Microsoft

Microsoft TechSpark Fellows Impact Report 2026



Microsoft

A Message from Our Team

Communities that power AI should be among the first to benefit from it

"When we invest in local leaders, we strengthen whole communities. This year, Microsoft made that a company commitment. Through Community-First AI Infrastructure, we have committed to strengthen these regions we build in, by growing workforce development and investing in local nonprofits. TechSpark Fellows are key leaders and conveners teaching us so much about community while they build their own."



Mike Egan
General Manager
Microsoft TechSpark

Investing in Communities Spreading AI Adoption

After three years, the pattern is consistent. Local leaders who learn AI teach it to everyone around them, and this report is a record of that work.

They work in education, workforce development, and nonprofit leadership, and this year they put AI to work in ways their communities could use. They built it into how their organizations run, and then they taught other organizations to do the same. Eighty-six percent embedded AI into their operations, and 80 percent created measurable impact at the community level.

I am proud of this cohort and grateful for their willingness to lead, experiment, and share what they learned.



Michelle Schuler
Senior U.S. Manager
Microsoft TechSpark

3 Years
of Fellows Impact

59,600+
upskilled individuals

1,500+
partners mobilized into a trusted ecosystem

$298.4M+
in funding

Cumulative impact reported by TechSpark Fellows over three years.

About the Program

Microsoft TechSpark advances opportunity, digital transformation, and job creation in communities across the United States. The TechSpark Fellows program invests directly in nonprofit organizations nationally. Each Fellow organization names a leader to serve as a Fellow, who receives coaching, training, and a national peer network, and uses it to bring digital skills and AI into the communities they already serve.

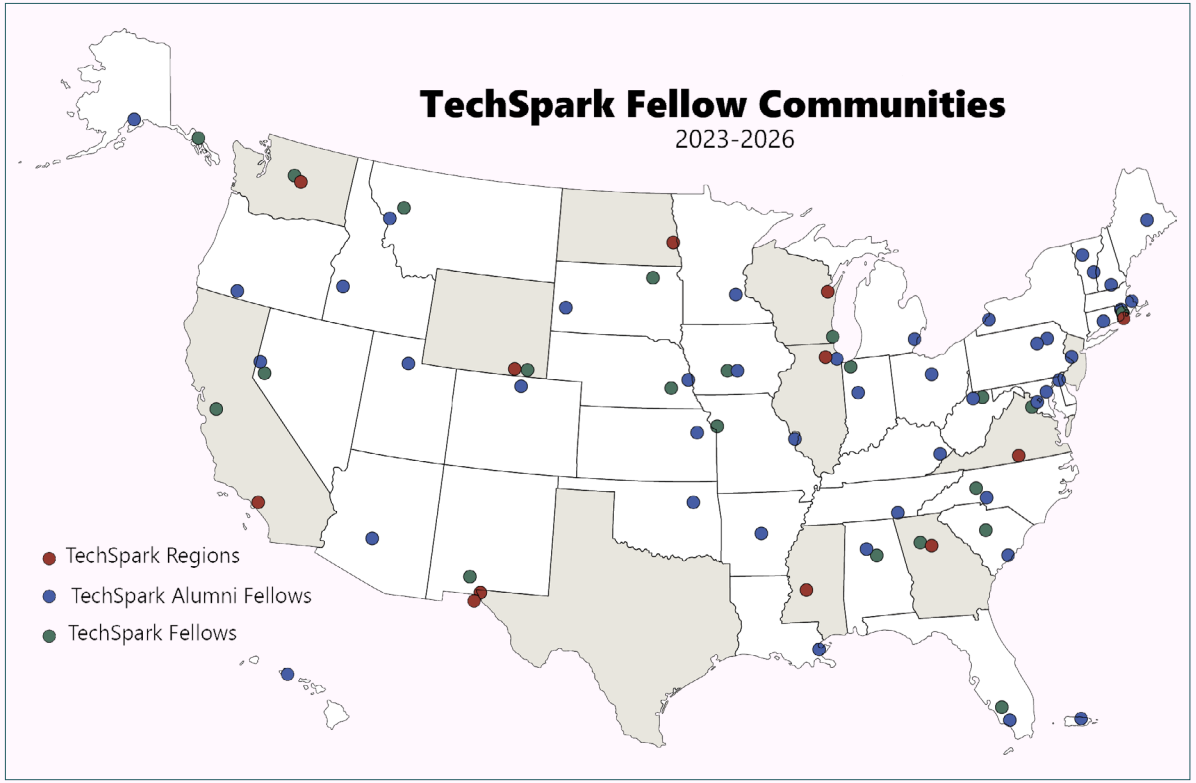
TechSpark uses a shared Learn, Explore, Implement, Sustain approach to turn local collaboration into real change. See the full model in the TechSpark Playbook.

67
Fellows: 24 new, 43 alumni

50
States

10 of the 24 first-year Fellows lead organizations in Microsoft datacenter communities.

Under Community-First AI Infrastructure, Microsoft has committed to invest in local AI training and nonprofits in these communities. The Fellows deliver that commitment locally, extending Microsoft's presence beyond infrastructure to established community leaders.



TechSpark is the initiative.
The Fellows program is how it reaches individual leaders on the ground.

Microsoft

Three Years of Growth

Over three years, the Fellowship evolved from building awareness to building lasting capability. Fellows first explored new tools, then integrated them into their organizations, and today many are helping others adopt AI in their communities.

A typical fellowship is two years, after which the Fellow becomes an Alumni Fellow and the work continues through alumni, partnerships, and the leaders carrying it forward.

After moving through learn, exploration, and implementation, Fellows and Alumni Fellows reach sustaining AI use. Two-thirds of responding Fellows and Alumni Fellows have moved their work into the Implement or Sustain stage, and every Alumni Fellow who responded is still applying or sharing what they learned well beyond the grant year.

Over three years, the work matured as fast as it spread.

FY24 *Digital Skills*
AI exploration

→

FY25 *AI Readiness*
AI strategy

→

FY26 *AI Diffusion*
AI adoption

Beyond the grant year



"The knowledge of AI shared in this program has transformed our organization into one that uses AI heavily.

The connection as alumni keeps the flow of vital information and resources coming our way, and we are profoundly grateful."

— Donna Hylton, STEAM Train, Inc., CT

STEAM Train built internal AI capability, trained its community, and continues growing as an Alumni Fellow. The organization is now moving toward a contracted training model.

From one leader to community impact

Lasting change often begins with one leader. As Fellows build confidence and practical AI skills, those changes move into their organizations and eventually into the communities they serve.

You

Leaders who once approached AI with hesitation became confident practitioners and teachers, using it in planning, communications, and service delivery.

Your Organization

As Fellows applied what they learned, their organizations turned exploration into practice. By year-end, 86% had built AI into how their organization runs.

Your Community

The reach extended into schools, workforce programs, and nonprofit networks. 80% reported creating impact at the community level.



One Leader, Growing Impact



Aaron Casillas began by using AI to bring more structure and follow-through to his work. As those practices took hold, they spread into reporting, broadband initiatives, and community partnerships across New Mexico. What started as personal learning evolved into stronger organizational capacity and broader community impact.

"The TechSpark Fellows program gave me more than tools. It gave me a community and a discipline for turning technology into follow-through."

— Aaron Casillas, Mycelia Foundation, NM

Insights from the Field

In smaller communities, trust often shapes whether people are willing to try something new.

