

# Ruckelshaus Fellowship

2020-2021  
APPLICATION GUIDE

Meridian builds understanding, guides collaboration, and  
drives action to address our world's complex challenges.



## ABOUT MERIDIAN INSTITUTE

# Who We Are

For over twenty years, Meridian has helped our partners solve the problems that shape our world. Our track record sets us apart—and so does our unique approach.



Meridian Institute is a mission-driven, non-profit organization that has helped our clients and partners develop and implement solutions to complicated, often controversial problems—big and small, global and local—for over two decades.

We do this with an innovative approach that brings together three elements: our deep understanding of the issues at hand, as well as the

people, politics, and power dynamics that surround them; our dedicated, expert team; and our ability to foster constructive discussions, manage decisions, and support actions that shape the world for the better. We work not only to shape meaningful consensus and action in the near term, but also to build our partners' capacity for cooperation that often continues for years, even decades.

We focus on five key services: collaboration, implementation, strategy, research, and philanthropic support. We bring our skills to bear on a diverse range of issues, including environment & natural resources, climate change, agriculture & food systems, forests, health, oceans & coasts, resilience, science & technology, and water. Across issues, boundaries, and systems, our work is a catalyst for powerful impact.

Effective collaborative decision-making requires inclusion of different perspectives and involves bringing together participants with diverse backgrounds. As an organization, we seek staff that reflects and values that same diversity and has experience working in multicultural settings.

LEFT: Meridian staff and Ruckelshaus Fellows after a day spent on Capitol Hill, bringing together CEOs and Senators to discuss the business case for bipartisan climate action

I work at Meridian because it is a fast-paced, engaging workplace that gives me opportunities to flex my strategic thinking skills in service to a broad suite of complex challenges and topic areas.

— Madelyn Smith  
2019-2021 Ruckelshaus Fellow

The Meridian Institute Fellowship Program provides an opportunity for early-career professionals to contribute to Meridian's mission to help people collaborate to solve complex problems, make informed decisions, and implement solutions that improve lives, the environment, and the economy. Fellows are engaged in varied and highly complex issues, learn about multi-party collaborative problem solving from experienced facilitators, and work directly with leaders from diverse sectors and interest groups. The Fellowship is a two-year, full-time position and typically assigned to work in Meridian's Dillon, CO or Washington, DC offices. Given COVID-19, Meridian staff have been working remotely since March 2020, and will continue to for the foreseeable future. Fellows who are selected will begin work in June 2021 or earlier.

Meridian Fellows typically work on several project teams focused on various topics over the course of their time at Meridian. Projects range from one-month efforts focused on facilitating a single meeting to multi-year projects where Meridian oversees the development, design, and implementation of an ongoing collaborative initiative. Fellows contribute research, writing, project management, and other types of support to teams. They can be responsible for a wide range of duties, which differ depending on the project team assignments as well as the individual's skillsets and interests.

The Ruckelshaus Fellowship honors Bill Ruckelshaus—Meridian's founding Board Chair—and his commitment to collaborative policymaking. The Honorable William D. Ruckelshaus served in several presidential appointments, including as the first Environmental Protection Agency administrator, shaping the agency's guiding principles.

## ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

# Our Ruckelshaus Fellowship

Fellows engage in varied and complex issues, learn about multi-party collaborative problem solving from experienced facilitators, and work directly with leaders from diverse sectors and interest groups.



Through the Fellowship, I gained a deep understanding and respect for the intricacies of environmental challenges—particularly the people, politics, and motivations that drive decision-making. The Fellowship has undoubtedly been the most valuable experience of my professional career.

— Anya Shapiro  
2016-2018 Ruckelshaus Fellow

# Fellowship Structure

The Fellowship will begin by June 2021 and is a two-year position, contingent upon performance and needs of the organization. Meridian hires Fellows for the position of Project Assistant (full job description linked [here](#)) to support projects on a variety of substantive topic areas. Past Fellows have been involved in work with global and domestic agriculture and food security, climate change, water management, and community and global resilience, among other topics.

