2) workstreams to prioritize, (3) goals to set, and (4) partners to engage.

For example:

- The primary process might consist of convening a task force on the future of broadband with telecommunication providers; public interest groups; foundations; academics; and representatives from local, state, and national government.
- Workstreams might center on coverage, adoption, equipment, and more.
- One of the goals might be helping a minimum of 25 states implement a step-by-step strategy for government by the end of our timeline.
- A few partners to engage might be Common Sense Media and Digital Inclusion Alliance.

B. Clarify the precise outcomes and impacts of this pillar and set an ambitious yet attainable timetable and budget for getting there.

- We predict this will be a multi-year effort given its complexities and challenges. Can we achieve measurable, nation-wide impact in 3 years, for example?
- In an ideal world, what level of funding would we aspire to receive, and what's a more realistic yet useful budget goal?

C. Illuminate the best way to prioritize equity throughout this process, with a particular focus on serving Native American, Alaska Native, Black, and Latinx communities across the U.S.

Some questions in need of answering might be:

- How can we work alongside community organizations to support the development of straightforward language for federal grant application processes geared toward tribal communities?
- What are equitable policies that governments can implement at the federal, state, and local levels in this term to ensure affordable access to reliable internet among urban Black communities?

COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION

Compensation will be commensurate with the effort, not to exceed \$30,000 for the pillar for the three month engagement.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants should write a statement of interest, and submit a resume and a list of writings/publications in this topic area with links (if applicable). Writing samples will be required for additional consideration. Applications will be open and reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. Please fill out this form to apply:
aspeninstitute.wufoo.com/forms/aspen-digital-consultancy-application/.

ABOUT US

Aspen Digital empowers policy-makers, civic organizations, companies, and the public to be responsible stewards of technology and media in the service of an informed, just, and equitable world. A program of the Aspen Institute, we shine a light on urgent global issues across cybersecurity, the information ecosystem, emerging technology, the industry talent pipeline, tech and communications policy, and urban innovation. We then turn ideas to action and develop human solutions to these digital challenges.