Fellows found that AI was easier to introduce when it came through local leaders, familiar networks, and practical examples.

Smaller Communities, Deeper Roots

In smaller communities, progress often begins with the people who are already doing the work. Fellows helped organizations and communities build skills, strengthen relationships, and create the confidence needed to keep moving forward.

In Alaska, educators gained practical opportunities to learn and experiment with AI. In Nevada, local leaders used trusted partnerships to move ideas into action. Across the network, progress often grew through relationships, local knowledge, and solutions that felt relevant to everyday community needs.



Meeting People Where They Are

When Montana Digital Academy first introduced AI learning opportunities, participation was lower than expected. The team found more success when it brought learning into conferences, curriculum meetings, and professional gatherings educators already attended. The approach lowered barriers to participation and helped AI feel relevant to everyday work.

> "By bringing learning to places where people already gather, we were able to make AI feel more accessible and relevant for educators and communities across Montana."
>
> — Caitlin Byers, Montana Digital Academy, MT

Impact by the Numbers in 2026

The three-year totals show scale. This year's results, drawn from the year-end Impact Survey (50 of 67 Fellows responding), show the program is working this year and gaining speed.

Adoption that Lasted



Capability lift

89% of Fellows improved their AI abilities, 76% of them significantly.

86% embedded AI into their organization's operations or workflows.

80% created measurable impact at the community level.



Microsoft tools in the field

Fellows drew on a mix of Microsoft tools, most often LinkedIn Learning (48%) and Copilot (44%), followed by Microsoft Learn (32%), Azure, and Teams. Beyond the tools, many valued TechSpark's own resources, from AI Learning Sprints and curriculum guides to the strategy roadmap and peer network, which they named among the most valuable parts of the program.

Based on self-reported responses from 50 current and alumni Fellows in the FY26 TechSpark Fellows Impact Survey.

AI Diffusion in Action

The real measure of the TechSpark Fellowship isn't how many people hear about AI. It's how fast a trusted local leader goes from curious to using it every day. That is where change in a community actually starts. Seventeen of 50 Fellows had never reached repeatable AI use before the Fellowship, and many others spent a year or more trying. Forty-three of them are now moving faster than their organization did before. With coaching, tools, and a peer network behind them, **74% now reach repeatable use within six months and 36% within three months.**

TechSpark compresses the path to working AI from "someday, or never" to a single season. Speed matters most in the communities where AI infrastructure is being built, because those communities should be among the first to benefit from it.

Jim Estep, High Technology Foundation, West Virginia's weather and climate datasets were too large to work through by hand, and he was stuck. Three months in, the roadblocks were gone.

"It changed our tactical and strategic operations."

He is now carrying that same shift to others across his industry.

Accelerating the use of AI across our communities

During this year of the program, each Fellow measured their AI adoption rate at the beginning and end of the program.

This year:

12% went from stalled in AI use to adopting new AI in under a year

48% accelerated their AI adoption by 50% faster

40% accelerated their AI adoption by 67% or greater





Microsoft

Building Community-First AI Infrastructure

The TechSpark Fellows program reflects Microsoft's Community-First AI Infrastructure commitment to strengthen communities through AI education, workforce development, and nonprofit capacity building. By supporting local leaders as they explore and apply AI in ways that address community needs, Fellows help ensure the benefits of AI reach the places and people who power its future.

Building Community-First AI Infrastructure - Microsoft On the Issues

Microsoft's Community-First AI Infrastructure 5-point plan

1. We'll pay our way to ensure our datacenters don't increase your electricity prices.
2. We'll minimize our water use and replenish more of your water than we use.
3. We'll create jobs for your residents.
4. We'll add to the tax base that funds local hospitals, schools, parks, and libraries.
5. **We'll strengthen your community by investing in local AI training and non-profits.**

All 67 Fellow organizations are nonprofits.

> Microsoft has done a great job bringing together leaders and communities to solve complex problems. I appreciate their commitment to local communities, support of nonprofits, openness to learning and leadership in the tech industry.
>
> **— Molly Kruger, Climb Wyoming, WY**

"The majority of people in Arizona are concerned about datacenter growth. As a tech leader in my community who is a strong AI advocate, I must also advocate for what my communities are concerned about so we can build trust and consensus across both sides of the aisle."

— Diana Lee Guzman, Coding in Color, Phoenix, AZ

The Leaders Behind the Work

Building Momentum

The profiles that follow represent communities, organizations, and leaders from across the Fellows network.

While their work looks different from place to place, many describe the same experience: learning alongside peers, building new relationships, and finding practical ways to move ideas forward.

Vinod Kumar Ahuja
Florida Gulf Coast University Foundation, FL

As a first-year Fellow, Vinod found that coaching, peer learning, and regular connections with other Fellows were among the most valuable parts of the experience.

Those relationships helped strengthen his work and informed how FGCU continues building opportunities for AI learning in Southwest Florida.



What Fellows Take Back to Their Communities

Confidence
The skills and confidence to lead new conversations.

Community
A network of peers, partners, and support.

Credibility
The visibility and momentum to open new doors.

Capacity
Programs, practices, and collaboration that continue beyond the fellowship years.

Together, these outcomes describe what Microsoft's commitment to invest in local AI training and nonprofits delivers at the individual level.

Microsoft

Meet the Fellows

1 National Network

67 Fellows & Alumni Fellows

50 States

Use this linked index to go directly to each Fellow and Alumni Fellow profile.

Current Fellows:

- **AK** Alaska Council of School Administrators
- **AL** Innovation Depot
- **AR** Heartland Forward
- **AZ** Fresh Start
- **CA** NPower Inc.
- **FL** Florida Gulf Coast University
- **GA** Compudopt
- **IA** YJI TechConnect
- **IL** Illinois Science & Technology Coalition
- **IN** United Way Northwest Indiana
- **MO** WeCode KC
- **MT** Montana Digital Academy
- **NC** STEM West
- **NE** Invest Nebraska
- **NM** Mycelia Foundation
- **NV** Western Nevada College
- **RI** Skills for RI
- **SC** United Way Association of SC - SC 211
- **SD** Northern State University Innovation & Startup Center
- **VA** Rosie Riveters
- **WA** NCW Tech Alliance
- **WI** Racine Unified School District
- **WV** Generation West Virginia
- **WY** Climb Wyoming

Alumni Fellows:

- **AZ** Coding in Color
- **CO** Innosphere
- **CT** STEAM Train, Inc.
- **DE** Upendo United Foundation
- **HI** Project Vision Hawaii
- **IA** Pi515
- **ID** Idaho Technology Council
- **KS** IBSA, Inc.
- **LA** Nolavate Black
- **MA** CSforMA, Inc.
- **MD** Code in the Schools
- **ME** Educate Maine
- **MI** Sistahs Reachin' Out (SRO)
- **MN** TechFluent
- **MO** Neighborhood Innovation Center
- **NC** Apparo
- **NE** Code Black Professional Tech Network
- **NH** United Way of Greater Nashua
- **NY** TechBuffalo
- **OH** Richland Community Development Group
- **OR** Taylor Hampton-Tinkham (individual)
- **PA** JobsFirst NEPA
- **PA** JGreater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry
- **SD** Elevate Rapid City
- **USA** Center on Rural Innovation (CORI)
- **UT** Tech-Moms
- **VT** Technology for Tomorrow
- **WV** High Technology Foundation

Profiles included in this report are based on information submitted through the 2025-2026 reporting process. All 67 Fellows and Alumni Fellows participating in the network are recognized on Page 38.

