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July 1, 2022

American India Foundation’s Banyan Impact Fellowship Launches a New Era of US-India Bridge Building

In July 2022, American India Foundation’s (AIF) Banyan Impact Fellowship (BIF) will host its inaugural cohort of social change professionals from India to serve in US-based organizations, amplifying the program’s goal of fostering lasting ties between India and the US. Since inception in 2001, BIF has selected, trained, and supported 512 Fellows—from the US and India—and placed them with 218 partner organizations across 25 Indian states to scale impact, catalyze change, and build the next generation of changemakers. With COVID-19 imposed travel restrictions lifting globally, the program will not only resume full-scale operations around its classical model of service in India, but will also establish a new opportunity for service in the US.

In 2022, BIF is partnering with Atlas Corps to place—for the first time in AIF history—5 fellows from India in the United States, embedding them with US-based organizations and further cementing AIF’s mission to build a bridge between these two powerful democracies. AIF will continue to independently place 25 Indian and US fellows with India-based organizations for a rigorous and transformative 10-14-month service-learning program.

Now in its third decade of operations, BIF is an immersive, dynamic, bi-national volunteer service program with crucial strategic importance in the US-India corridor, strengthening ties between both countries and creating the next generation of leaders committed to positive and sustainable change. Through its emphasis on a service-leadership model, BIF places young professionals from the US and India in service with communities and organizations across both countries for mutual learning, capacity building, and leadership development in support of social justice goals.

Fellows engage in service and fieldwork on projects linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across diverse thematic areas such as education, public health, livelihoods, social inclusion, minority rights, Dalit and tribal rights, climate justice, LGBTQ+ rights, gender, arts, sports, corporate social responsibility, and more. The inaugural 2022 Fellows from India will be deployed in Chicago and Washington DC-based nonprofits and social enterprises in the fields of agriculture, social justice, and public affairs.

“AIF is honored to deepen and expand our commitment towards bolstering US-India ties that will be critical to shaping the next generation of global, socially-responsible leaders who will strive together to build a better world,” said Nishant Pandey, CEO of AIF. “We want to support our Fellows to create an ecosystem of positive change to amplify each other’s impact. Bringing Indian Fellows to the US for the first time is a significant step towards mobilizing a collective, cross-generational force towards sustainable impact,” added Lata Krishnan, co-chair of AIF.

Generously supported by the Krishnan-Shah Family Foundation and the Rural India Supporting Trust, BIF is an exemplar of “living bridge” of collaboration, impact, and social change between India and the US aimed at creating lasting, meaningful, generational social change, while strengthening civil society in India and contributing to India's achievement of the SDGs 2030 goals.
About American India Foundation

The American India Foundation is committed to catalyzing social and economic change in India and building a lasting bridge between the United States and India through high-impact interventions in education, livelihoods, public health, and leadership development, with a particular emphasis on empowering girls and women to achieve gender equity. Working closely with local communities, AIF partners with NGOs to develop and test innovative solutions and with governments to create and scale sustainable impact. Founded in 2001 at the initiative of President Bill Clinton following a request from Prime Minister Vajpayee, AIF has impacted the lives of 12.9 million of India’s poor in 35 states and union territories.

About Atlas Corps

Atlas Corps, founded in 2006, engages emerging social change leaders from around the world in training activities to develop leaders, strengthen organizations, build a community, and advance positive social impact. The core leadership programs are the Fellowship (12-18 months of service at a U.S.-based organization) and the Virtual Leadership Institute (5-7 months of programming), both of which focus on the core concepts of developing self, developing others, and leading movements. Atlas Corps has also been recognized as a “best practice” in international exchange by the Brookings Institution and World Economic Forum and featured in the Washington Post and Forbes as a model social entrepreneurship program. The Atlas Corps Community includes 1,400 leaders from 115 countries and 400+ Host Organizations. To date, Atlas Corps has engaged 84 professionals from India in its leadership development programs.

For any queries about the Fellowship Program or AIF, please contact Dr. Björn Technau, Program Manager, Banyan Impact Fellowship, at bjoerntechnau@aif.org or Kalpana Kanthan, Director of Strategic Initiatives, at Kalpana.Kanthan@aif.org