

VENTURE AND FELLOWSHIP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Ashoka Arab World



Everyone a Changemaker



CONTENT OVERVIEW

- I. General Fellowship Questions
- II. Ashoka Fellowship (Benefits and Other Information)
- III. Fellowship Scope
- IV. Selection Criteria
- V. Application Process
- VI. Post Selection Process



I. General Fellowship Questions



A.WHO IS A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR?

Social Entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. Not only do they share qualities with leading business entrepreneurs—vision, innovation and long term commitment- but also succeed in creating new products that dramatically improve people's lives.

Social Entrepreneurs are rare individuals that can see all of the various dimensions of an important social problem and come up with a solution that deals with the problem in an integrated and comprehensive manner. His/ Her value proposition targets an underprivileged, neglected or highly disadvantaged population that lacks the financial capability or political influence to attain the transformative benefit on its own. Rather than leaving societal needs to the government or private sector, social entrepreneurs identify what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps. They then relentlessly pursue this vision until it becomes the established new reality, not just locally, but across societies.

They are both visionaries and ultimate realists, concerned with the practical implementation of their vision to drive social change, and it is that potential payoff, with its lasting, systemic benefit to society, that sets the field and its practitioners apart.

1. WHAT IS THE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP?

Ashoka is the largest network of social entrepreneurs in the world. Since its founding more than 30 years ago, Ashoka has provided stipends, professional support services, and connections to a global network for more than 3,000 leading social entrepreneurs - elected as Ashoka Fellows in over 90 countries. Ashoka is the professional home for entrepreneurial individuals dedicated to creating systemic social change. Since its inception in 2003 and from its office in Cairo, Ashoka Arab World (AAW) has pioneered and been the platform for social entrepreneurship across the Arab region, identifying and electing more than 115 of the region's leading social entrepreneurs across 12 countries. Through the Fellowship Program, AAW supports and empowers its fellows by providing a range of services and access to a global peer network aimed at maximizing their impact. We are not a grant making foundation or a service provider for social entrepreneurs but a network of entrepreneurs, and an accelerator of change.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ASHOKA FELLOW?

Ashoka seeks to build an entrepreneurial and competitive citizen sector across the globe. Ashoka Fellows, the world's leading social innovators, are the backbone for achieving this vision. By supporting these social entrepreneurs, and by granting them access to a global network of like-minded entrepreneurs, Ashoka helps spread society's best innovations and positions a group of leaders to stand at the forefront of citizen sector development.

Ashoka Fellows work on a variety of issues ranging from economic development, environment, healthcare, education to citizen participation and human rights, causing sustainable, long-term social impact. Some of the best-known Ashoka Fellows today are Kailash Satyarthi (2014 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and anti-child labor movement leader), Jimmy Wales (Founder of Wikipedia), Muhammad Yunus (2006 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Founder of Grameen Bank) and Paul Rice (Founder of Fairtrade International). As an Ashoka Fellow

you are a role model for society, demonstrating to others how they, too, can create change.

Ashoka invests in you not only because you are transforming your field, but also because you are opening doors for others to engage in Changemaking. Ashoka challenges you to transcend beyond your individual success as a social entrepreneur.

3. WHERE DOES ASHOKA GET ITS MONEY FROM?

We raise funds for our Fellowship Program and operations from corporate partners, foundations, and high-net worth philanthropists. Traditionally, a large portion of our funding has come from entrepreneurs motivated to support us in our endeavor to identify and support systems-changing ideas. Ashoka is not in any way affiliated with religious or political entities, and it does not accept any government funding.

4. WHAT IS THE GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF YOUR WORK?

As a global organization, Ashoka works in 90+ countries. For North Africa and the Middle East, fellows are selected by the Ashoka Arab World regional office located in Cairo, Egypt. The search, selection and election process is managed and overseen by the regional office. We elect leading social entrepreneurs, whose region of impact is the Arab World regardless of nationality.

II. Ashoka Fellowship (Benefits and Other Information)



5. WHAT DOES ASHOKA PROVIDE TO ELECTED SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS? HOW DOES ASHOKA SUPPORT ITS FELLOWS?

Ashoka Arab World helps its Fellows realize their visions and provides them with supporting tools that include:

- Identity : Ashoka gives you the identity of being a leading social entrepreneur
- Global Fellowship Network: A network of 3700+ leading social entrepreneurs across the globe, which constitutes a peer-to-peer community. Fellows belong to a trusted community that share resources and unconditionally embrace them.
- Networking: Ashoka mediates between its fellows and thought leaders, funders, business entrepreneurs, pro-bono partners and other stakeholders to help them scale their impact. Additionally, Ashoka identifies and drives potential collaborations among its fellows on a local, regional and global level to shape new paradigms across fields.