This year's TechSpark program also included datacenter communities. Each of those Fellows is indicated with the following symbol:

TECHSPARK FELLOW

ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Leadership, Unity, and Advocacy for Public Education

Juneau, AK | K-12, Educators or Administrators



> I have approached AI over the past two years looking for practicality through the hype. I am now excited about guiding our professional learning rollout this spring.
>
> — Sam Jordan

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

The Alaska Council of School Administrators built a professional learning program on classroom uses of AI, opening with a statewide summit in Anchorage in January 2026 alongside district leaders, Code.org, and AI for Education, and continuing with two webinar series in the spring. The team is moving deliberately, aware many schools are weighing AI against tight budgets and the daily demands of academics and student wellbeing.

IMPACT

What began as scattered curiosity is becoming a coordinated statewide effort. The program reached 190 Alaska educators, and 25 schools now use AI in their teaching. In the fall, the work moves to policy, bringing the state's superintendents into decisions about how AI is used across districts.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

INNOVATION DEPOT

Build Faster. Raise Smarter. Scale Here.

Birmingham, AL | Startup / Entrepreneurship



> TechSpark gave us the confidence to move early on AI, turning early experimentation into practical support for founders and the entrepreneurs we serve.
>
> — Ritchie Kruunenberg

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Innovation Depot found teaching AI as a standalone topic did not land, because founders were focused on immediate business problems. So it built the tools into work founders were already doing, like customer discovery, market research, and prototyping, across its Voltage and Boost programs.

IMPACT

AI is now woven into how Innovation Depot supports founders and runs day to day, a practical tool rather than a novelty. About 125 founders across Alabama use it as a regular part of building a company, and 35 of the startups it supports run it in daily operations.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Ten of the 24 first-year Fellows are based in Microsoft datacenter communities. Community-First AI Infrastructure commits Microsoft to invest in those communities, and the Fellows deliver that investment locally.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

HEARTLAND FORWARD

A Think-and-Do Tank

Bentonville, AR | Adult Skilling



> TechSpark helped us listen closely to students, small businesses, and entrepreneurs as we refined an AI skills simulation. That feedback made the work stronger and helped rural students build confidence in seeing AI as part of their future.
>
> — Mary Larkin Furlow

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Heartland Forward built an AI skills simulation for rural students and small business owners. When virtual-only outreach did not draw the engagement it wanted, the team visited schools in person to see what students were building and answer questions, and participation grew.

IMPACT

Rural students who used the AI skilling platform grew more confident with the tools, and a few said it changed their plans after high school. They now intend to pursue computer engineering, game design, and other AI-connected fields, futures many had not pictured for themselves before.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

FRESH START

We Empower Women to Succeed

Phoenix, AZ | Adult Skilling



> Fresh Start helped a participant move from workforce training into a datacenter technician role. 'Having someone in my corner gave me so much confidence, and I'm excited to begin this new chapter.'
>
> — Abdu Dahr

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

Staff and participants at Fresh Start were hesitant about AI at first, so the organization focused on real, everyday uses rather than the technology itself. By showing how AI could help with writing, research, and job searching, and encouraging people to start small, it built comfort and steady use.

IMPACT

For women rebuilding their careers, AI is now part of how Fresh Start coaches them toward work, from resumes to job searches. The program reached 260 women, and the team calls it one of the more meaningful changes in how it operates.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: In rural and small markets, trusted local leadership accelerates adoption, and small numbers can still mean deep community change.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

NPOWER INC.

Creating a new pipeline to the digital workforce

San Jose, CA | Adult Skilling



> TechSpark shifted how we approach growth in the Bay Area. We are building deeper partnerships with communities and leaders, creating stronger access to opportunity and a more sustainable path to impact.
>
> — Bertha Haro

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

NPower rebuilt how it approaches fundraising in the Bay Area, choosing to lead with listening rather than asking. The team spent more time understanding local priorities and building relationships before making requests, which slowed things down at first but drew partners from casual interest into real alignment.

IMPACT

Fundraising shifted from a reactive, campaign-by-campaign effort into a steadier, more strategic practice built on listening. The change reached beyond NPower's own walls: about 60 of the organizations it works with across the Bay Area now use AI in their own operations.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY

Unlock Your Potential on an Extraordinary Journey

Fort Myers, FL | Higher Education; Educators; Students



> The TechSpark Fellows Program elevated FGCU's regional visibility, accelerated AI program development through coaching and peer learning, strengthened cross-campus collaboration, and helped position Southwest Florida as a growing hub for AI innovation and community impact.
>
> — Vinod Kumar Ahuja

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Florida Gulf Coast University expected its AI programming to draw mostly from campus, and was surprised when nearly half of registrations came from the wider Southwest Florida community: professionals, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit leaders who could not find practical AI education elsewhere.

IMPACT

In its first year, the university's AI Summer Academy and AI Day reached close to 940 people across Southwest Florida, from students to nonprofit leaders, with 97% of AI Day respondents saying the event increased their understanding of AI. The university has become a regional anchor for practical AI learning.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Fellows in datacenter regions report a different starting point. Introducing AI there means engaging with what the community already thinks about the infrastructure around them.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

COMPUDOPT

Empowering Communities Through Technology

Atlanta, GA | Adult Skilling



> Before TechSpark, we did not have an AI policy. Now we have one in place, and that foundation is helping us expand AI in tech education programming and support workforce-aligned digital skills more responsibly.
>
> — Leisa Minor

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Compudopt put its first AI policy in place, something it did not have before the fellowship, and worked through the practical challenge of getting everyone on staff using the same tools.

IMPACT

With its first AI policy in place, Compudopt built more AI into its tech-education programming, reaching about 500 learners, and aligned a digital-skills pilot with real workforce pathways. Twenty-five organizations have engaged with the work so far.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

YJI TECHCONNECT

West Des Moines, IA | Students or Learners



> TechSpark helped me move from seeing AI as intimidating to using it with confidence to create, teach, and make a greater impact in my community.
>
> — Jodi Tschudin

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

YJI TechConnect tried to bring AI into the whole organization at once and ran into hesitation, so it started smaller. By showing staff real examples of how AI saved time and improved learning materials, it built comfort before scaling.

IMPACT

AI is now part of how TechConnect builds curriculum and teaches digital skills, and teenagers are learning to teach it to their own communities. The work gave paid, real-world experience to the 10 young people the program employs, blending workforce readiness with the chance to lead.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Fellows already know their communities' people, systems, and constraints. That is what makes the work move.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

ILLINOIS SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COALITION (ISTC)

From Idea to Impact

Chicago, IL | Education

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Skilling

FOCUS AREA

Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

Community

Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

As a first-year Fellow, we are exploring how AI can support student learning, program delivery, and internal operations, so far through pilot uses and a careful, age-appropriate introduction of AI to young people.

IMPACT

Our work is early. Through our Team-Based Challenge program we have engaged about 40 learners and three organizations, building students' AI literacy and workforce readiness while we learn to use AI responsibly.

Information is based on December 2025 project report.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

UNITED WAY NORTHWEST INDIANA

Valparaiso, IN | Adult Skilling



> "TechSpark is helping us design programs to bring proven AI upskilling opportunities to workers across Northwest Indiana."
>
> — Chris White

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA

Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

Individual

Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

United Way of Northwest Indiana learned it could not do the work alone. After announcing its focus on workers who fear losing jobs to AI, interest poured in from local colleges, universities, and nonprofits, and the organization set out to build a consortium.