The Meridian Fellowship offers opportunities for personal and professional development. By working in an active, exciting, and dynamic professional environment, Meridian Fellows can expect to:

- Develop the ability to think critically about complex issues and analyze participant interests and process dynamics.
- Help identify and learn to respond appropriately to concerns and problems that can arise in complex and challenging collaborative processes.
- Actively manage numerous tasks toward the completion of a project.
- Improve writing, research, and communication skills.
- Work under the guidance of experienced facilitators and mediators.

Meridian Fellows gain these skills through a combination of the projects they support and targeted professional development activities. Fellows may work on a variety of different projects or support one or two larger projects throughout their fellowship. The fellowship also includes formal growth opportunities such as annual Fellowship retreats, informal mentoring from peers and supervisors, networking opportunities, alumni network, and organizational resources to help Fellows refine their career goals. Periodic reviews of the Fellow's performance and professional goals will help ensure they are getting opportunities to grow. Fellows are encouraged to explore a variety of post-Fellowship career choices, including graduate school and employment with other organizations.

## Compensation & Benefits

First year Fellows are offered a salary of \$45,000 per year in a non-exempt position (\$21.64 per hour) and are eligible for overtime compensation. In the second year, Fellows receive set increases to account for growth and development within the program. Meridian offers an excellent benefits package including health, dental and vision insurance; employer contributions to a 401(k) plan; and vacation, sick, and holidays (alternative holidays available upon request and approval). In addition, Fellows are provided with a stipend of up to \$500 to support relocation expenses and are issued laptops and mobile phones in conjunction with employment. Washington, DC based Fellows are provided reimbursement of costs incurred by using public transit to commute to work.

# Typical Responsibilities

- Take detailed notes for internal and external videoconferences and meetings in order to document the range of perspectives, capture key points and next steps, and draft meeting summaries.
- Draft various types of documents including meeting summaries, research reports, surveys, interview synthesis and takeaways, press releases, letters, slide decks, and more.
- Conduct research, including tracking public policy developments, preparing literature reviews, identifying stakeholders, and gathering background information to support project teams in a variety of ways.
- Participate in and document interviews or otherwise engage participants in Meridian processes, including leaders of the private, non-profit, and government sectors.
- Assist in planning regional, national, and international projects and meetings.
- Support the preparation of grant proposals and grant reports, helping project teams effectively liaise with funders.
- Provide administrative support for client funded and inter-organizational project teams including, but not limited to attending and supporting domestic and/or international meetings, maintaining spreadsheets, including grant tracking spreadsheets and databases, and maintaining websites.

I am consistently floored by the opportunities I have to shape our projects, provide input, and manage key elements of world-changing efforts. We are trusted to learn, grow, and take on responsibility across a wide variety of content areas and types of projects.

– Hanna Khalil  
2020-2022 Ruckelshaus Fellow

## Our fellows have gone on to...



# Characteristics of Our Fellows

## REQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Successful applicants must have:

- Experience with qualitative and/or quantitative research.
- Strong attention to detail, copy-editing, and note-taking skills.
- Ability to handle multiple tasks at once, manage time effectively, and receive and balance direction from multiple Project Directors.
- Passion for the issues and work that Meridian is involved in, ability and willingness to learn, and ability to work independently and be self-motivated.
- Experience and enthusiasm for effectively working as part of a team. Ability to work with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Proficiency with Microsoft O365 (Word, Excel, Outlook, Teams, SharePoint, OneNote, PowerPoint) and other commonly used computer programs and technology, such as social media, as well as the ability to learn and deploy new and evolving technologies and tools.

## DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Preference will be given to candidates with the following characteristics:

- Interest or experience in collaborative decision-making, facilitation, or mediation.
- Experience with detailed notetaking, drafting meeting summaries, documenting interviews conducting surveys, researching and assembling background materials, and providing meeting and logistical support.
- Basic understanding of the institutional and political context in which public policies are deliberated.
- Substantive experience in Meridian topic areas.
- Experience with virtual collaboration tools, including Zoom, visual collaboration (e.g., Mural, Miro), and polling (e.g., Poll Everywhere).
- Online communications skills including experience with social media, managing website content in WordPress, and facility with platforms such as Twitter and MailChimp.
- Skills in graphic design for multiple platforms (web design, infographic creation, etc.), including the ability to create and develop visual responses to communication problems using knowledge of aesthetics and composition to construct meaningful images.
- Advanced technology competencies (e.g. qualitative research methods such as survey development and coding, template development, and database management).
- Experience in multicultural and/or international settings.
- Language skills at a full professional level in French and/or Spanish.



