



ASPEN TECH POLICY HUB

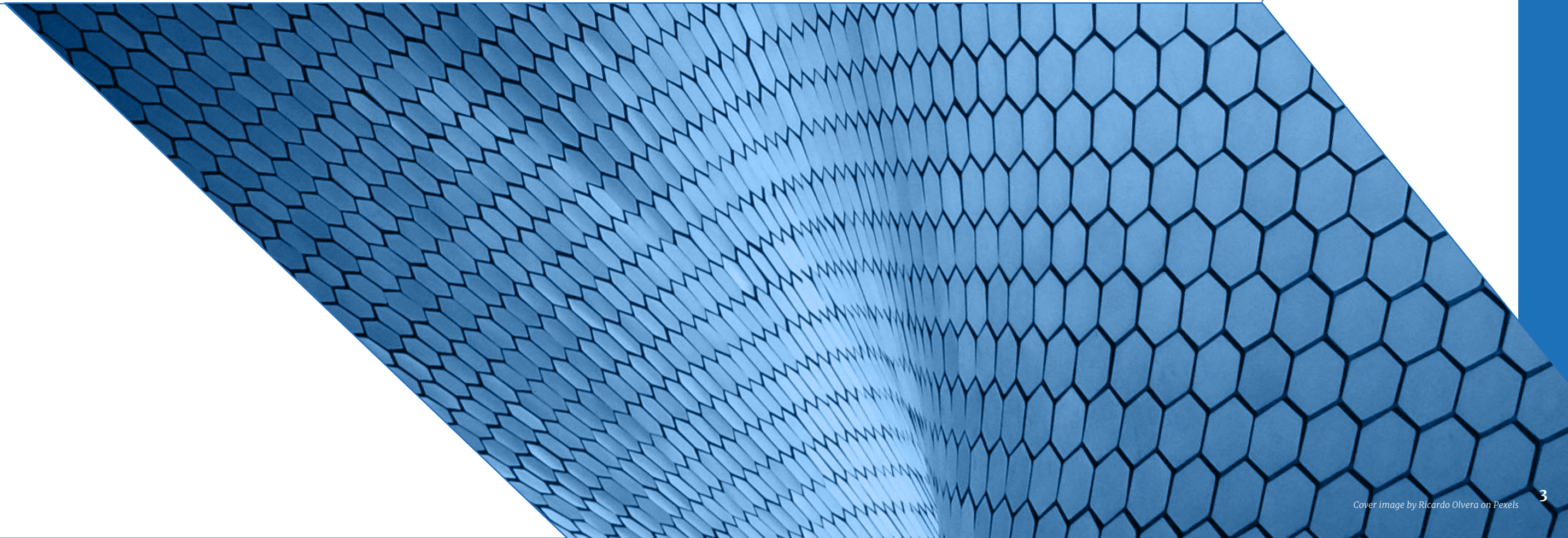
Aspen Tech Policy Hub Annual Report 2023





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Launched in 2019, the **Aspen Tech Policy Hub** is a West Coast policy incubator, training a new generation of policy entrepreneurs. Modeled after tech incubators like Y Combinator, we take STEM, climate, and nonprofit experts, teach them the policy process through fellowship and executive education programs, and encourage them to develop outside-the-box solutions to society’s problems.

Image by David Jorre on Unsplash

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Introduction

At the Aspen Tech Policy Hub, we teach our fellows to leverage their expertise to help shape the world of policy. As we enter 2024, we're fortunate to be able to celebrate 5 years of having made our own impact.

That impact begins with the hundreds of fellows who have taken our training and put it to use in their professional lives. The Hub recently reached an exciting milestone on that front — over 100 of our alumni have taken on roles in public service.

They include leaders like [Raylene Yung](#), who spearheaded the federal government's IT modernization strategy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in her role as Executive Director of the General Services Administration's Technology Modernization Fund. Another such leader is [Neal Parikh](#), a startup founder and machine learning expert, who developed New York City's AI strategy as the city's first Director of Artificial Intelligence.

We couldn't be more proud of Hub alumni like Neal and Raylene (as well as 98 others and counting!) who have answered the call to take on innovative and informed policy leadership. Those numbers don't account for the dozens more Hub alumni who are using the framework and vocabulary of the Hub's policy impact curriculum in leadership positions in academia, the private sector, and beyond. We founded the Hub precisely to create this ecosystem of technologists, policymakers, and others who don't just understand policy, but want to actively shape it.

