



Focus Project Coaching Overview

Focus Project Overview

The Focus Project is an action-planning framework Fellows use to identify and address a need in their business, organization, or community. This need can be based on their current professional pursuits, such as a business they already own and wish to expand, or a new professional venture they are looking to launch, such as establishing a non-profit organization in their community. During the Institute, Fellows will build out the steps necessary to implement their project using a toolkit of targeted worksheets and resources designed to guide Fellows through the project planning process.

The goal is for Fellows to walk away from their Institute with an action plan to put what they learned into practice through a project targeted at a particular professional goal. During their Institute, Fellows will engage in **three hours of one-on-one coaching** with a designated Focus Project Coach to aid this project planning process.

Requirements and Guidance for Focus Project Coaches

The Focus Project is a unique opportunity for Fellows to discuss their individual interests within the broad-based programming of the Leadership Institute. Focus Project Coaches serve a key role for Fellows during their Institute, providing:

- Targeted questions to help Fellows refine their ideas
- Guidance on how to think through the feasibility of their project's scope and approach
- Exposure to new professional experiences and examples that can inform their work
- Accountability to complete their action plan throughout the Institute
- Networking connections within the community

Focus Project Coach Expectations

As a Coach, you should be committed to serving in this role throughout the Institute (June 8-July 16) and meeting individually with your Fellow(s), in-person or virtually, for a total of three required coaching hours per Fellow. When serving as a Focus Project Coach, please note the expectations for:

- **Time Commitment:** You will spend three hours with each of your Fellow(s) throughout the six-week Institute (June 8-July 16). Fellows are expected to participate in three 60-minute, one-on-one coaching sessions.
 - *Note: If you and your Fellow(s) determine that it would be beneficial to divide a 60-minute session into two 30-minute sessions, you have the flexibility to make that change. It is expected that Fellows receive three hours of one-on-one coaching in total over the course of the Institute. Fellows and Coaches may add additional sessions if mutually agreed, and their schedules permit, but this is not required.*



- **Scheduling:** You will work with your Fellow(s) to schedule the coaching sessions based on both of your availabilities. Institute staff may support the scheduling process, and you should direct any questions about scheduling to your point of contact at the Institute.
 - *Note: We encourage you to schedule meetings to allow Fellows to complete independent work and think through learnings from the Institute. For example, you may want to schedule meetings in Weeks 2, 4, and 5 of the Institute. Institute staff can also help to identify optimal windows within their program calendars.*
- **Coaching:** You will provide professional guidance on action planning to support your Fellow(s) as they independently complete their Focus Project work. Your coaching sessions may be held in person or virtually.
 - *Note: You are not responsible for ensuring Fellow complete their independent Focus Project work. Please see [Focus Project Resources](#) below for more information on Fellows' independent work. You are also not required to continue coaching Fellows after their Leadership Institute ends.*

General Guidance

Each coaching relationship is different, and Fellows will get as much out of this experience as they put into it. The points above are the expectations for Focus Project Coaches; however, there are additional best practices to maximize the experience for both Fellows and Coaches:

- **Leverage your project planning experience.** It is not expected that Focus Project Coaches have the same professional backgrounds as Fellows. Rather, Coaches are selected because they are established professionals with experience in project planning and implementation. You may not be able to speak to the professional sectors a Fellow works in, but you will be able to share your practical experience navigating project management and provide general guidance and best practices.
- **Provide space for Fellows' ideas to evolve throughout the Leadership Institute.** When Fellows identify their Focus Project topic, it may be broad and not fully formed. Their idea may also be influenced by what they learn while attending their Institute. The role of the Coach is to encourage Fellows to talk through how lessons learned might apply to project planning or how specific content might help refine parts of their idea. For example, a session on public-private partnerships may result in Fellows engaging additional stakeholders in their projects. Coaches are not expected to have detailed knowledge of Institute programming but should aim to ask guiding questions to encourage the learning process.
- **Help Fellows connect with others and expand their network where possible.** It is not required that Focus Project Coaches provide networking connections for Fellows. However, if you know someone in your professional network working on a similar project or who would benefit from connecting with a Fellow, encourage them to network with each other.