- Media Coverage and Marketing Exposure: Fellows gain visibility through Ashoka's brand and partnerships with news outlets and high-profile national as well as regional conventions.
- Stipends: Case-dependent and, if needed. A three-year financial stipend for the purpose of financial stability is a modest way, through which Ashoka enables Fellows to fully commit to their work and the development of their ideas. Stipends always depend on a fellow's need, living standards and responsibilities.
- Monitoring And Evaluation: Ashoka closely monitors Fellows' progress, while strategically helping them plan their work and track their impact and needs. Monitoring also helps us understand Fellows' responsiveness to supporting tools provided by Ashoka.
- Legal Assistance
- Technical Assistance
- Award Nomination
- Capacity Building

6. HOW MUCH IS THE ASHOKA FINANCIAL STIPEND?

There's no set or fixed amount. The stipend focuses on each Fellow's circumstances and is tailored to his/her needs. We provide sufficient financial assistance to make it possible for that person to support his or her family at a level appropriate for those doing comparable work in his or her community. Ultimately, the stipend should allow the Fellow to focus on their idea by giving them the financial freedom to do so for an agreed start-up period. To receive a stipend, the Fellow must agree to dedicate him/herself to the new idea, for which he or she was elected. This means dropping any work that is not related to the new idea. The Ashoka stipend is not meant to replace the salary that a Fellow is already receiving from his or her organization. A Fellow's salary should not drop if it is for work related to the new idea. The Ashoka stipend does NOT cover any work-related expenses (i.e. equipment for work, traveling for work, etc.). The stipend cannot be invested in personal or family savings.

**7- WHAT IS THE LENGTH OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM?
HOW LONG DOES ASHOKA SUPPORT ITS FELLOWS FOR?**

Ashoka fellows are members of the Fellowship for life. It is not a time-limited engagement. As we say, —once a fellow, always a Fellow Only, the financial stipend if needed, applies to the first three years of the Fellowship.

8- WILL ASHOKA BE SUPERVISING MY WORK AND PROGRESS AS A FELLOW?

We do not intervene in your work. We help you strategize and plan, as well as maintain the big picture' in mind, when you get engulfed in the nitty gritty details of your work.

In other words, Ashoka facilitates the work of its Fellows, but does not control or direct it. We believe that Fellows are proficient in their fields and have the necessary and sufficient expertise to carry out their work. Nonetheless, you will be asked for quarterly reports and annual plans.

9- DO I HAVE TO PAY TO JOIN THE FELLOWSHIP?

No, you have to go through a rigorous selection process to join the Fellowship program. Ashoka does not take money from candidates or Fellows at any point.

**10- IF ELECTED AS A FELLOW, WHAT WILL ASHOKA REQUIRE FROM ME IN RETURN?
IS THE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP TIME-CONSUMING?
IS THE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP AN EXTRA BURDEN OVER MY WORK?**

The Ashoka Fellowship is not meant to be time-consuming. Instead, Ashoka and the social entrepreneurs have an equal intellectual partnership to support Fellows to scale up and grow. Equally, Fellows also have a chance to champion initiatives and give back to the Ashoka community. As a part of the Fellowship community, you will be expected to attend Fellows local meetings, give back to the network by sharing experiences and skills, fostering collaborations, acting as an Ashoka Ambassador and using public platforms to credit the support you have received from Ashoka. You will also be expected to nominate candidates for the Fellowship program to help expand our network. Additionally, you will be asked to provide updates on your work, needs and impact by using our monitoring and evaluation tool.

III. Ashoka Fellowship Scope



11. DOES THE FELLOWSHIP OFFER FUNDING FOR INITIATIVES/ORGANIZATIONS?

No. We are not a donor agency; we are our fellows' intellectual partners, helping them focus on their social ideas to create impact. If needed, we enable you to live on an adequate monthly stipend for three years to cover your living costs, while focusing on your cause.

12- WHAT/WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP? WHAT FALLS OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF ASHOKA'S SUPPORT?