As we move into 2024 and beyond, the Hub is excited to continue to empower more experts to contribute their insights toward the creation of engaging, responsive, and resilient policymaking. You'll read about our progress toward that goal in this report.

Because of the collective efforts of our staff, partners, and, most importantly, our innovative and passionate fellows and alumni, the Hub is poised to become an even more impactful organization in the years to come. We sincerely thank everyone who has played a role in the Hub's success to date.

OUR 2023 IMPACT

The Hub has grown to become the premier place for technologists and other STEM experts to gain the skills they need to influence policy. In 2023, we equipped nearly 300 changemakers with the tools to affect policy through our 3 key training programs, [our public webinar series](#), and a series of short courses. We estimate that our alumni stepped into policy roles managing over \$1 billion in public funds as they serve communities from the White House and other federal offices, state and local governments, and the private sector. Our alumni's efforts also continue to bear fruit in changing policy in wide ranging places from the Department of State to the State of Oklahoma.

We published resources on key issues at the intersection of technology and policy this year, including a primer on the [policy implications of EdTech tools](#), a report on the [potential harms posed by the data broker industry](#), and a toolkit of [field-level resources](#) needed to onboard new technologists into roles across government.

In this annual report, you'll read about how these efforts and others contributed to a year of expanding, strengthening, and scaling our work to create an ecosystem of policy entrepreneurs in government and beyond.

HUB MILESTONES REACHED IN 2023

100 alumni and staff with government experience
Including 60+ alums with federal government experience

475+ changemakers trained to impact policy

60+ policy impact projects published

20+ government partners at the federal, state, and local levels

Training Policy Entrepreneurs

Training policy entrepreneurs is the core of what we do at the Hub. In 2023, we ran both training programs that followed our tried-and-true methods and experimental programs that expanded our reach. Not least, for the first time we trained not only individual policy entrepreneurs, but entire organizations seeking to have policy impact. We also trained instructors on how to teach our methods, enabling them to help their networks impact policy. In running these programs, we influenced more policy entrepreneurs than we ever have before.

TECH EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

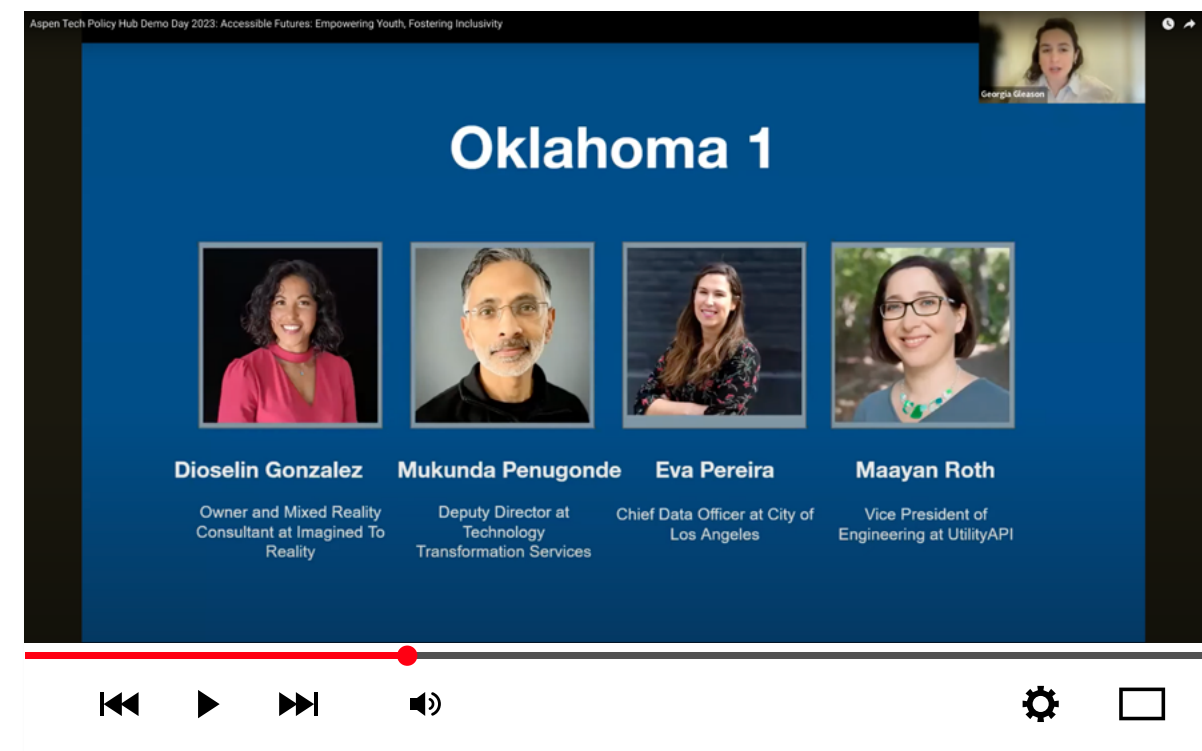
We kicked off 2023 with the 4th iteration of our Tech Executive Leadership Initiative (TELI), a virtual program that trains experienced technology leaders to engage effectively with public sector challenges and governments. In partnership with the Tech Talent Project, we hosted this 10-week, part-time program for [26 technology executives](#) with diverse backgrounds ranging from academia to private sector management. Through lectures and interactive sessions featuring more than 20 guest speakers, TELI leaders gained a concrete toolkit for influencing policy.