Focus Project Resources

The following resources will be available to support Fellows and Coaches throughout the Focus Project process:

- **Pre-Fellowship Focus Project Worksheet** - During the pre-Fellowship period, Fellows watch [a short introductory lecture](#) and complete a worksheet that walks them through key questions for identifying a need in their community, business, or organization. The worksheet is intended to help them choose a topic for their project before the start of their Leadership Institute. Fellows have been asked to bring this worksheet to their first coaching session, so they are prepared to discuss their idea with their Coach. Fellows are required to complete this worksheet by May 23, and Institute staff have been encouraged to collect these worksheets to distribute to Coaches as time and resources allow. Please connect with your Institute point of contact about this resource.
- **Focus Project Toolkit** - At the start of their Leadership Institute, Fellows watch [a second introductory lecture](#) and receive the Focus Project toolkit, which is a comprehensive action-planning framework that walks Fellows through the stages of project planning. Fellows' ideas will develop over the course of the six-week Leadership Institute, and they will walk away with a clear plan to implement their project when they return home. However, implementation of the Focus Project is not a Fellowship requirement.
 - *Note: The 2022 Focus Project toolkit is still in development. The version linked above is from the 2021 Fellowship; however, updates will be minimal, and it is anticipated that the toolkit worksheets will be largely the same.*

What to Expect During Coaching Sessions

Below is a **suggested framework** for approaching each coaching session. These are examples for reference only and can be adapted based on your preferred approach or as you develop an understanding of the Fellow's goals and project idea.

Session 1

- **Introductions** - Take some time to get to know your Fellow and their work. Briefly share your professional journey and experience, particularly in project management and implementation.
- **Goals and Expectations** – Discuss your and the Fellow's goals for the coaching experience. The Fellow's project idea and professional pursuits will largely drive their goals. Share why you decided to participate in this experience and what you hope to gain. Additionally, share any expectations you have for the coaching sessions, such as what the Fellow should have prepared and how you envision facilitating the discussion.
- **The Fellow's Idea** – As noted above, Fellows should come to their first coaching session with an idea for their project. Help them refine their idea by ensuring it is practical and achievable. If a Fellow's idea seems very broad, such as eradicating poverty in their country, ask them what they are doing now to address this and help them narrow in on a practical next step in addressing this need or issue. If Fellows do not have an idea at their

first session, dive further into their professional goals and suggest ideas based on what seems practical to achieve on a reasonable timeline.

Session 2

- **Status of their Idea** – Check in with the Fellow to see if their idea has adapted or changed since your first session. Ask how they are applying their learnings from the Institute to their idea.
- **Discuss the Project’s Goals and Objectives** – Worksheet 3 in the Focus Project toolkit asks Fellows to develop a goal and three SMART objectives for their project. Provide feedback on their goal and objectives to ensure they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound). Ask questions to help Fellows think through the practicality of their goals and objectives. Do they seem feasible to achieve within the timeframe they have set for themselves?

Session 3

- **Planned Activities** – In worksheet 4 of the Focus Project toolkit, Fellows are asked to identify the activities they need to implement to achieve their project objectives. Provide feedback on these activities to ensure they are practical and achievable based on the Fellow’s available resources. Help the Fellow think through how each activity will work towards the overall goal of their project.
- **Implementation** – While it is not required that Fellows implement their action plan after the Fellowship, discuss what implementation would look like using worksheet 5 of the toolkit. Worksheet 5 asks Fellows to identify the key responsible person(s), timeframe, and indicators of success for each of the activities they identified in worksheet 4. Ensure that the identified timeframes are reasonable for achieving each activity and that the indicators are easy to track and accurately reflect the success of each activity.
- **Wrapping Up** – Help the Fellow think through any challenges they may face and how to overcome them. Encourage them to implement their learnings from the Fellowship when they return home and use the Focus Project as an ongoing resource for their professional pursuits.