

Frequently Asked Questions: How Do We Choose Henry Crown Fellows?

1. I keep hearing about the mosaic. What is this?

In creating the perfect class, we look to weave together Fellows from various personal and professional backgrounds whose experiences will complement, challenge, and inspire each other in the seminar room and throughout the Fellowship. Each Fellow should have something to teach and to learn from the other. We call this "creating the mosaic." It's both a science and an art. Unfortunately, many amazing individuals are not included because they don't fit the class mosaic for that particular year. That's why we often reconsider candidates, sometimes for a number of years, before they are selected.

2. Who is the ideal candidate?

We are looking for candidates who have achieved significant success in their for-profit career and who are now at an "inflection point"—looking toward the broader role they might take on in their communities or globally. By this we mean that they are ready and able to pause, re-evaluate the things that matter to them most, and dedicate time and energy to making a difference in society using the platform they have at hand.

3. Who is not a great fit?

We get many candidates who we consider to be fully baked, meaning they have already reached the point where we hope our Fellows to be when they graduate the Fellowship. We get other candidates who are wonderful people but who may not be at the right stage in their life/career for this program. Some are so busy building their business or organization that it's clear they won't be able to make the time for or truly focus on all the Fellowship experience entails. We feel this focus is necessary in order to be open to deeply examining the world through the new and different lenses of the Fellowship experience.

4. How can my nomination letter be even stronger?

Your nomination letter is a very important part of our nominee evaluation process. In addition to providing your candidate's basic contact information—date of birth, cell phone, and email address—we ask that you share personal details, including struggles or hardships the candidate has had, that you wouldn't normally put into a typical recommendation. The strongest nomination letters are those that help us understand the candidate's inflection point and why this is the right time for them to take full advantage of what the Fellowship offers. We always look for signs of grit and for ways the candidate has had to overcome obstacles to achieve success.

5. Is there an initial screening process?

We are fortunate to evaluate about 400 candidates each year. We take several months to research each candidate, gleaning information from the internet, from people that know them, from your letter of recommendation, and in some cases, from in-person meetings. We first evaluate the most

objective criteria of age (30-45 years old), success in a given field, and evidence of entrepreneurial (or intrapreneurial) spirit.

6. What does “evidence of entrepreneurial (or intrapreneurial) spirit” mean?

We are looking for people who make things happen. Our strongest candidates have started something, grown something – even if this happens inside an organization. Bluntly, we are looking for entrepreneurs who fix the plane while they are flying it.

7. You say you want successful entrepreneurs, how do you define success?

We are primarily interested in candidates who have built, created or innovated something. Maybe they have several failed start-ups. Maybe their innovation has changed the game for thousands of customers, even if it isn't yet reaping monetary returns. Maybe they aren't the CEO, but are the head of Corporate Innovation, the Chief Marketing Officer, or leading the company into new territory that will have a profound impact on society. We look for a variety of industries and sectors in choosing a class. In addition to more traditional sectors, we have had Henry Crown Fellows from the arts, military, media, medicine, science, and family businesses. In sum, we are looking leaders who have made a difference and who are now ready to have an even wider impact.

8. My candidate doesn't make a lot of money, is that a problem?

We are looking for entrepreneurial candidates, not necessarily wealthy ones. The program pays for all but a Fellow's transportation to and from the seminar site, and we have a limited pool of scholarship funds available if a Fellow needs help with that transportation.

9. My candidate is not in business or entrepreneurship. How would they be evaluated?

In addition to a tremendous amount of background research, a biographical sketch is written on every candidate in order to compare apples to apples. Our goal is to make sure every candidate gets a fair and objective review, no matter their professional or personal background.

10. If my candidate makes it through the first screening, what happens next?

Once we are through the first screening, we ramp up the effort to really understand the diversity each candidate brings to the table. Not just gender and ethnicity, but other lenses such as where they live, family status, political or religious affiliation, industry, size of company, education and socio-economic diversity. As mentioned earlier, we look for signs of grit or resilience, compassion or creativity. We hope to have found much of this information in the original nomination letter, but may reach out to you as the nominator with additional questions. We look to have as diverse a group as possible when we reach the interview stage. For example, we don't want to interview 75% from California, Harvard Business School, or the banking industry.

11. What does it mean if my candidate is invited to interview?

Being asked to interview is a big deal! We interview a short list of 60 candidates in various locations around the United States. Being asked to interview means we believe your candidate has the potential to be a Henry Crown Fellow.

12. So, if my candidate isn't interviewed, that means they aren't getting in?

Not necessarily. We try to meet with as many candidates as possible, and are now extending our exploratory interviews throughout the year. This means we may have already met with your candidate before our official interview tour, which may make it unnecessary for us to meet with them again. We may also decide that your candidate is on our watch list for the future, potentially because the timing doesn't seem right for them to be able to truly focus on all the Fellowship offers and requires; their age or position within a company/industry; or because of the competition in a given

locale, industry or company that particular year. We ask that you be patient with our process and not get discouraged.

13. How can I prepare my nominee for an interview?

Please ask them to be open and honest. At this point in the process, we are confident the candidate meets our earlier criteria (success, entrepreneurial, lenses of diversity). The interview is all about getting to know them as a person. Are they at an inflection point in their life? 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 candidates and see how their personality would fit into our class mosaic. Everything said at the interview is confidential, so please encourage your candidate to feel comfortable sharing anything they feel is important about who they are as a leader and potential Henry Crown Fellow. In addition, we strongly encourage them to reach out to a few alumni or current Fellows to get a feel for the Fellowship.

