

General FAQs

Key Information

2019 Class, 5-Seminar Timeline:

- **The Challenge of Leadership:** December 8-13, 2019, Aspen, CO
- **The Aspen Seminar**— Spring 2020
- **Values in Tension**— Late Fall 2020
- **Challenges of Civil Liberties and Security**— Late Spring 2021
- **The Promise of Leadership**— Winter 2022

Is a nominee eligible if they will turn 46 this year?

Eligible candidates for our inaugural cohort should be between the ages of 25 and 45 on June 1, 2019.

Where can nominees be based?

Anywhere in the 50 United States or U.S. territories.

Can Fellows from other AGLN programs be nominated to participate in the Civil Society Fellowship?

Unfortunately, we are not able to accept candidates who are Fellows of other Aspen Global Leadership Network programs.

When are nominations due?

Nominations for the 2019 class will open upon launch of Fellowship and will close at the end of May 2019 with applications from invited candidates due end of June 2019.

Class 2019 Interviews

Interviews will take place in July of 2019 in select cities across the United States. Cities will be announced once the pool of candidates invited to apply is identified.

Fellowship Background

What is the purpose of the Fellowship?

The goal of the Fellowship is to empower community and civil society leaders, activists and problem-solvers by providing them with values-based leadership development as well as with the networks to accelerate the creation of a more just world by expanding the reach of their existing work and community commitments.

How is the Fellowship structured?

Like other Aspen Institute Fellowship programs, the Civil Society Fellowship has a clear structure anchored by a series of sessions based on the proven Aspen Global Leadership Network (AGLN) model, but also enhanced by customized sessions designed to drive experiential learning with content that is specific to community issues. Over a period of three years, Fellows will attend three seminars in the Aspen Institute tradition plus two additional tailor-made seminars to be curated by ADL in collaboration with the Institute.

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Who would benefit from participating in this Fellowship?

Candidates for the Civil Society Fellowship are at an inflection point in their career and, as such, we hope to focus on those individuals under 45. The ideal Fellow would be positioned to benefit from a leadership journey supplemented by unique travel experiences. ADL and Aspen Institute expect and encourage Fellows to challenge one another's ideas respectfully in conjunction with our commitment toward engaging a multitude of perspectives.

Is there a cost for the Fellowship?

Fellows' room and board during sessions as well as their airfare (domestic and international-coach class) and all moderator sessions will be covered by the Fellowship. While we recognize the cost of time to leaders whose presence in their organizations and communities is vital is also important to consider, we believe the opportunity to learn and engage with other leaders across the country and the world will prove invaluable to those who chose this journey.

What will happen during the Fellowship?

Fellows gather five times over a 2.5-3 year period with the other members of their class. The seminars are hosted in Aspen, CO, Wye River, MD, Western Europe, the Middle East and American South. These seminars are led by Aspen Institute moderators and guest speakers.

How does one become a Civil Society Fellow?

Potential Fellows must be nominated by a third party who knows them well and is prepared to speak candidly and objectively about the candidate's qualifications. Individuals cannot apply for the Fellowship or nominate themselves. Short-listed nominees will be interviewed in person and a final cohort will be selected from that pool of interviewed applicants.

The ideal class will include Fellows from various personal and professional backgrounds whose experiences will help complement, challenge, and inspire each other during the seminars and throughout the Fellowship. We are looking for diversity within the class. Each cohort of Fellows will be comprised of 20-22 individuals who represent a range of attributes including gender, geography, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, ideology and political affiliation. Each Fellow should have something to teach and something to learn from the others. In the Aspen Institute tradition, this diversity of talent is called "the mosaic," and is carefully assembled to provide the greatest benefit to each cohort. Many exceptional, impressive individuals are not chosen to be Fellows because they don't fit the class mosaic for that particular year and may be reconsidered for their suitability for future classes.

What is the Aspen Global Leadership Network (AGLN)?

The [Aspen Global Leadership Network](#) is a growing, worldwide community of entrepreneurial leaders from business, government and the nonprofit sector who share a commitment to enlightened leadership and to using their extraordinary creativity, energy and resources to tackle the foremost societal challenges of our times. Collectively AGLN is made up of over 3,000 current Fellows and alumni from over 60 countries. Like the Civil Society Fellowship, each of the AGLN programs is designed to inspire Fellows to take their leadership to greater heights and to broaden their impact on society at-large. The network helps keep members connected so that they can continue to learn from, collaborate with and support one another. Once selected, Civil Society Fellows will automatically become members of the AGLN and will be included in their activities.

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What do we expect from Fellows?

The program requires each Fellow to commit to attending approximately 30 days of seminar meetings (5 seminars of 5-7 days each) over a period of approximately 2.5-3 years. In addition to time spent in seminars is the time to prepare for each seminar as well as the time and energy to design and launch a venture of the Fellow's own choosing. This venture is a requirement of the Fellowship and an opportunity for Fellows to truly stretch themselves in their leadership. Each Fellow will need to be able to attend all 5 seminars in their entirety – start to finish – and each candidate will need to confirm his or her availability for all 5 of the seminars before we will consider them for the Fellowship. Participation will be without cost to the Fellows or their organizations, with the exception of incidental expenses.