Ashoka does not support any of the following requests/applications:

- a. Ashoka does not support ideas, which have not launched or been implemented, yet. Ashoka not only looks for someone with a good idea, but also someone, who has already applied his idea and put it into practice. Ashoka seeks fellows, who have a very clear how to map.
- b. Ashoka does not finance business entrepreneurs or commercial enterprises, if they are not first and foremost social ventures. We support social ventures regardless of their legal status (profit, non-profit, social enterprises).
- c. Ashoka does not support purely technical innovations or inventions. Technical innovations are interesting to us only if tied into a program or a system to disseminate the innovation and its social benefits.
- d. Ashoka does not support groups or associations as a whole. We only support individuals who are starting groups/ Organizations/initiatives, etc.

h. Ashoka will not elect a Fellow, whose endeavors have a primarily religious impact. Ashoka does not associate or support any particular religion, theology or spirituality, and must remain accepting of and neutral on all matters of religious belief. Ashoka will not be involved in a program that imposes its views, beliefs, or practices on others, who do not voluntarily subscribe to them. Ashoka fully respects every Fellow's right to his or her own religious beliefs, practices, and associations. However, our Fellows must not aspire to impose their own beliefs or practices on the broader society. Fellows should respect diverse groups and aim at combating oppression & prejudice, not encouraging it.

i. Ashoka will not elect any individual associated with a political party. The efforts of any Ashoka Fellow cannot support or associate with any party that advocates violence, totalitarianism, or racism. However, Ashoka recognizes that Fellows will want to exercise their right to vote, state their personal opinion, and provide modest personal support for candidates. In doing so, they must not allow themselves or their work to adopt a partisan political appearance.

j. Building schools or clinics

k. Research projects/proposals

l. Academic scholarships or travel funds

IV. Ashoka Fellowship Selection Criteria and Process



13. WHAT IS ASHOKA'S SEARCH AND SELECTION PROCESS?

Maintaining a rigorous selection process of Social Entrepreneurs for our Fellowship Program, and universally applied standards is critical to Ashoka, as it ensures the election of only the most innovative social entrepreneurs with the greatest probability of achieving transformational social impact. The search and selection process involves five stages and can take place over the course of several weeks to a year. Implicit to these five stages are intermediate steps that must be considered throughout the process.

Stage 1: Nomination (The team receives a nomination of a Social Entrepreneur from our network of partners in the Arab region or from prominent figures in the eco-system. Entrepreneurs cannot nominate themselves).

Stage 2: First Opinion Review (Regional Team)

- a. First Opinion Interviews
- b. Reference Checks
- c. Site visits
- d. Profile Writing

Stage 3: Second Opinion Interview (Global Team)

Stage 4: Selection Panel (Regional Approval)

Stage 5: International Board Approval

After a candidate's profile is approved by Ashoka's Global Board, he/she is officially an Ashoka Fellow, and will then go through our on-boarding process with the regional fellowship team.

14- WHAT ARE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP SELECTION CRITERIA ?

Ashoka's criteria guarantee that social entrepreneurs elected across the globe satisfy our tested profile for effectiveness. Ashoka is known for having the toughest, most competitive selection process in the field and is the best to identify social entrepreneurs

The Criteria are :

- a) **Ashoka's Knock-Out Test:** The New Idea: Ashoka will only elect someone as a Fellow, if he or she is possessed by a new idea: a new solution, or new approach to a social problem that has the potential to change the pattern across a field at a national or regional level. The candidate must be the original idea owner, even if they co-founded their initiative with individuals who are equally possessed by and invested in it.
- b) **Creativity:** Successful social entrepreneurs must be creative both as goal-setting visionaries and in the essential follow-up of problem solving. This creativity defines the entrepreneur and is often clearly evident in their lives from childhood on.

- c) **Entrepreneurial Quality:** A true social entrepreneur is so committed to his or her vision that it is impossible for him or her to rest until the vision becomes a new pattern across society. They are so interested in the practical or —how to questions as they are in the vision itself.
- d) **Social Impact of idea:** Successful social entrepreneurship needs not only an extraordinary champion to develop an idea but a powerful, practical new idea that will spread on its own merits. Therefore, this criterion is the only one focused specifically on the Candidate's idea, not the Candidate. Usually, system changes fall into one or more of the following patterns: changing market dynamics and value chains, introducing a culture of empathy and change-making, changing industry norms and public policies, full economic citizenship and inclusion, and bridging the gap between the business and social sectors.
- e) **Ethical Fiber:** Ashoka will only elect individuals with unquestionable Ethical Fiber. An entrepreneur with a strong sense of ethics and commitment to others, and the new idea will bring about a positive transformational change for the good of all.

Ashoka elects fellows irrespective of age, education, class, race or ethnic background. Anyone who meets all five criteria is someone Ashoka wants

**15- DO YOU ACCEPT DUAL CANDIDACIES?
IF THE ORGANIZATION/INITIATIVE/SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IS FOUNDED BY TWO MEMBERS
CAN THEY BOTH APPLY FOR THE FELLOWSHIP??**

Only in rare cases will there be acceptable situations of dual candidacy. This will happen in cases, when it is clear that both individuals share the following:

- An equal investment in the success and spread of the program and the new idea behind it
- An equal level of technical, methodological, theoretical, and physical investment in the effort
- An equal level of innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and ethical fiber
- The ability to contribute as exceptional social entrepreneurs to a network of peers
- That both together they form a more powerful, influential benefit for their initiative

16- WHAT ARE THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS TO JOIN THE FELLOWSHIP?