IMPACT

Coverage in the Times of Northwest Indiana drew interest from seven local colleges, universities and nonprofits. The consortium now forming will train incumbent workers who fear losing jobs to AI, giving them skills that lead to job security and upward career mobility.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Ninety-two percent of Fellows rated the AI Learning Sprints, Fellowship Live!, and Fellows Summit among the most valuable parts of the program.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

WECODE KC

Coding A Pipeline of Future-Ready Professionals

Kansas City, MO | K-12; Educators; Students



> TechSpark gave our organization resources, support, and a community of leaders that helped us strengthen our impact. The network has created space for shared learning, inspiration, and growth beyond fundraising.
>
> — Tammy Buckner

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

WeCode KC tried a traditional curriculum in an urban-core school and it did not work, in part because of students' reading levels. So it rebuilt the approach around shorter, engaging lessons to teach AI the way students actually use it, with ethics and real-world problem-solving at the center.

IMPACT

The redesigned lessons reached about 250 students and educators in Kansas City's urban core, meeting kids a traditional curriculum had left out. Shorter and rooted in ethics and real problems, they gave teachers something usable and shifted how the school and community approach AI.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

MONTANA DIGITAL ACADEMY

Your School District's Partner for Expanded Learning Options

Missoula, MT | K-12, Educators or Administrators



> TechSpark gave the AI Playdate model room to grow. By bringing learning to the places where people already gather, we were able to make AI feel more accessible and relevant for educators and communities across Montana.
>
> — Caitlin Byers

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Montana Digital Academy found hosting its AI Playdates on a college campus did not draw the crowds it hoped for, since campuses can feel intimidating. So it took the Playdates to where educators already gather, like administrator and STEM conferences and summer curriculum meetings.

IMPACT

By taking its AI Playdates to conferences and gatherings educators already attend, Montana Digital Academy drew about 150 participants and made AI feel approachable rather than intimidating. The model is now spreading to more schools and communities across a big, rural state.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: The strongest evidence of impact is sustained behavior change, not learner counts.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

STEM WEST

Claremont, NC | K-12; Higher Education; Educators



"TechSpark helped us better understand how rural educators can be supported through practical, relevant professional development."

— Carol Moore

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

STEM West took time to understand the program and then identified a clear gap: rural educators in its region lack local support to learn AI. It set out to help fill that gap.

IMPACT

STEM West is hosting an AI Educator Day in July and building toward a standing professional-development role for the region, where few local resources exist for educators learning AI. Five partner organizations have joined the effort. The work is early, and the direction is set.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

INVEST NEBRASKA

Today's Entrepreneurs. Tomorrow's Business Leaders.

Lincoln, NE | Startup or Entrepreneurship



"Through TechSpark, I expanded my own AI journey and found a community of nonprofit leaders who understand the same challenges. The tools mattered, but the relationships have been just as meaningful."

— Jessie Rudolph

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Invest Nebraska first pointed startup founders to self-paced Microsoft Learn and LinkedIn Learning modules, and found it hard to keep busy entrepreneurs on track. It pivoted to one-on-one conversations to understand what each founder actually needed.

IMPACT

Acting as the top of the funnel for AI awareness in Nebraska's startup ecosystem, Invest Nebraska shared curated Microsoft resources through newsletters reaching nearly 3,000 people. One-on-one coaching followed, sparking real interest among founders in AI learning and industry certifications.

TechSpark 2026 Quote: "The TechSpark Fellows program helped turn AI from a conversation about fear into a movement focused on opportunity."
—Betsy Davies, Idaho Technology Council Foundation, ID

TECHSPARK FELLOW

MYCELIA FOUNDATION

Building Digital Infrastructure for Economic Growth

Las Cruces, NM | Nonprofit; Public Sector



> The TechSpark Fellows program gave me more than tools. It gave me a community and a discipline for turning technology into follow-through, meaning clearer decisions and more confidence in our rural broadband work.
>
> — Aaron Casillas

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

Mycelia first tried to use AI too broadly, as if one system could track and summarize everything at once. The sprawling approach created noise and made the work feel less trustworthy, so the team redesigned it around smaller workflows tied to real decisions.

IMPACT

AI became a practical operating layer for Mycelia's broadband, Student Connect, and reporting work, reaching about 600 people and helping 60 organizations across New Mexico move into using AI. The foundation also advised on AI for the state at a roundtable with a U.S. senator.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

WESTERN NEVADA COLLEGE

Carson City, NV | Higher Education



> TechSpark gave me the confidence, language, and support network to move ideas from concept to reality in the communities we serve.
>
> — Angela Holt

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

At Western Nevada College the work was already underway when the fellow joined, so rather than redefine it, the team focused on moving it from concept into implementation and getting up to speed quickly.

IMPACT

Joining a project already in motion, the team focused on moving it from concept to implementation. Staff gained the confidence and vocabulary to talk about AI's practical uses with colleagues and partners, and the college advanced a framework for responsible AI adoption, with governance and guidance for staff.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Fellows moved from curiosity to practical, sustained use, and then from using AI to teaching others how to use it.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

SKILLS FOR RI

Transforming lives through meaningful employment and economic mobility

Providence, RI

Skills for RI is focused on upskilling Rhode Islanders in AI and cybersecurity, and is mapping the Microsoft training resources available to make it accessible. The work is early, with the groundwork being laid to connect the state's workers to practical training.

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

FOCUS AREA

Adult Skilling



Nina Pande, TechSpark Fellow

Work is in development and information here reflects most recent communication.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

UNITED WAY ASSOCIATION OF SC - SC 211

Columbia, SC | Public Sector



"SC 211 was built to connect people with help. Through TechSpark, we are improving the text channel so residents can more easily search local resources and get connected to support."

— Elizabeth H.

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Innovation • Adoption

FOCUS AREA

Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

Individual

Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

SC 211 first played down how much it was innovating its text channel, and some partners wrongly assumed it was going tech-only. The more openly it talked about the work, in its annual report and public presentations, the more people got excited about building something new for the state.

IMPACT

Rebuilding its text channel with natural-language tools, SC 211 is making it easier for residents to find local help in plain language. Talking openly about the work deepened partnerships with about 25 agencies around disaster response, employment, and health, with a lean, under-funded program leading on innovation.

TechSpark 2026 Quote: "The power of AI is not replacing people. It is helping people access the right knowledge, at the right time, in a way they can actually use to build something real." **— John Chen, Neighborhood Innovation Center, MO**

TECHSPARK FELLOW

NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY INNOVATION & STARTUP CENTER

Building a Rural Tech Startup Ecosystem

Groton, SD | Higher Education



> The most impactful part of TechSpark has been the people. Being surrounded by leaders committed to education, innovation, AI, and their communities has been one of the most supportive experiences I have been part of.
>
> — Lindsey Huber

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Northern State University found starting with the technical side of AI lost students and community audiences, who assumed it was only for programmers. Shifting to practical, relatable examples from everyday life connected far better.

IMPACT

More than 200 students moved from asking whether AI would replace them to asking how to work alongside it, more willing to experiment and think critically. The work is reaching beyond campus too, including an upcoming AI session for Girl Scouts across four states.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

ROSIE RIVETERS

The Confidence to Try. The Courage to go Further.

