

UPDATES FROM THE WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP IN PUBLIC FINANCE FOR CITIES

FEB-MAR '24



About the Women's Fellowship In Public Finance for Cities

Janaagraha's Women's Fellowship in Public Finance for Cities provides a platform for young women professionals to carve out a niche for themselves in the domain of public finance by working on transforming the quality of life in India's cities and towns. The Fellowship is an immersive, two-year journey where the women Fellows will be working on live projects with either the Finance or the Housing and Urban Development Department of different state governments in India. This on-the-job learning will be bolstered by learning through webinars and masterclasses by various domain experts.

The Fellows will also receive personal mentorship from domain experts so that they may learn from their professional experiences and receive guidance to chart their own career trajectory in the field of Public Finance Management (PFM).

The Fellowship has three central objectives:

- Catalyse reforms in PFM for better quality of life through improved public infrastructure and services.
- Introduce gender parity for working professionals in the PFM domain.
- Nurture women professionals to emerge as leaders in PFM, having voice and agency to drive better gender outcomes in the future.

Induction Workshop

The Fellowship commenced with a five-day residential induction workshop held from January 15th to 19th, 2024, in Delhi. The key objectives of the induction programme were three-fold, namely, to familiarise the Fellows with the core principles of PFM, foster a sense of camaraderie among them, and facilitate leadership development.

The induction workshop featured distinguished experts in PFM, representing bureaucracy (like Deputy CAG, Additional CGA, among others), civil society organisations, academia like National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), donor organisation, namely, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and think tanks like the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL).



The sessions were designed comprehensively with the aim to guide the Fellows through every stage of the PFM lifecycle including budget planning, budget execution, accounting, and auditing. Further, the Fellows were also introduced to emerging innovative budgeting practices such as outcome-based budgeting, gender budgeting and climate budgeting.



Regular reflective sessions at the beginning and end of each day were facilitated by Bullzi Inc. to enable the Fellows to take in the journey with a clear vision and intent. These sessions also held space for the Fellows to discuss their hopes, apprehensions, and fears regarding the Fellowship with the Programme Team, setting a strong base for open communication going forward.

The Fellows also took part in leadership training sessions conducted in-person by experts in the field from UpGrad. While the workshop hosted two foundational sessions, more are planned to be held throughout the two years ahead. Personal leadership is vital to the Fellowship, so these sessions are designed to cultivate the Fellows into future leaders in PFM, with a focus on achieving improved gender outcomes.

The induction programme marked a dynamic, energising, and motivating start to the two-year Fellowship.

Gallery



Ms. Vidhu Sood (NFRA) with the cohort



In session with Mr. Devesh Sharma (BMGF)



Dr. Lekha Chakraborty (NIPFP)



Q&A session with the Fellows



Team building activity



Session with Ms. Rebecca Mathai (Deputy CAG)



Dr. Shankari Murali (Additional CGA of India)



Session with Mr. Srikanth Viswanathan (CEO, Janaagraha)

Introducing the Cohort of 2024-26

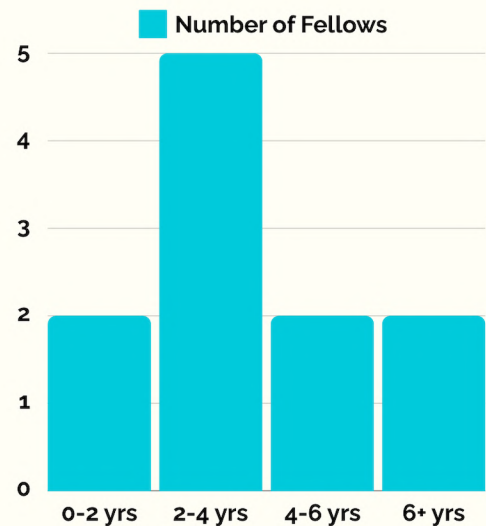


Cohort Profile

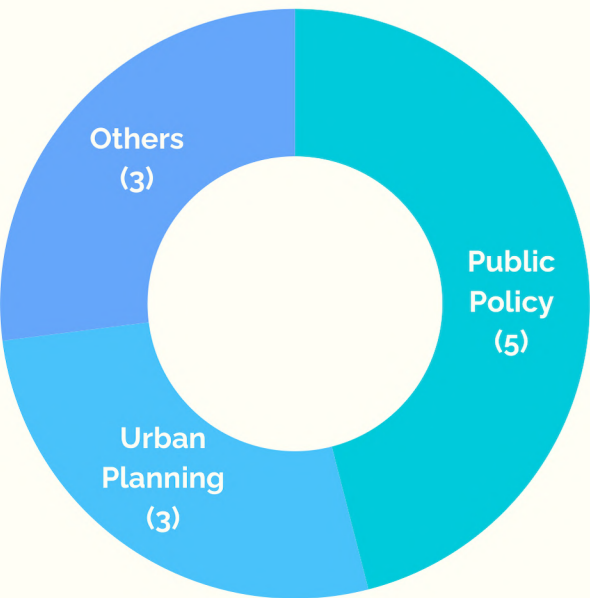
The inaugural cohort of Janaagraha's Women's Fellowship in Public Finance for Cities consists of 11 Fellows who were selected through a rigorous 4-step testing and interview process. We received 200 applications via an online application form.

