

Changemaker
Fellowship website:
UN FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Changemaker Fellowship?

The Changemaker Fellowship is a global, 10-week learning and implementation program designed to help nonprofits, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), and UN system entities move from AI interest to responsible, real-world adoption. Fellows work on a live organisational challenge and develop an implementation-ready AI Adoption Plan tailored to their context.

Is there a dedicated UN or IGO cohort?

Yes. The Fellowship includes dedicated cohorts for UN system and intergovernmental organisation staff. These cohorts are designed to reflect the accountability and operational realities of multilateral institutions and align with priorities such as the UN80 agenda, the SDGs, and the Global Digital Compact.

Why is the Fellowship relevant to UN agencies right now?

UN agencies are being asked to deliver greater impact with constrained resources while navigating increasing expectations around responsible AI and digital transformation. The Fellowship is designed to help teams explore AI adoption in ways that strengthen operational efficiency, accountability, and mission delivery.

Who from the UN system can apply?

Applications are open to staff from UN systems, programmes, funds, specialised agencies, and intergovernmental bodies. Applicants may be based at headquarters, regional, country, or programme-office level.

What kinds of challenges or use cases are suitable?

Fellows are encouraged to work on real organisational challenges such as:

- Workflow automation
- Knowledge management
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Reporting and analytics
- Programme delivery optimisation
- Stakeholder communications
- Data management and governance
- Internal coordination and institutional memory

The focus is on practical, mission-aligned implementation rather than experimentation for its own sake.

What makes the UN cohort different from the general Fellowship?

The core learning journey remains the same, but the UN pathway includes:

- SDG and UN80 framing
- Additional focus on international cooperation and accountability
- Multi-stakeholder implementation considerations
- Cross-agency replicability discussions
- Enhanced EY Ripples engagement
- Responsible AI discussions through a multilateral lens

UN system Fellows are also asked to frame their use case against a UN80 priority or SDG target from the beginning of the program.

Is this a technical AI training program?

This is not a technical training course. Fellows will receive targeted technical implementation support from vetted partners after completion, matched to their use case but the program's focus is on leadership and adoption planning, not technical skill-building.

What is the expected experience level for participants?

The Fellowship is designed for mid- to senior-level professionals working in operational, policy, program, innovation, digital, or service delivery roles who are positioned to help drive organizational change within their institution or agency.

No technical or engineering background is required. The program is specifically designed for leaders and practitioners responsible for improving systems, processes, services, and organizational effectiveness through responsible AI adoption.

What will participants leave with?

Fellows complete the program with:

- An implementation-ready AI Adoption Plan
- A practical implementation roadmap
- Governance and risk considerations
- Peer and mentor feedback
- Access to a global community of practice
- Exposure to Microsoft nonprofit tools and resources
- A certificate of completion

How much time does participation require?

The expected time commitment for the UN system cohort is approximately 4-6 hours per week over 10 weeks. This includes:

- Self-paced learning
- Live workshops
- Coaching sessions
- Peer collaboration
- Adoption plan development

The program is designed to accommodate busy professionals and global participation.

Is the program virtual?

Yes. The Fellowship is delivered virtually to enable participation from across global regions and time zones.

Can more than one person from the same organisation participate?

Yes. Up to three participants from the same organisation or operating unit may apply together if they are working on a shared organisational challenge.

Does participation imply endorsement of Microsoft products or procurement commitments?

No. Participation in the Fellowship does not create any procurement obligation, vendor preference, or endorsement requirement. The program is capacity-building focused and technology implementation decisions remain fully independent to participating organisations.

Is the Fellowship Microsoft-tools only?

No. While Microsoft tools and learning resources are included, the Fellowship is intentionally tool-agnostic. The focus is on responsible AI adoption and organisational implementation planning rather than platform lock-in.

Will participants receive implementation support?

Yes. Selected Fellows may receive targeted implementation support from vetted technology partners matched to their use case and organisational needs. This support is funded through the Fellowship and focuses on helping Fellows move from planning toward implementation readiness.

Is there a financial cost to participate?

No. There is no financial cost to participate in the Fellowship.

Are there grants available for organisations?

The Fellowship does not provide direct cash grants to participating organisations. Funding is instead allocated toward expert technical assistance and implementation support delivered through vetted partners.

What is the selection process?

Applications go through a multi-stage review process that includes:

- Eligibility screening
- Technical and implementation review
- Independent judging panel assessment
- Cohort composition balancing across geography, sector, and organisational type

Applications are assessed on implementation readiness, problem quality, AI use case credibility, leadership influence, and additionality.