Alexandria, VA | K-12



> TechSpark gave us space to listen, learn, and better understand how AI can support program design and workforce readiness. That foundation is helping us build stronger connections between K-12 learning, technology skills, and future opportunity.
>
> — Brittany Greer

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

In its first fellowship year, Rosie Riveters focused on listening and building relationships, reaffirming sustainable community work rests on strong partnerships. It spent the year strengthening connections with potential collaborators before building programs.

IMPACT

Rosie Riveters closed year one with ten new partner relationships and a clearer view of how AI, workforce readiness and foundational K-12 skills connect for the girls it serves. Three of those partners have begun using AI. Year two turns the connections into programs.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Fellows name the peer network and in-person convenings as the parts of the program they value most.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

NCW TECH ALLIANCE

Get Inspired. Expand Your Knowledge. Make Connections

Wenatchee, WA | K-12; Local Business



> Being part of the TechSpark community has been invaluable. It is a network of changemakers who show up with curiosity, generosity, and a real commitment to learning together.
>
> — Sue Kane

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

NCW Tech Alliance started by helping people find individual AI use cases, then shifted to something clearer: spotting whole categories of work AI handles well, like repetitive tasks or data analysis for decision-making. The shift cut guesswork and made the value obvious.

IMPACT

By helping people spot the categories of work AI handles well, the Alliance cut guesswork, and about 19 organizations have moved into using AI. A national community broadened its resource network and reshaped how it measures success, strengthening the rural regional tech ecosystem it serves.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Raising Racine, Together

Racine, WI | K-12



> My relationship with AI has shifted from a grammar tool to a thought partner in leadership, innovation, and learning design.
>
> — David Venne

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

For its Hour of AI event, Racine Unified planned heavy use of online tools, then hit access and platform limits. It pivoted to offline, hands-on activities exploring AI through collaboration and problem-solving, and found the offline version engaged students better.

IMPACT

The district launched NOVA Academy for students who needed something different from a traditional classroom, using personalized plans, mastery-based progress, and AI-supported tutoring. The approach reached about 1,900 students, giving disengaged learners a real path and a more personal experience at scale.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: The most valuable resource Fellows gained was not funding. It was connection.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

GENERATION WEST VIRGINIA

Equipping young West Virginians with key skills and career opportunities, ensuring their ability to thrive

Morgantown, WV | Adult Skilling



"Through TechSpark, Generation West Virginia's NewForce program helped create life-changing opportunities for West Virginians by combining accessible technology training, mentorship, and career support to prepare participants for sustainable careers in the digital economy."

— Tracy Samples

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Generation West Virginia builds AI into its NewForce program, a tuition-free, remote track training West Virginians for tech careers. It tried to engage employers on AI policy and found little interest yet, so it is focusing on preparing students directly.

IMPACT

For students in NewForce, the payoff is concrete. One described breaking out of a narrow data-labeling role into real data-analysis skills, ready to move his career forward. The tuition-free program engages about 100 partners to open technology careers for West Virginians.

TECHSPARK FELLOW

CLIMB WYOMING

Life-Changing Skills for Single Moms

Cheyenne, WY | Adult Skilling



"Microsoft excels at bringing together leaders and communities to solve complex problems. I deeply appreciate their commitment to local communities, nonprofit support, openness to learning, and leadership in the tech industry."

— Molly Kruger

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Climb Wyoming is still working out how to use AI as a search tool to navigate a complex training manual, a problem it has not cracked yet. A conversation with a TechSpark peer at the summit gave it new ideas to try.

IMPACT

Climb Wyoming is folding AI into the workflows behind its free career training for low-income single mothers, work that reaches more than 1,000 women and 2,000 children. Conversations with peers in the Fellows network are shaping how the team moves forward.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: What began as a fellowship is becoming a leadership pipeline.

TechSpark Alumni Fellows Network

This 2025-2026 TechSpark year introduced the alumni fellows network, a group of organizations that had previously gone through the TechSpark program and continue to support AI adoption in their communities. New as well is the **Fellows Alumni Leadership Council** (FALC). FALC, the formal TechSpark alumni leadership network, was established to create continuity, peer leadership, mentoring, cross-cohort collaboration, and strengthen the long-term impact of the national Fellows community.





The impact of the TechSpark Fellows program extends well beyond the fellowship year.

In 2026, 89% of the network's 43 Alumni Fellows remained connected to the network through learning opportunities, events, mentorship, storytelling, surveys, and other program activities. Engagement is tracked across these touchpoints, demonstrating continued connection and contribution long after the formal fellowship experience ends.

Our FALC Members

Stephanie Alphee • Sara Ceasar
Angie Cirone • Betsy Davies
Mike Gutman • Diana Lee Guzman
Jenny Hutchinson • Donna Hylton
Darrah Kauhane • Stephanie McKee
Shanie Mohamed • Angela Oechslie
Regina Reithii • Robbyn Scribner
Sabrina Short

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

CODING IN COLOR

Developing the future digital workforce through digital skilling, computer science and artificial intelligence education in Arizona

Phoenix, AZ | K-12; Students or Learners



> Connecting with a cohort solving similar challenges nationally helped me advocate for CS and AI education.
>
> — Diana Lee Guzman

FALC

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

Coding in Color runs AI Academies in Arizona's Title I schools, where students learn to build with AI and to weigh its benefits, limits, and ethics. The focus is as much on access as skill, reaching students who often have the least exposure to the technology.

LASTING IMPACT

Coding in Color's AI Academies reached 55 students in Arizona's Title I schools, giving young people with the least exposure a chance to build with AI. The work also reached beyond the classroom: its founder is now helping lead a statewide coalition for a shared computer science and AI education plan.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

INNOSPHERE

Innosphere

Scaling Science and Technology

Fort Collins, CO | Higher Education; Students or Learners



> Through Microsoft TechSpark, I've built a national network of trusted peers I can call on across the country. These relationships have created real opportunities for collaboration, learning, and shared progress.
>
> — Emily Wilson

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Innosphere started by assuming good training would lead to jobs, and learned training alone was not enough. It shifted to a demand-driven model, working directly with employers and startups to pinpoint real skill gaps and shape programs around them.

LASTING IMPACT

Through the NSF ASCEND Engine, cohort-based upskilling in digital and IT roles reached more than 600 learners without four-year degrees in rural and tribal communities. Tied to real employer demand rather than offered in isolation, the training connects people in overlooked places to the AI-driven economy.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Many Fellow organizations created responsible-use guidance during the fellowship year. Governance turns early experimentation into a more durable and trusted organizational practice.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

STEAM TRAIN, INC.

Moving Generations to STEM

Middletown, CT | Adult Skilling



FALC

> TechSpark helped us move from learning about AI to sharing that knowledge in ways that support both our organization and our community.
>
> — Donna Hylton

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

STEAM Train tested AI hands-on and found the paid version of Microsoft 365 Copilot far more useful for its real work than the free chat, so it invested in a subscription now helping most with grant writing.

LASTING IMPACT

STEAM Train passed what it learned straight to staff and community, and 35 of the groups it works with now use AI. One clear sign of the shift is its administrative assistant, who completes tasks with new confidence and no longer needs everything reviewed first.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

UPENDO UNITED FOUNDATION

Empowering a Generation One Child at a Time

Newark, DE | K-12; Higher Education; Educators



FALC

> AI (Copilot) has reduced my stress levels and helped me stay organized managing our organization.
>
> — Regina Reithii

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Running a foundation serving youth in both Delaware and Kenya stretches a small team, so Upendo turned to AI to handle the grind of grant work, using it to research, analyze, and organize its grants process.