- a) Applications are screened against the five Ashoka Selection Criteria (See Question 14)
- b) By applying to the Ashoka Fellowship, you agree to five main conditions that apply to all Fellows. These are:
 - You are ready and willing to work full-time on your idea and leave any other irrelevant work to your social cause for at least three years. Ashoka can help you do so by offering a financial stipend
 - You are ready to spend these years in the country of your primary impact within the Arab World
 - You are the decision-maker in your organization/company/initiative (please tell us if the case is different)
 - If the legal structure of your work is a for-profit company, then you will need to agree that all the profits of your company are re-invested in your work and social cause for at least 10 years
 - You confirm that you are not associated with any political party, either individually or through your organization
- c) If your application proceeds to the next level, you will be obliged to work with Ashoka closely and extensively in a responsive, open and cooperative manner over the span of at least two months, followed by attending a regional selection panel that takes place in Cairo, Egypt and lasts for about 4 days.

17. WHAT IF I CAN'T ATTEND THE SELECTION PANEL?

Attending selection panels in Cairo, Egypt is a mandatory step to complete the selection process for the Ashoka Fellowship. Selection panels are held every 6 months. If your application proceeds to this level and you receive an invitation to attend a selection panel, you are expected to comply with the panel dates. However, if there are clear circumstances that hinder you from attending, the team will consider this on a case by case basis, and can postpone your candidacy to the following selection panel.

18- F I LIVE OUTSIDE CAIRO, WILL ASHOKA COVER MY TRAVEL EXPENSES TO ATTEND THE SELECTION PANEL?

Yes, if you are invited to attend a regional selection panel, Ashoka will fully cover your flight and accommodation expenses. However, your visa fees are not reimbursed by AAW.

19-

DO I HAVE TO PAY TO JOIN THE FELLOWSHIP?

Ever since Ashoka's founding, Fellows have been required to dedicate themselves to the spread of their vision for the first three years of their Fellowship. The full-time picture requires an individual to dedicate their entire life to an idea for three years. If they are not prepared to do so, this indicates that either their idea is not at a mature stage, or s/he is not truly an entrepreneur. In either case, s/he is not a qualified candidate for the Fellowship.

Candidates will often cite financial constraints as a reason for not willing to dedicate themselves full-time to their cause. However, Ashoka's stipend is designed to remove such financial barriers. If a candidate is unwilling to dedicate him- or herself full-time to their efforts, when basic financial restraints are removed, it is a clear indication that the candidate is not prepared to participate in the Fellowship.

20. DOES ASHOKA INVEST IN FELLOWS WHO HAVE FOR-PROFIT MODELS?

If the Fellow sets up a for-profit enterprise as part of his/her business model or sustainability plan, social transformation must be its primary purpose rather than personal or financial gain. Ashoka asks all Fellows to reinvest for ten years any surplus or revenue of such an entity -- excluding reasonable personal compensation -- into the enterprise or related project or into other socially beneficial aims.

Ashoka supports entrepreneurs with a wide range of venture models. However, Ashoka does not assist —socially minded business entrepreneurs — the organization is only interested in genuine social entrepreneurs. Ashoka only supports entrepreneurs who are dedicated to bringing about lasting social change, not those who are mostly interested in generating profit. If a candidate has developed a systems-changing model that happens to generate a steady financial gain, he or she may be eligible for the Fellowship. However, social change must be his or her primary motive. The Ashoka Fellowship is designed to represent leading social entrepreneurs who are first-and-foremost dedicated to creating dramatic, systems changes to address the world's most pressing social problems.

V. The Application Process



21. WHEN CAN I APPLY FOR THE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP?

Usually, AAW accepts candidates on a rolling-basis. Panels are held twice a year, and in order to be considered for a particular panel, candidate must coordinate with his/her nominator.

22. WHERE CAN I FIND THE ASHOKA FULL APPLICATION FORM?

To fill out the full application form, you must be invited to apply. In order to receive an invitation to apply, you must be nominated by one of our fellows, partners, citizen sector or academia professionals.

23. WHEN SHOULD I EXPECT A RESPONSE TO MY APPLICATION?

The team will update you on the status of your application within six months of your submission. Normally, before giving a final status update, there are always several follow-up questions. These serve the purpose of better understanding the candidate's idea, strategy and problem. We assure you that we rigorously screen all applications. We always appreciate your patience and understanding in this process, given the large number of applications in our pipeline.