Selection is conducted by a multi-stakeholder panel. Microsoft is one voice on the panel, alongside Caribou (the program lead), independent reviewers with sector expertise, and UN-system advisors for UN cohorts. No single party, including Microsoft, can approve or reject an applicant unilaterally. Panel members declare conflicts of interest and recuse where applicable. Selection criteria are published in advance and applied consistently across applicants. Participation in the Fellowship does not create any procurement obligation, vendor preference, or endorsement requirement on the part of participating organizations.

What kinds of organisations are prioritised?

The Fellowship prioritises organisations where support would create meaningful additionality – particularly teams with high mission demand but limited AI implementation capacity. Prestige or organisational size alone are not selection advantages.

Will there be opportunities for peer exchange with other UN agencies?

Yes. A core part of the Fellowship model is peer learning and cross-organisational exchange. Dedicated UN system cohorts are specifically designed to create a trusted environment for shared learning across agencies and regions.

How does the Fellowship approach responsible AI and sensitive use cases?

Responsible and ethical AI is embedded throughout the Fellowship curriculum and AI Adoption Plan process. Fellows are supported to consider governance, accountability, human oversight, privacy, inclusion, and risk mitigation alongside implementation. For UN and intergovernmental cohorts, the Fellowship draws on internationally recognised frameworks including the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, the UN High-Level Advisory Body on AI report, the UN Global Digital Compact, and OHCHR B-Tech guidance. Where participants' organizations already have AI, legal, data governance, or ethics frameworks in place, fellows are expected to work within and apply those existing institutional policies and standards.

Use cases that affect vulnerable or rights-affected populations are welcome and common in this Fellowship. They are supported through a structured risk review: applicants describe the population, potential harms, mitigations, human-in-the-loop design, and governance. Use cases that cannot demonstrate adequate safeguards — for example, autonomous decision-making in high-risk environments — are not supported.

Do participants need leadership approval or sponsorship?

Yes. Because the Fellowship is focused on real organizational adoption rather than individual learning alone, applicants are expected to have support from a senior leader or sponsor within their organization. This helps ensure that Fellows have the internal alignment, time, and authority needed to meaningfully participate and develop an implementation-ready AI Adoption Plan.

What happens if our organization is not selected for the first cohort?

The Fellowship is designed as a multi-cohort initiative running across multiple intakes over two years. Strong applications that are not selected for the immediate cohort may be deferred to a later cohort rather than declined outright. Final cohort selection considers not only application quality, but also cohort balance across geography, sector, organizational type, and implementation readiness.

Can country offices or regional teams apply independently from headquarters?

Yes. Eligibility is assessed at the operating-unit level rather than only at the parent organization level. Country offices, regional teams, departments, programs, and functional units within larger organizations are all eligible to apply where there is a clearly defined operational challenge and sufficient leadership support for participation.

How is confidentiality and data handled during the Fellowship?

We recognize that many participating organizations, particularly within the UN system, operate in sensitive policy, humanitarian, governance, and community contexts. The Fellowship is therefore designed to support responsible participation without requiring organizations to disclose confidential, classified, or operationally sensitive information during workshops, peer sessions, mentoring engagements, or implementation planning activities.

Participants retain full discretion over what information they choose to share throughout the program. Fellows are encouraged to use generalized, anonymized, or representative examples wherever possible, particularly when discussing beneficiary data, internal operational processes, or high-risk environments.

The Fellowship operates in alignment with the United Nations Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles, alongside applicable Microsoft privacy, security, and responsible AI standards.

Key principles include:

- **Purpose limitation and data minimization:** The program is designed to collect only the information required for application review, cohort management, learning delivery, mentorship coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and program improvement.
- **Access controls:** Access to participant and application information is restricted to authorized personnel involved in program delivery and governance, including relevant staff from Caribou, Microsoft, EY Ripples, and approved implementation or operational partners where necessary for program administration or technical support.
- **Storage and processing:** Program information may be stored and processed using secure cloud-based systems and collaboration platforms operated by Caribou. Depending on the platform or service used, data may be processed in multiple jurisdictions. A list may be requested.
- **Retention and deletion:** Applicant and participant information will be retained for the duration of the Fellowship and for up to 12 months following the completion of the final cohort. This retention period supports program administration, cohort management, implementation support, impact measurement, longitudinal learning and evaluation activities, and the production of aggregated program insights and reporting. Application data for unsuccessful applicants will generally be retained for no longer than 6 months following the closure of the relevant application cycle, unless consent has been provided for consideration in future cohorts or related opportunities. Reporting, storytelling, and learning outputs will use aggregated or anonymised information rather than personally identifiable data unless stipulated otherwise. At the end of the applicable retention period, personal data will be securely deleted, anonymised, or aggregated in accordance with applicable legal, contractual, and compliance requirements, including alignment with the UN Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles where relevant.
- **No public disclosure without consent:** Participation in storytelling, case studies, communications, or public-facing impact materials is always opt-in. Organizations may anonymize sensitive details or decline participation entirely.
- **Responsible AI and safeguarding:** The Fellowship prioritizes privacy-preserving, human-in-the-loop, and rights-respecting approaches to AI adoption, particularly in contexts involving vulnerable populations or sensitive operational environments.