LASTING IMPACT

With AI handling the grind of grant work, Upendo spends less time on paperwork and more with the young people it serves across Delaware and Kenya. The foundation is now teaching AI skills to young people and equipping the wider community to use the tools too.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Organizations adopted AI faster when leaders modeled its use, and organizational change was often the first visible sign of adoption.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

PROJECT VISION HAWAII

Increasing access to health and human services for the people of Hawai'i

Honolulu, HI | Nonprofit; Connectivity and Tech Adoption



"At first, we were all scared and skeptical. Now AI is part of our everyday work, helping us move beyond spreadsheets and build a custom data system to better support the communities we serve."

FALC

— Darrah Kauhane

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

Project Vision Hawaii jumped into AI without a technology foundation to build on, which made the early going hard. It found its footing by starting from where its data actually lived: scattered Excel spreadsheets.

LASTING IMPACT

What lived in scattered spreadsheets is now a custom data system, built around the organization's work with some of Hawaii's most vulnerable residents, people with lived experience of homelessness and incarceration. Project Vision is now moving toward mapping resources for other nonprofits across the state.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

PI515

Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders

Des Moines, IA | K-12; Educators; Students



"TechSpark helped Pi515 move from introducing young people to technology to building a stronger ecosystem. It gave us the space to turn awareness into action and helped our students see themselves as builders and leaders in the future of work."

— Nancy Mwirotsi

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Pi515 assumed the main job was exposing more students to AI, and learned awareness alone was not enough. It moved from one-time events to a connected model where students, educators, families, and employers share a clear pathway from learning to careers.

LASTING IMPACT

Students at Pi515 no longer only learn about technology; they help teach, test, and shape how AI is used in their community. The work ties AI to workforce readiness and real problem-solving, and students are starting to see themselves as builders and leaders in the future of work.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Rural and small-market Fellows often show impact through depth rather than volume. They may reach fewer people, but they perform strongly on organizational change and ecosystem-level progress, where local trust and presence matter most.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

IDAHO TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

Driving Tech Growth in Idaho

Boise, ID | Nonprofit Employees



> TechSpark helped us replace fear with practical adoption, giving Idaho workers and businesses a clearer path to build skills for an AI-driven economy and stay competitive.
>
> — Betsy Davies

FALC

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

The Idaho Technology Council set out to bring AI literacy to justice-involved individuals in the state prison system, and learned meaningful innovation has to flex to real-world conditions. When the first effort met constraints, the team adapted its approach.

LASTING IMPACT

The work replaced fear of AI with practical skill, giving Idaho's workers and businesses more responsible ways to use it. It engaged more than 140 organizations and helped about 30 move into using AI, strengthening the state's footing in a fast-changing economy.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

IBSA, INC.

Topeka, KS | K-12; Students or Learners



> TechSpark changed how I looked at AI. It stopped being just another acronym and became a way to get real work done, from automating agency tasks to helping youth, adults, and local leaders build skills where they are.
>
> — Lazone Grays

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

IBSA kept hitting a silo mentality when it approached other local organizations, until one workshop with elder community leaders on using Microsoft Copilot changed things. The leaders started using it to build culinary cookbooks, design sewing workshops, and research their neighborhoods for grant applications.

LASTING IMPACT

One workshop with elder community leaders on Microsoft Copilot broke the ice, and they began using it to build culinary cookbooks, design sewing classes, and research grants. AI went from an acronym IBSA barely noticed to a practical tool doing real work across Topeka's neighborhoods.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Alumni are the strongest proof the work continued after the fellowship year; for many, completion is when it began to deepen and spread.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

NOLAVATE BLACK

Inclusive Tech South Foundation
Building the Network That Works

New Orleans, LA | Nonprofit Employees



> TechSpark helped move my relationship with AI from curiosity to intentional use, now part of how I approach workforce development and business strategy, helping NOLAvate Black support job seekers and guide employers toward smarter hiring.
>
> — Sabrina Short

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

NOLAvate Black first ran its Explore Tech program as small cohorts, which capped how many people it could reach. It is moving to an on-demand model, recording the curriculum with industry leaders so job seekers can access AI-driven career training on their own schedule.

LASTING IMPACT

AI is now embedded across NOLAvate Black's programs and content, helping it support job seekers and coach employers on smarter, fairer hiring. Moving to an on-demand model, its One Thousand Pathways initiative aims to reach up to 1,000 job seekers by 2030.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

CSforMA, INC.

Computer Science for All Massachusetts Students

Marshfield, MA | K-12



> My relationship with AI has shifted from curiosity to responsibility.
>
> — Shaileen Crawford

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

CSforMA found the way into AI for educators was to connect it to what they already care about: computer science, digital literacy, ethics, and classroom practice. It made room for basic questions and experimentation, which made the work feel useful instead of intimidating.

LASTING IMPACT

CSforMA now treats AI as part of its core professional learning rather than a side topic. It reached about 250 Massachusetts educators with learning grounded in the computer science, ethics, and equity they already care about, helping them navigate a real shift with their values intact.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Alumni influence often shows up through ecosystem work that current metrics do not fully capture. Their mentoring, convening, referrals, and policy engagement suggest that program impact continues to grow after the grant year ends.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

CODE IN THE SCHOOLS

We Empower Baltimore City Youth

Baltimore, MD | K-12; Students or Learners; Educators



"I feel more confident holding a nuanced stance on AI use that is aligned with my values."

FALC

— Stephanie Alphee

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Code in the Schools trained its educators first, then built AI into hands-on projects with students, working carefully to keep its policies aligned with the organization's values. It drew on lessons from peers at the El Paso summit to shape the policy work.

LASTING IMPACT

Staff who once feared AI would take their jobs now use it with confidence and say it has made their work easier and more valuable. Twenty participants across the organization's after-school and summer programs have tested for industry-recognized credentials.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

EDUCATE MAINE

Helping Everyone Get the Education They Need to Succeed

Old Town, ME | K-12



"In addition to skilling, TechSpark has helped us lead local, state, and national conversations about technology access, economic opportunity, and innovation while increasing the visibility of Educate Maine's Project>Login program."

FALC

— Angie Oechslie

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Education

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Educate Maine learned outreach built for one rural county often does not fit another, so it shifted to personalized communication, using customized emails, postcards, and calls to reach different learners, educators, and employers across the state.

LASTING IMPACT

Educate Maine reached more than 400 students and educators across rural parts of the state, and built an AI roadmap to guide its next phase of digital transformation. The work also raised the profile of its Project>Login program in state and national conversations about technology access.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Across the network, Fellows helped more than 1,000 organizations move into using AI.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

SISTAHS REACHIN' OUT

Effectuating economic equality through digital access for underserved, under-resourced Detroiters

Detroit, MI | Adult Skilling



"AI has become a useful tool in streamlining workflows for SRO staff, helping us better serve Detroit's underserved residents and families. Our mantra, 'skills pay the bills,' continues to guide how we support learners."

— Jenny Hutchinson

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

Sistahs Reachin' Out brought AI into its everyday workflows so a lean team could do more for the Detroit residents it serves through its Career and College Access Center.