We shortlisted 72 candidates for an online screening interview in Round 2 with the Programme Team. Thereafter, we conducted Round 3, comprising of group discussion, case presentation and panel interview, with 30 candidates. This was held in person in Bangalore and Delhi. The Fellows had a final round of interaction with their respective project officers.

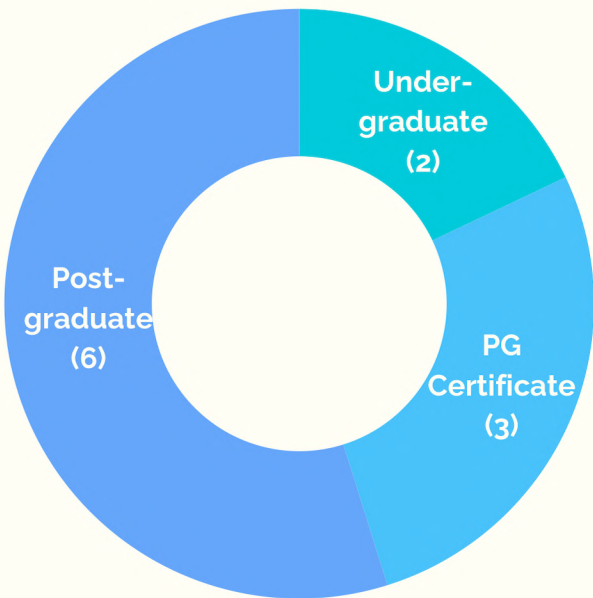
Years of Experience



Postgraduate Subjects



Highest Qualification



Fellow Profiles



**Aishwarya
Shekar**

Project Location:

Tamil Nadu



Academic Background:

B. Arch., Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bengaluru
Master's in Planning (Housing) from CEPT University, Ahmedabad

Professional Background:

Aishwarya, an urban planner and researcher, has led community projects for equitable urban development. She advocates evidence-based policies promoting sustainability.



Anikha Ashraf

Project Location:

Uttar Pradesh



Academic Background:

B.Com. (Hons), Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University
Masters of Public Policy (MPP), NLSIU, Bengaluru

Professional Background:

Anikha is a qualified Chartered Accountant with over 4 years of experience across policy advocacy and corporate consulting. Her expertise lies in policy & regulatory research & analysis, stakeholder management, and advocacy.



Anupriya

Project Location:

Punjab



Academic Background:

B.Tech. (ECE), Bhagat Phool Singh Women's University, Sonapat
Certification in Public Policy and Management, IIM-Bangalore

Professional Background:

Anupriya is an engineer turned development professional who has expertise in public policy as well as management. She has worked at the grassroots level on skill development and livelihood-based programmes.



Bhavya Mittal

Project Location:

Odisha



Academic Background:

B. Com. (Hons.), Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Delhi
M.A. in Education, Azim Premji University

Professional Background:

Bhavya has 3+ years of work experience with KPMG and the Adhyayan Foundation. She has worked as a Consultant on state education sector budgets.

Fellow Profiles



Ipsika Ghosh

Project Location:
Uttar Pradesh



Academic Background:
B.A. (Hons.) in Geography, Miranda House, Delhi University
M.A. in Cities and Governance, TISS, Hyderabad

Professional Background:
Ipsika has a strong background in academic research and has worked on some ambitious projects. She is passionate about data-inspired and people-centric public policy.



Meghamala C

Project Location:
Bengaluru



Academic Background:
B.E. (Electrical and Electronics), Visvesvaraya Technological University
Certification in Public Policy and Management, IIM Bangalore

Professional Background:
Meghamala is a policy professional with government expertise crafting innovative state-level policies & programs. She advocates for innovative yet practical approaches to drive impactful change.



Merin Sunny

Project Location:
Bengaluru



Academic Background:
B. Com., St Joseph's College of Commerce, Bengaluru
M.A. in Cities and Governance, TISS, Hyderabad

Professional Background:
Merin has work experience as an Audit Assistant at Deloitte. Skilled in financial accounting and analysis, she has a passion for urban finance and sustainable urban development.