14. What can derail a candidate?

We expect candidates to come to the interviews prepared, having taken the time to research a bit about the Aspen Institute and about what the fellowship experience entails. We also ask them to make two non-negotiable commitments: to attend the seminars in their entirety, from start to finish, and to complete a meaningful venture. An inability to commit to either eliminates candidates for the coming year. We ask you as the nominator to stress the importance of examining the published seminar dates as well as the venture-related criteria and frequently-asked questions. We have had candidates who accept an interview knowing that they can't make the dates, as some believe they can receive an exception. This is not the case, as the seminars are an incredibly important part of the Fellowship and missing any part is unfair to that Henry Crown Fellow and their class. Sadly, accepting an interview slot with this expectation prevents another candidate from being evaluated.

15. What happens after the interview?

Our process takes several months. We do not give out information prior to the final selection, so we respectfully ask nominators and candidates to be patient. Once we have made our final selection, we let every nominator and their candidate know the outcome and whether or not they will be reconsidered for the following year.

16. My candidate was not chosen, but reconsidered. What does that mean?

Being reconsidered is also a big deal, as not many candidates fall into this group. We have had Henry Crown Fellows who were reconsidered for multiple years before being selected. That said, being reconsidered is not a guarantee of future selection.

17. What can I or my reconsidered candidate do before the next nomination cycle?

Please keep us updated on any life changes, accomplishments, press, etc. We will do our best to meet with each reconsidered candidate before the next cycle. Candidates who drop off the radar screen or are out of communication obviously weaken their chances. Prior to the next official interview period, we will contact the candidate to see if they are still interested in being considered. They will need to respond to confirm their interest.

18. My candidate was not reconsidered. What does that mean?

Based on the research conducted and information we had, we did not see the candidate as a potential Henry Crown Fellow. Rather than give candidates and nominators false hope, we try to be as honest as possible. If you think we missed something in our evaluation, or if there are significant

changes in a candidate's life, please re-nominate them. Fortunately, there are many ways for someone to get involved with the Aspen Institute beyond the Henry Crown Fellowship. Depending on age and geography, they may receive a special invitation to public events, activities, and the classic Aspen Seminar. In certain cases, they may be considered for another one of our leadership programs that better fits their talents and background.

19. How does my candidate find out about the results?

Every candidate, nominator, and supporter receives a personal email from the Managing Director when the class is announced. Although email is not as personal as a phone call or letter, the number of nominations submitted makes email the most efficient way to communicate with all of our nominees and their nominators. We do our best to treat all nominators and candidates with dignity, professionalism, and the respect deserved.

20. My candidate will be 46 this coming year. Are they still eligible?

In order to be eligible, the candidate needs to be 45 or younger by June 30th in the year in which they would start the Fellowship. Therefore, at age 46 your candidate is aged out of eligibility for our program.

21. Does it help for a candidate to have more than one nominator?

Only if each nominator can add a new dimension to the candidate's profile. If all are saying essentially the same thing, then a quick note of support via email will do rather than a complete nomination. If each nominator has a unique perspective on the candidate, then by all means, please add a full letter of recommendation.

22. Should I tell my candidate they are being nominated?

Yes! We expect that you will not only tell them you are nominating them, but that you will explain to them who the Aspen Institute is and what the Fellowship entails to ensure they are both interested and available to participate on the seminar dates if chosen. Please forward the nomination materials to them and make sure they visit our website, so they understand the program – including its goals, time commitment, and venture/seminar requirements – and are fully prepared to engage.

23. How important is the venture requirement of the Fellowship?

Some of our nominees receive mixed messages about the leadership venture: some hear from alumni that it is not that important while others say it is. To clarify, as this Fellowship is about thought leading to action, the ventures are very important and have been a real source of accomplishment, even joy, for many Fellows who didn't realize what an impact they could have. It's a fact that the venture did not receive as much attention in the early years of the Fellowship, but it does now. While we don't expect candidates to know the specifics of their venture at the start, we do expect them to solidify their idea and to launch it within the first few months of the program. We require regular written and verbal updates from Fellows on their ventures—the key is open communication. Even if a Fellow is struggling with their venture concept, plan, or execution, we want to be aware and involved so we can assist and guide as best we can.

24. How well do I have to know the candidate to nominate them?

We prefer that the candidate is nominated by someone who knows them very well. That said, if you see someone at a conference or in a business meeting who really wows you and that you think has what it takes to be a Henry Crown Fellow, please let us know. Even if it's not a formal nomination at first, we are happy to do a bit of exploratory work to vet a candidate.

25. I want to be keep my eyes open for great candidates, who do you need?

We specifically need more qualified candidates who are female, African American, or Latino. We have no shortage of candidates from tech, finance, or consulting, but are looking for representation from other industries and for people whose work has given them a view of human nature beyond what one finds in typical white collar businesses. From a location point of view, we need more candidates from the middle of the United States.

26. Do you accept nominations for international candidates?

Although the program is primarily domestic, we feel an international perspective is important, so we do regularly have 1-2 international participants in a class. That said, we have no firm quotas. In the last four years, we have selected about 25% internationally-born, domestically-based Fellows. Each Henry Crown Fellow is also part of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.

27. Can I send in nominations before the official period opens?

Our nomination cycle is open annually from August 1st to August 31st. We require nominations to be submitted during this time frame. When possible, we will provide personalized links for historical nominators and AGLN Fellows to auto-populate your information and streamline this process.

28. What if I see or meet someone I think will be an amazing candidate in the future?

Please send us their name and any information. We have a pool of candidates on our watch list and would be happy to add your contact to this tracking effort.

If you have questions related to nominations, please contact Stacy at stacy.zimmerman@aspeninst.org