LASTING IMPACT

With AI in its daily workflows, a lean team reached about 210 Detroit residents and helped 35 partner organizations start using AI too. For families who are too often under-resourced, the work is a steadier path toward skills, jobs, and economic mobility.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

TECHFLUENT

Empowering under-resourced communities through education and tech jobs

Minneapolis, MN | Adult Skilling



"Being part of the network keeps us connected, learning, and growing together."

— Carol Smock

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

TechFluent serves adults in low-income, rural, immigrant, and BIPOC communities across Minnesota, and used the fellowship network to widen its own reach. A board member even set up LinkedIn automation to connect the organization with ecosystem leaders for sponsorships and collaboration.

LASTING IMPACT

A skeptic turned pragmatic user, TechFluent's leader now puts AI to work for the organization and the adults it serves in low-income, rural, immigrant, and BIPOC communities. New connections from the fellowship network are helping it grow its footprint and widen inclusive access to digital opportunity across Minnesota.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Over three years, the program evolved from digital skills to AI readiness to AI diffusion, and the role of AI moved from optional to strategic to operational.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

NEIGHBORHOOD INNOVATION CENTER

Empowering Entrepreneurs through Microbusiness Incubators

Saint Louis, MO | Nonprofit; Small Business; Startup



> TechSpark helped us make AI useful for entrepreneurs by giving people access to knowledge they can understand, apply, and use to build something real.
>
> — John Chen

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

The Neighborhood Innovation Center set out to build a microlearning library, and learned giving early-stage entrepreneurs access to content was not enough, because they often do not know what they do not know. It shifted to curated learning paths, hands-on tasks, and human coaching, with AI grounded in real local businesses.

LASTING IMPACT

AI became an operating layer across the Center's programs, turning years of scattered entrepreneurship know-how into practical support. It reached about 200 microentrepreneurs and small-business owners in St. Louis with curated learning and human coaching through its MBi, Urban Eats, and Wink incubators.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

APPARO

Amplifying Nonprofit Impact through Technology and Process Improvement

Charlotte, NC | Organizations/Employees (Public, Private, Nonprofit)



> TechSpark has transformed how Apparo and I support nonprofits through AI education. Over three years, the collaboration, shared learning, and Fellows network helped us expand knowledge, strengthen nonprofit capacity, and contribute to greater community impact.
>
> — Stephanie McKee

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Apparo expected most nonprofits were still exploring AI for the first time, and was surprised by how quickly they had adopted it. In one 90-minute webinar, a pre-session survey showed many participants already using AI tools, so Apparo shifted the training from basics to a more advanced session on the spot.

LASTING IMPACT

Nonprofits adopted AI faster than expected, and Apparo moved with them, shifting from basics to advanced help in real time. Over three years it reached more than 1,000 people and 2,000 organizations, with 400 nonprofits now in active AI use, helping set the pace for the sector.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Alumni keep contributing through mentoring, introductions, and collaboration long after their fellowship year ends.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

CODE BLACK PROFESSIONAL TECH NETWORK

To empower and make an impact on people of color in our technology community

Omaha, NE | Nonprofit



> TechSpark helped me move from carrying the work alone to seeing the power of community and better systems. With AI supporting policies and procedures, I spend less time on administrative burden and more on sustainability.
>
> — David Pollock

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Organization
Programs • Workflows • Operations

TRANSFORMATION

Code Black's executive director started out siloed and carrying the work largely alone. Reaching out to other TechSpark fellows built his confidence and a steady support network, changing how the organization operates.

LASTING IMPACT

AI took over policies and automated procedures, easing the administrative load on a founder who had been carrying it alone, and freeing time for planning to keep the nonprofit sustainable. About 245 learners took part in stronger, more hands-on tech training.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

UNITED WAY OF GREATER NASHUA

Nashua, NH | Adult Skilling



> TechSpark helped a small team work faster with AI while building a Digital Access program that has served hundreds of people with laptops and digital literacy education.
>
> — Sara Ceasar

FALC

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

United Way of Greater Nashua struggled to reach the lowest-income residents who most need digital access, so it is pivoting to train the social workers who already see them regularly.

LASTING IMPACT

Every staff member now uses AI to work faster, which is how a very small team delivers as much as it does. The Digital Access program reached about 200 people with free laptops, one-on-one navigator sessions, and monthly digital-literacy support.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Change starts with one local leader and spreads outward, from individual confidence to organizational capability to community-level impact.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

TECHBUFFALO

Building Community. Creating Connections.

Buffalo, NY | Startup; Nonprofit; Small Business; Public Sector



> TechSpark helped us move faster and think more clearly about how to support educators, students, and families. By building AI into program design and educator support, we were able to scale Family Code Nights and bring more communities into early technology learning.
>
> — Rachel Eastlack

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

TechBuffalo knew its Family Code Nights engaged students and families well, but its own capacity capped how far they could reach. It launched an Innovation Fellowship to train educators to run the nights in their own schools, scaling access through them.

LASTING IMPACT

By training educators to lead Family Code Nights in their own schools, TechBuffalo scaled far past its own capacity, reaching more than 4,000 students and families in Western New York. About 78 organizations moved into using AI, opening early, hands-on tech pathways for K-8 kids.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

RICHLAND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Strong Business. Strong Community.

Mansfield, OH | Nonprofit Employees



> TechSpark accelerated what is possible in Richland County. It gave our organizations the tools, coaching, and confidence to apply AI to strengthen our economy and expand opportunity.
>
> — Angie Cirone

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Adoption • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Richland learned online learning alone did not stick in its community, where people needed hands-on coaching and in-person guidance to actually apply AI. It paired digital tools with relationship-driven support to meet people where they are.

LASTING IMPACT

Through its AI Blueprints, five local organizations built AI-driven workflows, reaching about 200 people across Richland County. The county Visitors Bureau now works faster and with more precision to draw visitors, sending ripples of efficiency through the regional economy.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Fellows built personal AI skills and most translated that learning into organizational practice, creating changes that can endure beyond a single Fellow or grant year.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

TAYLOR HAMPTON-TINKHAM

Alumni Fellow Individual



> TechSpark gave me more than technical skills. It gave me the confidence and tools to lead meaningful change.
>
> — Taylor Hampton-Tinkham

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Innovation • Skilling

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Taylor's work on AI widened beyond youth and staff, the team learned the community's real views on AI differed from its assumptions. Talking with local executives, business owners, and educators reshaped how it approaches adoption.

LASTING IMPACT

Taylor is using AI to move community projects and partnerships forward, with about 50 partner organizations now using the tools in their own work. An emerging small-business tech effort with the local Downtown Association aims at healthier, stronger long-term outcomes for the region.

Alumni Fellow Individual.
Taylor has since carried this work to a new organization (Healthy Klamath) outside the network.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

JOBSFIRST NEPA

Economic Mobility For All Young Adults

Scranton, PA | Nonprofit; Small Business; Public Sector; Startup



> As a TechSpark Alumni Fellow, I continue to be inspired by the work happening across the country to advance skilling and literacy. The network helps fuel my work and connects me to the right resources.
>
> — Shanie Mohamed

FALC

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Community
Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

Organization new to the network via FALC.

TRANSFORMATION

JobsFirst NEPA learned talking about AI in Northeast Pennsylvania means navigating real division: some residents worry about datacenters straining resources and rural identity, while others use AI but will not advocate for it publicly. In a region often slower to adopt new thinking, the organization approached the conversation carefully.