"Humble, impactful, connected."  
- Seth Blum



"Purposeful, inquisitive, hardworking."  
- Frances Burton



"Fast-paced, dedicated, passionate."  
- Hanna Khalil



## In their own words...

See what our current Ruckelshaus Fellows had to say when asked to describe Meridian in three words.



"Engaging, strategic, fast-paced."  
- Madelyn Smith



"Collaborative, dynamic, growth-oriented."  
- Meredith Soward



"Dynamic, engaging, varied."  
- Lily Weissgold

JOINING THE TEAM

# Application Process

Completed applications are due by 10 pm EST on Monday, February 1, 2021.



## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Meridian recognizes that our work is made stronger and more impactful by the contributions of diverse groups from around the world. At Meridian, we welcome people from all backgrounds and do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender

identity, disability, national origin, creed, class, ancestry, or other grounds. Meridian Institute is a participating employer in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security program, [E-Verify](#).

## HOW TO APPLY

Apply using the [Meridian Institute applicant portal](#). For the best experience, we recommend opening the applicant portal in either Chrome (version 30+), Safari (7+), Firefox (27+) or Microsoft Edge.

After registering your account and logging into the applicant portal, you will be directed to provide additional information related to your application and upload the following materials:

### 1. Cover Letter – 1 page

Drawing from your personal, professional, and academic experiences, please explain how you hope to contribute to Meridian as a Fellow and what you hope to gain from this opportunity.

### 2. Essay – 1 page

Meridian works on a variety of social and environmental policy issues including agriculture & food systems, climate change, environment & natural resources, forests, health, oceans & coasts, resilience, science & technology, and water. Briefly describe a critical public policy issue facing society today and suggest how a collaborative process could be effective in helping address that issue. If applicable, include details about which parties should be engaged and what challenges might be faced in trying to bring them together.

### 3. Resume – 1 page

Detail relevant education, training, experiences, and accomplishments.

## HIRING PROCESS

### What is the timeline for the hiring process?

The application period opens every year in December and closes in early February. Once applications are reviewed, the selected applicants will go through a two-phase interview process consisting of phone and video interviews. Interviews occur between February and March and final decisions are made by late March.

### When will I know whether or not I am moving forward in the selection process?

We do our best to communicate with applicants as we reach different stages in the hiring process. The application portal will note when your application has been selected to move forward in our process, and we will reach out to schedule an interview.

### I missed the application period; can I still apply?

Unfortunately, no. All applications must be submitted through our application portal, which has a firm timeline for each phase of our process. We hire for Fellows annually, so we encourage you to apply during the next application period.

### When does the fellowship begin?

Each Fellowship term begins in June. Exact start dates are determined by project assignment to allow for overlap between new Fellows and exiting Fellows. Selected Fellows will coordinate the logistics and timing of their start dates with Meridian, following an offer of employment.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

# Frequently Asked Questions

Included are responses to some frequent questions submitted by Fellowship candidates. For additional information, please email [fellowship@merid.org](mailto:fellowship@merid.org).



My teammates place a trust in me to not only get work done, but to lead. In addition, I find the highly collaborative, all-hands-on-deck nature of my projects to be rewarding. I learn something every day and no two days are the same. I feel lucky to be intellectually engaged by my job, not something most of my friends in entry-level positions can say.

– Lily Weissgold  
2020-2022 Ruckelshaus Fellow



## APPLICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

### **Will candidates with master's degrees be considered for the fellowship?**

No. The Fellowship is an entry-level position best suited for recent undergraduates hoping to gain professional development and career learning opportunities. Those with advanced degrees or those already enrolled in an advanced degree program would be better suited for higher level positions at Meridian. Please check our website periodically for alternative opportunities.

### **Are non-US citizens eligible to apply?**

All candidates who apply must be authorized to work in the United States. International applicants are only eligible if they are authorized to work in the United States and do not require any visa assistance.