They had the opportunity to use this new toolkit in pitching ideas for the Department of State’s data team to incentivize individual bureaus and employees to share data within the agency. Dioselin Gonzalez, a TELI leader with no policy experience, [recommended](#) that the department’s Enterprise Data Council create the “Interagency Award” to incentivize staff from different bureaus to share internal data with one another. The State Department agreed on the spot to implement her idea.

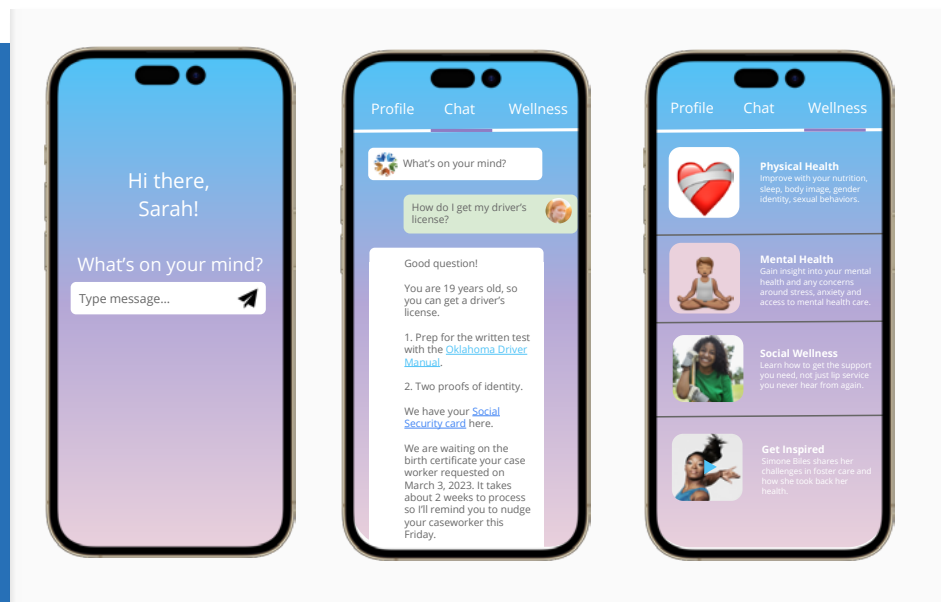


The training I received at the Tech Policy Hub confirmed a long-held desire to take an active role in government and provided the real world information and connections required to transform that desire into action.”

– Meghan Cochran



TELI leaders had additional opportunities to impact policy through the 6-week project phase of the program, and pitched their proposals to the Department of Homeland Security, the State of Oklahoma, and the City of Boston at our “[Accessible Futures: Empowering Youth, Fostering Inclusivity](#)” virtual, public demo day. Participants reported that our program successfully equipped them with the tools for shaping policy and engaging with the public sector. Participants rated their understanding of the policy process as 8.7/10 on average after the program, compared with 6.0/10 before.



IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES OF YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

In response to a request from Oklahoma’s Department of Human Services, 2 TELI teams created proposals to better connect aging-out foster care youth to existing government and community resources. One team recommended the creation of a self-service online portal to improve outcomes for foster youth. The portal, run by state officials, would allow aging-out foster youth to directly communicate with state social service providers and connect them with government and community resources.

Another team proposed that Oklahoma develop a mobile-friendly web app, “Glow Up,” which would replace traditional paper-based milestone planning and communication with social service support teams, allowing foster youth to take control of their transition into adulthood.



View these and other Hub projects at <https://www.aspentechpolicyhub.org/projects/>

TRAIN THE TRAINER

We are thrilled that the Hub programming continually receives positive feedback from participants as having catalyzed their policymaking journeys. With that in mind, one of our key goals for 2023 was to expand our capacity to make our programming available to as many people as possible.

To achieve this, we piloted our Train the Trainer program, training policy experts both on our methods for impacting and communicating for policy, and on how to teach those methods to others. Our interactive sessions enabled participants to hone their teaching skills through practicing with guidance from one another and Hub staff.



Immediately after completing the Train the Trainer courses, I started a job as a senior research associate for a large school district. I applied what I learned in the Writing for Policy Impact course to make clear, research-based arguments that had immediate and significant impact on the district’s decisions.”

– Adrienne Goss

We selected 13 of these policy experts to be instructors for future Hub courses, which will allow us to teach more courses and scale our impact. We wasted no time in employing their expertise. We will continue to invite these instructors to teach and contribute to our expanding programming as we keep scaling in 2024 and beyond.



I work with fellows and interns, so having a concrete framework to discuss policy change is useful.”

– Sara Collins

NONPROFIT AND PUBLIC INTEREST POLICY FELLOWSHIP

Our [2022 Climate Cohort](#) proved that Hub programming is valuable to experts beyond technology. In 2023, to further scale our ability to impact policy, we launched our inaugural [Nonprofit and Public Interest Policy Fellowship](#). Our hypothesis was that, by training representatives from nonprofits, we would shape not just individual careers but the trajectory of promising organizations.



The Hub training was incredibly valuable. While I had many tools in my skill set, the program showed me how to use them for maximum impact.
 – Josh Richards, representing Pacific Peering

Through our Nonprofit Fellowship, we trained representatives of [15 nonprofit organizations](#) working on a broad range of issues, including tech, climate, education, housing, cancer research, and diabetes management. Fellows spent 3 weeks in San Francisco learning our toolkit for influencing policy, including through lectures, guest speaker panels and dinners, practice assignments, and a 48-hour project sprint. Fellows then had the option to participate in the virtual 6-week project phase, either developing an advocacy plan for their organization, or taking on a substantive policy project on behalf of their organization. Fellows gave the program the highest ratings of any Hub program to date. When asked to rate the program on a scale of 1-10, fellows scored the Nonprofit Fellowship as 9.14.

Policy will be forever ingrained in what I do now.
 – Korene Stuart, representing G{Code}



\$50,000 CHALLENGE GRANT WINNER
Tidepool
 Represented by Saira Khan-Gallo

Project phase participants had the opportunity to pitch their policy impact projects to a team of judges for a chance to win \$50,000 to support their policy impact work. The judges unanimously selected [Tidepool](#), a nonprofit committed to empowering the next generation of innovations in diabetes management, as the winner.

Representing Tidepool, Saira Khan-Gallo proposed that the Food and Drug Administration update the guidance for its [Breakthrough Devices Program](#) to clarify that third-party interoperability would be considered when designating devices under the program. This clarification would incentivize medical device sponsors to enable devices to use and share information across platforms, which can lead to improved patient care.

This clarification would incentivize medical device sponsors to enable devices to use and share information across platforms, which can lead to improved patient care.

“*Saira has taken what she’s learned through the Aspen Tech Policy Hub and carried the torch of technology, policy, equity, access, and impact so much further than I ever imagined possible. We are so grateful to the Aspen Tech Policy Hub for making this grant available.*”

– Howard Look, President, CEO, and Founder of Tidepool

 [View the full project here.](#)



Policy impact can occur within organizations as well. Nonprofit Fellow **Nidhi Rastogi**, representing the Global Cybersecurity Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), persuaded RIT to implement [her proposed workshop](#) that will empower students to navigate the social media landscape safely and critically.