LASTING IMPACT

The fellowship helped launch JobsFirst NEPA as a neutral workforce intermediary for a region often slower to adopt new thinking. It reached about 240 people and aligned nearly 60 partners across industry, education, and community to build shared solutions and stay ahead of how technology is reshaping jobs.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: Current Fellows are building confidence. Alumni are building influence, evolving into mentors, connectors, and advisors.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

GREATER WILKES-BARRE CHAMBER OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Connect the Valley. Innovate the Valley. Elevate the Valley.

Wilkes-Barre, PA | Nonprofit



> TechSpark helped us move from individual AI use to a clearer organization-wide framework. It gave our team a shared starting point for learning, adoption, and conversations about how to sustain this work over time.
>
> — Meghan Flanagan

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Adoption

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

At the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber, staff had been using AI on their own with no shared plan. The Chamber decided to provide a baseline of education and adoption across the whole team rather than leave it to individual comfort levels.

LASTING IMPACT

A few staff had been using AI on their own; the Chamber turned it into an organization-wide framework, giving everyone a shared starting point and consistent processes instead of scattered efforts. The framework also gave the Chamber a foundation to discuss long-term sustainability with funders.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

ELEVATE RAPID CITY

Elevating the Economy For All.

Rapid City, SD | Nonprofit; Small Business



> I was cautious about AI, but TechSpark helped us find the right places to use it. Now our staff uses it in daily workflows, and local small businesses are testing the tools too.
>
> — Laura Jones

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR
Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA
Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT
Individual
Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Elevate Rapid City set out to adopt an AI ethics policy, but its CEO resigned before one was in place, so the policy waits for new leadership. In the meantime, most of its staff built AI into their daily work.

LASTING IMPACT

Most staff now use AI in daily work, most notably drafting press releases and public materials in a consistent Elevate voice, saving the communications team hours of rewriting. About 10 organizations have moved into regular AI use, and local small businesses are beginning to test the tools too.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: The program did not simply get bigger over three years; it became more durable, moving from access and awareness to relationships, organizational change, and community influence.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

CENTER ON RURAL INNOVATION

Unlocking Rural Potential

Nationwide (USA) | Nonprofit Employees



AI can help educators create curriculum quickly, but it still needs local context. Through this work, rural higher-ed partners are building training hubs and curriculum tools shaped by their own policies, communities, and economic history.

FALC

— Mike Gutman

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Innovation • Adoption

FOCUS AREA

Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

Community

Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

The Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) began its rural higher education AI community of practice with a scripted, scheduled format and curriculum for its monthly sessions, but quickly dropped it. Because each rural community's needs were hard to predict and kept shifting, it moved to a flexible approach, asking people what they needed and when, and letting them shape the work.

LASTING IMPACT

In this pilot, CORI is supporting 4 rural higher-education institutions build AI training hubs and curriculum shaped by their own communities' history and context, rather than generic, out-of-the-box AI. The aim is durable AI capacity built to fit the places it serves, not a one-size template.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

TECH-MOMS

Tech Jobs are Mom Jobs

Bountiful, UT | Adult Skilling



Running a nonprofit can be lonely, but TechSpark gave me a community of peers from across the country. We share ideas, resources, frustrations, and triumphs, and I am grateful for the inspiration to keep going.

FALC

— Robbyn Scribner

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Adoption • Skilling

FOCUS AREA

Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

Individual

Skills • Confidence • Leadership

TRANSFORMATION

Tech-Moms is working through a moving target: which jobs to prepare women for as entry-level roles change quickly. It keeps testing new tools and reaching into new sectors to see where its graduates' experience and AI skills fit best.

LASTING IMPACT

Over three years the organization has trained hundreds of women to use AI, about 175 in the past year alone. For many who found AI foreign or intimidating at first, the skills are a real step toward better-paying jobs and providing for their families.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: The strongest outcomes emerged when AI was tied to education, workforce development, and local problem-solving, and the strongest community outcomes were built on organizational readiness.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

TECHNOLOGY FOR TOMORROW

Empowering People in Need with Technology Education

Williston, VT | Older Adults; New Americans; Nonprofit Employees



> The strength of TechSpark is its ability to bring together funding, technology, and genuine human connection in service of communities.
>
> — Vijay Desai

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Skilling • Innovation

FOCUS AREA

Adult Skilling

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

Community

Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

Technology for Tomorrow treats AI as an ongoing learning process, finding it most useful as a brainstorming partner, one able to speed up some tasks and open up others time never allowed before.

LASTING IMPACT

Technology for Tomorrow shares its growing AI knowledge with its community and nonprofit partners through classes, with about 25 organizations now using AI in their own work. It keeps weighing how, where, and when to use AI so the technology genuinely serves people.

TECHSPARK ALUMNI FELLOW

HIGH TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION

Building a stronger West Virginia

Fairmont, WV | Startup / Entrepreneurship



> We were struggling to achieve our objective until TechSpark helped us understand how AI could eliminate the obstacles.
>
> — Jim Estep

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

AI PILLAR

Innovation

FOCUS AREA

Digital Transformation

PRIMARY AREA OF IMPACT

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Access • Opportunity • Community Benefit

TRANSFORMATION

The High Technology Foundation was struggling to reach its goal of helping communities and businesses adapt to weather and climate risk until it understood how AI could clear the obstacles in its way.

LASTING IMPACT

Climate and weather datasets from sources like NOAA were too big for cloud computing alone to tame. Using agentic AI, the Foundation began solving problems once beyond its reach, work now reaching about 100 people and 10 organizations as it helps communities adapt to weather risk.

TechSpark 2026 Insight: By year three, Fellows were carrying what they learned into staff workflows, classrooms, nonprofits, coalitions, and community conversations.

Microsoft

Recognizing the National Network of Fellow Organizations



Continue the Work

The momentum does not stop here.

The Fellows featured in this report show what becomes possible when trusted local leaders have the tools, relationships, and support to keep building. Nearly all of them said the program made it safe to talk about what did not work, which is why the stories in this report include the missteps as well as the results. These resources are a starting point for communities ready to continue their work.

Not sure where to start? Explore the AI Skills Navigator to discover learning pathways, build new skills, and identify opportunities aligned with your goals, organization, or community.

Community and TechSpark Resources

Building Community-First AI Infrastructure
Microsoft's five commitments to the communities where we build and operate datacenters.

Microsoft TechSpark homepage

TechSpark Playbook: Building Community Ecosystems
Explore Microsoft TechSpark's approach to building local ecosystems through public, private, and nonprofit collaboration.

Microsoft in your community
Explore Microsoft's local community work that helps residents better understand Microsoft's presence in their community.

Data, Research, and Trends

AI Adoption Across the United States | Microsoft
Explore where AI adoption is strongest across the U.S. by state and county.

2026 Work Trend Index Annual Report
Microsoft's annual report on how AI is changing work.

2026 Environmental Sustainability Report | Microsoft
The report includes progress, challenges, and examples related to datacenters, energy, water, waste, products, and local community impact.

Education and AI Literacy

Microsoft Elevate for Educators

Microsoft Education AI Toolkit
Use this toolkit to help education leaders plan a responsible AI journey, from early exploration to implementation.

AI Literacy Framework
A framework to support AI literacy in primary and secondary education.

Nonprofit Learning and Adoption

Microsoft Changemakers | Microsoft for Nonprofits
Find AI training, credentials, events, and learning journeys designed to help nonprofit professionals.

Unlocking AI for Nonprofits | NetHope
A free, self-paced course series focused on practical nonprofit use cases and responsible adoption.