### **Should I submit letters of recommendation with my application materials?**

No. Please only provide the names and contact information for three references. This is requested as a part of the online application form, so you do not need to include them on your resume. The hiring team will contact them later in the selection process should your application advance.

### **To whom should I address my cover letter?**

A selection committee will be reviewing your application materials. Please address cover letters to "Meridian Institute Fellowship Selection Committee."

### **What type of formatting is preferred for my resume and cover letter?**

We have no specification on the design elements of your applications materials. Please use whatever template you feel is professional and remember to stay within the 1-page limit.

### **Does the topic of my application essay matter? Should I write about something that Meridian Institute works on?**

No. The subject can be anything that you believe to be a critical public policy issue. The essay is evaluated for writing ability and knowledge of collaborative processes. Please note that the essay prompt asks the applicant to identify stakeholders and the challenges that could exist in bringing them together.

### **Does the application essay require a specific citation format?**

Including citations is optional, so we do not have any requirements on formatting. If you do choose to include citations, please note that they do not count towards the page limit.

**The Fellowship offers the opportunity to work in multiple different roles on a variety of projects and focus areas... in some ways, it's like many entry-level positions rolled into one.**

## POSITION LOCATIONS

### What is it like to live and work in Washington, DC?

Our Washington, DC, office is located downtown near Farragut North, at the heart of our nation's capital. The District is home to a vibrant culture and is a wonderful place to network with others working in the policy arena. Young professionals have access to a variety of opportunities, such as networking happy hours and events that focus on Meridian's top cities.

### What is it like to live and work in Dillon, CO?

Our Dillon, CO office is the organization's headquarters and located 70 miles west of Denver in the Rocky Mountains at 9,100 feet in elevation. Dillon is a picturesque location and a major tourist destination for adventurers of all types. In the winter, the community draws people near and far for skiing/snowboarding at 7 nearby resorts. In the summer, people come looking for retreat from the heat by hiking, biking, camping, and taking in the scenery.

### How is the position location decided?

Due to COVID-19, work in Meridian Institute's physical offices is restricted and only available in limited capacity. As of March 2020, staff have been working remotely and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. However, we do ask all candidates to identify a preference for work location even though there is no timeline for relocation. When determining the location, the candidate's preference is the primary factor. Other factors can be office space availability and the geographic location of specific projects, but Fellows are not asked to work in a location that does not match their preference. For this reason, we do not recommend candidates select "either location" if they would not be willing to live and work in one of our locations.



## OTHER

### **What project areas will I work on as a fellow?**

Fellows are typically hired to play generalist roles and are assigned to a variety of projects teams. A fellow may work on anywhere from 4 - 12 projects at any given time, depending on the complexity and time commitment of the project assignments. This model helps expose Fellows to many different areas of our work, a valuable piece of the Fellowship experience. There can be times when we have the need for a specialist in an issue area and a Fellow may have direct relevant experience or interest to fit that role. Fellows will also be asked to work on project areas where they may not have prior interest or experience. Ultimately, the project assignments are made by those tracking our labor resources and making decisions based on project needs.

### **Do fellows work overtime hours?**

There will be periods when project deadlines and urgent needs require a Fellow to work overtime. When these needs occur, Fellows may experience longer workdays or work weeks.

### **What travel opportunities are there for fellows?**

Fellows may be asked to travel domestically and/or internationally to complete project work. This could involve attending and taking notes at a conference, participating in a strategy session, conducting on-the-ground interviews, or any range of responsibilities. Due to COVID-19 and current travel restrictions, Fellows are less likely to travel in the near term.

### **What professional development opportunities are there for fellows?**

Professional development occurs primarily through on-the-job exposure to process design, collaborative problem-solving, and facilitation. Fellows may also access professional hours to pursue opportunities that fall outside the scope of their project work. Fellows are provided an allowance of funds each year to be used towards activities like:

- Getting coffee or lunch with a contact;
- Conducting informational interviews;
- Attending webinars or seminars or completing an in-person or online training for a particular skill (ex: Excel, Tableau, etc.); and
- Participating in an external conference or meeting.

**Thank you for your interest in the Ruckelshaus Fellowship! We look forward to your application. Please reach out to [fellowship@merid.org](mailto:fellowship@merid.org) with any further inquiries.**