24. WHAT ARE THE DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE MY APPLICATION FOR THE ASHOKA FELLOWSHIP?

To complete your application for the Ashoka Fellowship, you need to submit:

- A full application form (all questions thoroughly answered)
- A copy of your CV
- Links to mediaarticles and promotional videos pertinent to your work
- Photos of your work
- A high resolution photo of yourself
- Three letters of recommendation
- A copy of your valid passport

25. I AM NOT ARAB, BUT I AM A RESIDENT OF AN ARAB COUNTRY WORKING ON A SOCIAL NITIATIVE FOR THE REGION, CAN I APPLY?

Yes, we support individuals residing in the region and creating a system change regardless of their nationality. However, candidate must show commitment to the region.

26. IF I HAVE PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR A PAST SELECTION ROUND, DO I USE THE SAME APPLICATION?

Please note that candidates who do not pass panel stage are not permitted to re-apply to the fellowship. If you previously applied, received no answer/did not pass any of the stages preceding panel i.e. First-Opinion Interview, Second-Opinion Interview), kindly amend/add to the application according to your most recent updates. Kindly highlight all the new achievements or idea twists. Please mention the date of your last application in your email.

27. IF I DECIDE TO POSTPONE MY APPLICATION FOR SOME TIME, BECAUSE I REALIZED THAT I AM NOT READY OR BECAUSE I HAVE OTHER ENGAGEMENTS THAT WILL NOT ALLOW ME TO FOCUS ON MY CAUSE (LIKE STUDYING FOR A POST-GRADUATE DEGREE). CAN I RE-APPLY AT A LATER DATE

Be sure to update us on your situation, so that we can update your status in our database. Your files will be kept in our records. However, it is your job to keep the team updated with your work and re-connect with an updated application whenever you think you can commit to the Ashoka Fellowship.

28. I AM INTERESTED, BUT I AM REALLY BUSY WITH MY INITIATIVE; I AM NOT SURE I CAN WORK FOR ASHOKA AND HAVE ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS

You actually work with Ashoka, not for it, as we enable you to have enough time to focus on your social idea, rather than having to juggle work.

29. WHICH LANGUAGE SHOULD BE USED IN THE APPLICATION?

You can fill the Application in either English, Arabic or French; whichever you are most comfortable expressing yourself in.

30. I AM ALSO A SYNERGOS/ SCHWAB FELLOW, CAN I APPLY TO ASHOKA?

We have no problem electing Fellows, who are also part of other networks, which enable Social Entrepreneurs; in fact we always encourage our Fellows to seek all possible opportunities to develop themselves and their work.

VI. Post Selection Process



31. MY APPLICATION WAS ACCEPTED AND I RECEIVED AN INVITATION TO ATTEND A SELECTION PANEL. HOWEVER, I HAVE A COMMITMENT THAT TAKES PLACE DURING THE SAME DATES AS THE PANEL, WHAT CAN I DO?

We know you are busy and that there are many good opportunities out there. However, panel dates are based on many factors on top of which are the panelists' and interviewers' schedules, in addition to the Global Ashoka calendar. Changing selection panel dates is not possible. Attending all days of the panel is mandatory for all candidates who are invited to the panel. If, for any reason, you cannot attend The panel, then your candidacy Can be pushed to the following selection panel.

32. DO YOU REQUIRE REGULAR REPORTING ON THE PROGRESS OF MY WORK?

To enable us to design suitable engagement strategies, Ashoka requests you to provide regular updates on your work for the first three years. We use a monitoring and evaluation tool that helps Fellows keep track of their annual plans and goals, as well as assess their impact and needs. Thereafter, we request you to provide timely responses to any engagement possibilities within Ashoka

33. WHEN I AM ELECTED AS A FELLOW, IF I'D LIKE TO GET SOME FUNDING FOR A NEW PROJECT – CAN I ASK YOU?

No. Ashoka does not fund projects. We are neither a grant making organization nor an award-giving body. We are also not able to fundraise on behalf of our Fellows. However, many Fellows have found the time to fundraise for themselves after focusing full-time on their ideas. Additionally, many other Fellows have accessed further funds from people they have met through the Ashoka network.

A woman wearing a grey hijab and a grey sweater is looking intently at a laptop screen. The background is a warm, orange-brown color.

ASHOKA ARAB WORLD

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASHOKA: INNOVATORS FOR THE PUBLIC

For further inquiries on the Fellowship selection criteria and process, please contact:

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