The Fellowship focuses primarily on implementation planning, governance readiness, organizational adoption, and responsible change management — not on transferring sensitive operational datasets into shared program environments.

We can provide a “Data Handling Note” that applicants may share with their legal, procurement, privacy, or information security teams during internal review processes.

What happens after the 10-week Fellowship ends?

Participants will continue to have access to a broader community of practice and peer network following the completion of the Fellowship. Fellows leave the program with an implementation-ready AI Adoption Plan, governance and planning resources, peer connections, and

practical next steps for organizational adoption. The Fellowship is designed not as a one-off training intervention, but as part of a longer-term ecosystem supporting responsible AI adoption across mission-driven organizations.

Why does the Fellowship focus on AI adoption rather than just AI literacy?

Many AI training programs focus primarily on awareness or technical understanding. The Changemaker Fellowship is intentionally designed to go beyond literacy by supporting organizations to develop a practical, implementation-ready pathway for responsible AI adoption. The focus is not simply on learning about AI tools, but on helping organizations navigate governance, stakeholder alignment, change management, operational readiness, and long-term implementation within real institutional contexts.

Who owns the AI Adoption Plan and materials developed during the Fellowship?

Fellows and their organizations retain full ownership of their AI Adoption Plan and any organizational materials, frameworks, or work products developed during the Fellowship. Participation in the Fellowship does not transfer intellectual property rights to Caribou, Microsoft Elevate, EY, or implementation partners.

With explicit participant consent, anonymized or attributed excerpts, case studies, or learning insights may be used for program learning, communications, or impact storytelling purposes. Participation in storytelling or case studies is entirely opt-in, and organizations may request anonymization or withdraw consent for future use at any time.

What language is the Fellowship delivered in?

The Fellowship is currently delivered in English. Live sessions are recorded and transcribed, and self-paced materials are designed in translation-friendly formats to support accessibility across regions and language contexts. We are also exploring multilingual cohort pathways from Cohort 3 onward.

Can participation count as official duty time or professional development?

Yes. With supervisor approval, participation may be treated as official duty time or professional development within your organization's learning and development framework. The Fellowship team can provide a sponsor/support letter template for HR, learning-credit, or internal approval processes, including for UNSSC-aligned systems where relevant.

I am a Director-level (D1/D2) staff member. Are additional approvals required?

Some UN entities and intergovernmental organizations may require additional internal clearances for participation at Director level or above, particularly where external engagements, speaking participation, or AI-related initiatives are involved. The Fellowship team can provide a formal program overview and clearance-support letter template to assist internal approval processes.

Will Fellows or organizations be publicly identified?

No. Fellows and participating organizations are not publicly named without explicit opt-in consent. Photography, case studies, testimonials, quotes, and participation in external communications are entirely optional, and consent can be withdrawn for future use at any time.

What is EY Ripples' role in the Fellowship?

EY Ripples provides structured pro bono mentoring and strategic advisory support throughout the Fellowship, focused on organizational adoption, change management, stakeholder alignment, and implementation planning. Across the duration of the program, EY professionals will contribute hundreds of hours of support to Fellows as they develop their AI Adoption Plans.

This includes coaching on organizational transformation and leadership buy-in, facilitating group workshops on building the business case for AI adoption, supporting accountability planning, and helping Fellows prepare for the final pitch and presentation process. Support is delivered through thematic clinics, group sessions, and selected cohort touchpoints, with additional engagement for dedicated UN cohorts where appropriate.

What does the AI Adoption Plan include?

Each Fellow team develops an implementation-ready AI Adoption Plan tailored to a real organizational challenge. Plans typically include the problem definition, proposed use case, governance and risk considerations, stakeholder mapping, implementation roadmap, resource considerations, and success indicators. The plan is designed to be practical, actionable, and aligned to the organization's operational realities.

Are Fellows expected to share their plans across agencies or cohorts?

Fellows are encouraged, but not required, to share generalizable lessons and implementation insights with peers across the Fellowship community. Confidential, operationally sensitive, or organization-specific information is never shared without explicit consent.

How does the Fellowship support field-based or country-office staff?

The Fellowship is intentionally designed for global participation across multiple time zones and connectivity contexts. Sessions are recorded for asynchronous access, self-paced materials are low-bandwidth friendly, and country-office and field-based staff are explicitly encouraged and prioritized within the selection process where appropriate.

When will applicants hear back?

Current timelines indicate:

- Application review and shortlisting in mid-July 2026
- Final cohort selection in late July 2026
- Fellow onboarding at the end of September 2026