PARTNERSHIP SHORT COURSES

2023 was also a year in which the Hub strengthened relationships with longtime partners. We continued our partnership with the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) and its Policy Entrepreneurship Fellowship (PEF) program, training fellows on our methods for shaping policy. The collaboration was so successful that we ran a short course for another cohort of FAS PEF fellows in the fall. We also ran short courses with the Horizon Institute for Public Service and the Aspen Institute’s Food & Society and Business & Society programs.

Impacting Policy

At the Hub, one of our biggest measures of success is the impact our program alumni go on to have. We are so proud of the new policy roles that our alumni took on in 2023, and the policy impact they had within and beyond those roles.

ALUMNI POLICY IMPACT

Alumni policy impact highlights from 2023 include:

Ginny Fahs and the nonprofit Consumer Reports [released Permission Slip](#), a free app that acts as a privacy digital assistant, ordering companies to delete the user’s personal information and digital history.



Nadia Seeteram [published a study](#) that examined building-by-building projections of flooding caused by sea-level rise, with predictions on how residents will be affected, in Florida’s Miami-Dade County area.



Brandie Nonnecke [co-authored an amicus brief](#) referencing the Supreme Court case *Gonzalez v. Google*, which [questions whether tech giants can be held legally responsible for content promoted by their algorithms](#). The brief urges the Supreme Court to hold tech giants accountable by applying Section 230’s liability shield.



Hub alumni are frequently featured in the media for their policy impact work. We had over 100 media hits this year, including in [The Washington Post](#), [Politico](#), [Forbes](#), and [The Hill](#).

Public Service Roles

Our alums took on exciting new roles in government this year, including:



Kesone Phimmasone
Chief Digital Strategy Officer,
City of New York



Marcela Escobar-Alava
Special Assistant to the President,
Chief Enterprise Applications at
Executive Office of the President



Mukunda Penugonde
Deputy Director, Technology
Transformation Services at US
General Services Administration



Matthew Zhou
Data & Analytics Governance
Lead, California Office of Data
and Innovation



Parimala Rao
Deputy Chief Information
Security Officer, US General
Services Administration



Patrick Day
Chief Software and Systems
Architect at Veterans Experience
Services Portfolio, US
Department of Veterans Affairs

Private and Social Sector Policy Roles

Exciting new roles in other sectors include:



Mira Chokshi
Principal,
Climate Adaptive Systems



Nicole Schneidman
Tech Policy Advocate,
Protect Democracy



Hilary Braseth
Executive Director,
OpenSecrets



Nancy Mandujano
Founder,
Abobo Technologies



Swathi Manchikanti
2030 Climate Champion,
The Asia Foundation

DATA BROKERS REPORT

The Hub practices what it preaches by occasionally taking on its own projects to influence policy. In June 2023, the Hub worked with federal government leaders to convene a cross-disciplinary group of data privacy professionals to discuss the data broker industry — meaning the businesses that collect, process, store, and sell individualized personal data. Participants included leaders from government, academia, the private sector, and civil society. Together, the group considered the challenges facing the data broker industry and proposed steps that can be taken to improve transparency and privacy protections.



We consolidated the ideas proposed in the convening into a report: “[Data Brokers: A Call to Action](#).” It includes concrete, actionable recommendations in 4 areas:

- ▶ **Managing** the government’s use of data broker services;
- ▶ **Limiting** the use of data brokers in law enforcement;
- ▶ **Enforcing** existing laws to combat data broker abuses; and
- ▶ **Educating** the public about data brokerage.

Several of the recommendations in the report are already under consideration, such as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s September 2023 [initiation of rulemaking](#) under the Fair Credit Reporting Act to expand the regulation of data broker activities.

HUB POLICY IMPACT RESOURCES

We also created a number of resources in 2023 to make it easier for our alumni to shape policy, whether in government roles or through their own advocacy projects.

Skills Wiki for Government Hires and Gap Analysis

We have often heard from alumni entering public service that it is difficult to find adequate, consolidated onboarding resources targeted at new employees who, like themselves, are unfamiliar with government. In response to this challenge, the Hub consolidated and highlighted key onboarding resources in our [Skills Wiki for New Government Tech Employees](#). The wiki also includes a [Gap Analysis](#), which recommends specific additional government technology resources that government agencies and public interest organizations could develop.