What sort of venture will Fellows be expected to complete?

Our goal is to be thought partners and provide structure for the Fellows to improve the effect that their localized work has on people across the country. We ask our Fellows to develop new approaches that will stretch them in their leadership and make a significant impact on the field. The key is that the ventures add to the Fellows' current efforts and accomplishments and, as such, Fellows cannot fulfill the venture requirement by continuing a current venture. The Fellowship does not provide financial resources for these ventures, but we will approve the ventures and provide support that includes coaching and mentoring.

What kind of impact meets the criteria of the program?

As a recipient of this Fellowship, Fellows are the beneficiary of a very significant investment in their development as a leader. Like their nominators, we believe our Fellows have the capacity to bring significant new ideas and energy to societal challenges that often seem to be hopelessly deadlocked. We have no specific target level of impact in mind but we do hope for a real and significant "return" to the world for this investment. We will select Fellows because we believe in their ability to do great things.

Given the number of ventures already created within the Aspen Global Leadership Network, are there any common traits among those that have proven successful?

The [venture](#) should be something that the Fellow's organization or movement was not already doing or planning to do. It should be something that Fellows would not have started or done were they not in this Fellowship. The correlation between the Fellow's passion for the venture and its success is key. If a Fellow isn't invested in what they are pursuing, it will likely not succeed. Ventures should be achievable; time and resources are key to consider before launching a Venture. Ventures built off of a Fellow's existing work will likely be the most successful.

When do Fellows have to decide what they will do for their venture?

Fellows are not expected to arrive at the first seminar knowing what venture they will undertake. Rather, the Fellowship experience and the other members of their class are meant to inspire them to discover what they want to create.

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Nomination Process

Who is an ideal candidate?

We are looking for proven leaders who are community and civil society leaders, activists and problem-solvers, preferably those that have organizational management experience. These leaders will have demonstrated a sustained ability to establish a goal that leads to the betterment of others and reach it. These leaders now find themselves at an “inflection point” – that is, at a point in their lives and careers where they are ready to explore “painting on a broader canvas” or deepening their impact. Being at an inflection point is different from being ready to change jobs, mobilize a movement, or start a new organization. Fellows must be at a stage in their lives when they are ready to explore how to use their skills, experiences, resources and networks to broaden and deepen their impact on their communities and their country.

How do we define a future community leader?

A person who has demonstrated leadership and momentum within their community or organization. This individual is ready for the next step and the next challenge in their commitment to civil liberties and community growth. This individual is also capable of working within a network or coalition, perhaps with groups that hold differing viewpoints, in order to accomplish a goal. We invite nominations for those individuals who are looking to gain from engaging with others outside their community in order to advance the rights and visibility of those in their community and across our country.

How can a nomination be most effective?

To be most effective, a nomination will use examples of the nominee’s ability to demonstrate the following attributes: is a proven leader; is a leader within and without their organization or movement; is at the right point in their life and career to step back and think about how to broaden their leadership and impact; is not daunted by challenges that may intimidate others; understands the requirements of the Fellowship and can commit to completing them.

How well do nominators have to know the candidate to nominate them?

Very well. We look to nominators to provide an in-depth look into a candidate’s background, values and readiness to take full advantage of this opportunity. They must have demonstrated experience with the candidate’s work and an understanding of how that work impacts the candidate’s community.

What can derail a candidate?

We expect candidates to come to the interviews having taken some time to research ADL and the Aspen Institute and what the Fellowship experience entails. We also ask them to make a couple of non-negotiable commitments: to attend each seminar in its entirety and to complete a meaningful venture. An inability to commit to either eliminates candidates for the coming year. We ask the nominator to stress the importance of examining the confirmed and expected seminar dates, as well as the venture-related criteria and all frequently asked questions. Seminar attendance is required and Fellows cannot receive an exception as the seminars are an essential component of the Fellowship and missing any part is unfair to that Fellow and their class.

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Should nominators tell their potential Fellow that they are being nominated?

Absolutely, yes, they need to ensure that they are interested in the Fellowship and available to participate fully if selected. Please forward the nomination materials to your candidate and make sure they visit our website so that they understand the program and the time commitment it involves. We encourage candidates to reach out to other individuals involved with the Aspen Global Leadership Network and the Aspen Institute for feedback on the Fellowship experience.

How can nominators prepare their nominee for an interview (if they are selected)?

Please ask them to be open and honest. At this point in the process, we are confident the candidate meets our basic criteria (at inflection point, success in their field, innovative, between the ages of 25 and 45). The interview is about getting to know them as a person. Are they willing to be open and vulnerable at the seminar table and with their classmates? Do they have a kind heart and generous spirit to take this journey for themselves and their classmates? The interview is a chance to really get to know each of our top nominees and see how their personality would fit into our class mosaic. Encourage your candidate to feel comfortable sharing anything they feel is important about who they are as a leader and a potential Civil Society Fellow.