Nirupama M

Project Location:
Tamil Nadu



Academic Background:
B.Tech. (Electrical & Electronics Engineering), SASTRA University, Thanjavur
PGP (Infrastructure Finance Development & Management), NICMAR, Pune

Professional Background:
Nirupama is a human-centric systems thinker who believes in equitably accessible and implementable policies going beyond first principles. She has a background in Infrastructure Finance and Public Policy.

Fellow Profiles



Saumya Jauhari

Project Location:

Assam



Academic Background:

B.A. (Hons.) Philosophy, Miranda House, Delhi University

M.A. Social Work, Department of Social Work, Delhi University

Professional Background:

Saumya has diverse work experience, collaborating within the government sector, contributing to public policy, e-governance, and monitoring and evaluation. She has a firm grasp of project management.



Shaivya Harit

Project Location:

Odisha



Academic Background:

B.A. Economics (Hons) from Deshbandhu College, Delhi University

M.A. Urban Policy and Governance, TISS, Mumbai

Professional Background:

Shaivya has worked for about three years in enhancing livelihoods for rural communities through an NGO (Nayi Pehchaan) and Grant Thornton Bharat LLP.



**Veronica Q
Wijunamai**

Project Location:

Assam



Academic Background:

B.A. English, the D.M. College of Arts, Manipur University

Masters in Social Work, TISS Mumbai

Professional Background:

Veronica has over four years of work experience in inclusive urban development, with specialization in policy making, capacity development, and strategic communication.



Project Updates

Government of Uttar Pradesh: Urban Development Department (UDD)

The engagement with UDD is focused on driving systemic reforms in the policy, process, and capacities of municipal budget preparation and accounting. The Fellows have dived straight into handholding select ULBs on the creation of realistic budgets for FY 2024-25 by using detailed, standardised templates. They are also supporting UDD and ULBs in transitioning from cash-based (single-entry) to IT-based accrual (double-entry) system of municipal accounting. Revenue augmentation for 200 Municipal Councils is also a priority, which will entail the introduction of property tax reforms using the lifecycle approach.

Government of Assam: Department of Housing & Urban Affairs (DoHUA)

The engagement with DoHUA entails creating systemic reforms across the finance and accounts functions of 103 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Assam. One priority of these Fellows is to enable Assam's ULBs to strategically transition from cash-based, manual systems of accounting to the Double-Entry Accrual-Based Accounting System (DEABAS). Another priority for the Fellows is to undertake capacity building of 206 newly recruited municipal administrative and finance officers for effective PFM. It's been an action-packed first month for the Fellows with the development of the training plan and designing of a state-level roadmap to transition to DEABAS after a thorough review of learnings from other states' implementation strategies.

Strengthening Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers

The Fellows are actively involved in developing a reform roadmap for improving urban local governance across the PFM value chain, with specific focus on strengthening intergovernmental fiscal transfers. One Fellow is building on recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission on publication of audited annual accounts and is evaluating the current legal framework for auditing and preparing a roadmap for strengthening audit of Urban Local Bodies.

Another Fellow is engaged in supporting the publication of a thought leadership/advocacy study on strengthening State Finance Commissions. The Fellow will also engage with active SFCs to drive reforms in urban governance and PFM.

Government of Tamil Nadu: Department of Finance

Janaagraha has partnered with the Centre for Effective Governance of Indian States (CEGIS Foundation) for this project. Two Fellows are working closely with CEGIS on a couple of revenue augmentation initiatives involving Stamp Duty & Registration Fees and Property Tax. The work involves exploring mechanisms for streamlining the underlying

approaches for Guideline Values and Property Tax rates, respectively. The Fellows shall also be involved in generating insights from analysis of financial data to inform evidence-informed policy and budget preparation in the State. Further, the Fellows shall provide support in monitoring the status of the recommendations made by the Sixth State Finance Commission.

Government of Punjab: Department of Governance Reforms

Janaagraha has partnered with the eGov Foundation for this project. The project has intersectionality with the Finance Department and various line departments like Housing & Urban Development, Social Welfare and Power. The Fellow will work to identify and mitigate revenue leakages, enhance inter-departmental coordination for efficient benefits' delivery, improve the utilisation of funds for socio-economic development, and streamline revenue generation and fiscal sustainability for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Government of Odisha: Finance Department (FD), and Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD)

The Odisha engagement is uniquely positioned, wherein the Fellows will be working closely with two key departments to usher PFM reforms in ULBs. One Fellow, working with H&UDD, under the guidance of the Directorate of Budget, FD will support in Budget Policy and Planning at the state and ULB level. The other Fellow, attached with the Directorate of Treasuries & Inspections (DTI), FD will work on interventions in budget execution, including adoption of IT systems such as Schematic Bank Management System, Just-in-Time Financial System (JIT-FS), and advocacy for streamlining of Utilisation Certifications (UCs) for improved reporting processes.

Published by:

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Got feedback?

Write to us:
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