Communicating for Policy 101 Webinar Series

In an effort to make our tools for impacting policy more widely accessible, in 2023 we hosted an open-to-the-public webinar series, [Communicating for Policy 101](#). The first webinar offered a 101-level overview of how to communicate for policy. The second webinar focused on how organizations can write effective public comments. We look forward to expanding our webinar series in 2024.



Supporting Alumni Leaders

One particularly valuable aspect of Hub programming is that participants graduate into an incredible network of alumni working to have policy impact. We support these alumni and their work by hosting networking events and providing mentorship even after the end of their particular programs.

This year, we launched our Policy Pulse newsletter as a resource for Hub alumni! Every 2 weeks, this newsletter shares opportunities for Hub alumni to directly impact the public policies they care about — such as calls for public comments and opportunities for challenge grants.



SAVILLA PITT MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP

In loving memory of our colleague Savilla Pitt, we award the [Savilla Pitt Memorial Fellowship](#) to the member of each Hub cohort who best exemplifies Savilla’s selfless spirit and passions. In 2023, we added 2 new Savilla Pitt Memorial Fellows, [Nannette Cutliff](#) and [Nancy Valentin](#). They will receive a paid trip to Washington, DC, to meet with high-level Aspen Institute and government executives in their areas of interest.

THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA & MISINFORMATION

In October 2023, Hub alumni, [Aspen Institute Henry Crown Fellows](#), and [Rodel Institute Fellows](#) joined prominent political and technology leaders in Washington, DC, for a 2-day dialogue on The Politics of Social Media & Misinformation. This closed-door event fostered meaningful discussions and collaborations on social media, providing another opportunity for our alumni to grow their networks and drive positive change.

Making This Work Possible

In an effort to grow our capacity, we doubled the size of the Hub team in 2023. We were thrilled to hire Andrew Lewis (Policy Advisor), Kateri Gajadhar-Smith (Program Specialist), and Constance Moore (Events and Communications Assistant). We also added Jessica Cole as our Interim Director while our Director, Betsy Cooper, was on maternity leave in the fall.

OUR 2023 TEAM



BETSY COOPER
Director



JESSICA COLE
Interim Director



MAITREYI SISTLA
Deputy Director



ANDREW LEWIS
Policy Advisor



MEHA AHLUWALIA
Project Manager



KATERI GAJADHAR-SMITH
Program Specialist



EMMA CALKINS
Program Coordinator



CONNIE MOORE
Events and
Communications Assistant



BROOKE HUNTER
Senior Advisor



NICOLE TISDALE
Senior Advisor



SARAH FREI
Designer



SAABIAH HUSSAIN
Designer

We could not do our work without the support of our talented contractors, who help with everything from ensuring our website functionality, to copy editing and designing our outputs, to supporting our communications. We are so grateful for their work, as well as the work of countless individuals who have supported the Hub in other capacities, such as by serving as guest speakers, reviewers, and mentors.

Finally, we want to extend our deep gratitude to our funders, who have enabled us to continue expanding our impactful work, including:



The Way Forward

We were thrilled by the success of our 2023 efforts to expand, strengthen, and scale our ability to impact policy. As we experimented with offering new program content and formats, we learned valuable lessons that will inform our work in 2024 and beyond.

First, our Nonprofit and Public Interest Policy Fellowship proved that our training models are effective at the organizational level and that fellows find our coursework useful whether or not they have a STEM background. We look forward to building on this momentum to design and offer 2024 programs that teach wider audiences how to influence policy.

Second, our Train the Trainer program exponentially increased our impact by training leaders who can license our materials to teach our methods to their own networks. We are excited to continue “training teachers” so we can grow our impact beyond the individual level.

Finally, our ongoing partnerships with other organizations, including the Horizon Institute for Public Service and the Federation of American Scientists, demonstrated the value of using our methods to train fellows at other organizations. Going forward, we’re excited to explore more opportunities for short-course partnerships, which will grow our capacity to increase the number of people and organizations we reach.

In 2024 and beyond, we are eager to continue expanding the audiences we teach and the ways in which we teach them. We are looking forward to this exciting time of growth for the Hub.







**ASPEN TECH
POLICY HUB**

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