

For **25 years**, the Business & Society Program at the Aspen Institute has engaged executives and professionals in dialogue and leadership programs to align business decisions with the long-term health of society. *Our goal is to ensure everyone prospers from business success.*

In an era of extraordinary pressure on business, and growing public and private debate about corporations, the Aspen Institute Business & Society Program works with change agents *within* business—executives, directors and “intrapreneurs”—to design, amplify and execute changes in business practices and protocols.

Our Approach

The influence, reach, problem-solving skills, and capacity of the business sector is unique and unparalleled. We need business at the table to advance environmental sustainability and to enable an economy that works for all.

The Business & Society Program was launched with a vision for business education but soon embraced dialogue among executives and those who advise and influence business. We focus on building the courage and capacity of leaders. We are at our best when we directly engage business executives and carefully craft partnerships with business associations and service providers—to influence norms and engage new ways of thinking about the role of corporations in society.

What are we known for?

Support to Leaders Who Drive Change from within Companies

- Through networks, fellowships, working groups and leadership experiences, we help business leaders and managers of large-scale, globally significant corporations to understand persistent problems that undermine the long-term health of the business—and build their commitment to act. We design dialogues and leadership experiences that help executives stay at these problems—and unpack what is needed to enable systems change.

Disrupting the Narrative About the Purpose of the Corporation

- Aspen dialogues among scholars, advocates and corporate governance professionals has expanded thinking about *corporate purpose* in classrooms and new ways of acting in boardrooms. In 2019, dialogue participants challenged the [Business Roundtable](#) to restate its mission—which it did in 2019, putting Milton Friedman’s legacy of shareholder primacy to the test, and disrupting a narrative that had dominated since the 1980s.

Challenging Short-termism in Business and Capital Markets

- In the wake of the sudden implosion of Enron in 2001, Aspen BSP co-hosted with The Conference Board a series of roundtables and working groups on the causes of “short-termism” that ultimately engaged hundreds of executives, scholars, advisors, and experts in corporate governance. [The Aspen Principles for Long term Value Creation](#) was published in 2007 with three key partners, **Business Roundtable**, **AFL-CIO**, and **Council of Institutional Investors**. The *Aspen Principles* challenged directors and executives on the costs of quarterly earnings guidance and rewards tied to the stock price.

Rethinking Executive Compensation

- Years of inquiry about what's broken in executive pay led to a partnership with **Korn Ferry**'s executive compensation practice and the release of the [Aspen Principles of Sensible and Effective Executive Pay](#) in 2019. These ideas are making their way into boardrooms that are responding to changes in the operating environment and that are committed to fairness in the workplace. The principles challenge the conventions of external 'benchmarking' and shareholder-first thinking in favor of pay practices designed to sustain the long-term health of the enterprise.

#ESG Summit

- The Aspen ESG Summit convenes the world's leading ESG strategists, investors, scholars, rule makers and standard setters in dialogue to address the most pressing current and long-term challenges at the intersection of business and society—from environmental and social risks to creating economic opportunity and an economy that works for all.

Best-in-Class Teaching about Sustainability in MBA classrooms

- Legacy programs aimed at business schools include: elevating research and teaching of faculty willing to challenge narrow, shareholder-centric interpretations of business success; a [global ranking of MBA programs](#) to put a spotlight on best-in-class teaching; creative partnerships that [blend the humanities into the teaching of business at the undergraduate level](#); and a classroom-ready weekly feed of [Ideas Worth Teaching](#) to move promising ideas and case examples from boardrooms to classrooms.

Opportunities for Engagement

The Business & Society Program's page on the Institute's website, [AspenBSP.org](#), offers information about ongoing programs and current priorities for dialogue and partnership:

- [First Mover Fellowship](#) – entering its 15th year, the Fellowship is the Business & Society Program's most enduring leadership offering, designed to build the capacity and influence of mid-career professionals driving initiatives that link business success to social and environmental impact.
- [Leaders Forum](#) – a corporate membership network that engages enterprise-level sustainability leaders in dialogue, coaching and education to support sustainable business practices and operations.
- [Forum on Trust and Worker Voice](#) – a community of practice for CHROs and communications leaders exploring new ways to harness insight from the workforce to make better long-term business decisions.
- [Economic Mobility Fellowship](#) – building on the First Mover model, the Economic Mobility Fellowship is a project accelerator and leadership development program for innovators who link business priorities and products to economic mobility for employees and consumers.
- The [Agenda for a Prepared Board](#)* poses critical questions for executives and directors who seek to clarify the long-term business imperative and narrative for investing in the future.

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