

Applicant Guide

2023

India Acumen Fellowship

ACUMEN
ACADEMY



We're excited that you are applying to the Acumen Fellows Program.

We have designed the Acumen Fellowship Applicant Guide to support you throughout your Application and provide additional assistance. There are two main sections in this guide:

1. Application Overview and Examples

(To guide you in specific questions throughout the Online Application Form where reading examples might help you frame your responses)

2. Platform Navigation Guidance

(In case you're struggling while completing or submitting your Application)

1. Application Overview and Examples

The application comprises the following sections:

Eligibility Section

- A: Contact Information
- B: Eligibility for the Acumen Fellowship

Online Application Form

- C: About your Work
- D: About You and Your Experiences
- E: About You as a Leader
- F: Terms and Conditions

Please note that you'll find guidance for some specific questions that are marked with two (instead of one) red asterisks (**) inside the platform. That means those are mandatory questions that include examples or clarifications in this guide.

Eligibility Section

A&B: Contact Information and Eligibility for the Fellowship

This section comprises basic profile information and a set of questions to check your eligibility for the Fellowship. Please note that only applicants who will qualify here will be moved to the next sections of the application. If you're not eligible, we encourage you to check out our other resources on acumenacademy.org and apply in the future.

Online Application Form

C. About your Work

This section comprises questions about your work, particularly around sustainability and impact. Most of the questions are drop-down or multiple choice, however, there are also a few short essay questions to help us understand the impact of the work. We have shared the questions and sample responses below as well as clarifying definitions for certain questions in this section.

**** Q: Do you work in any of these sectors below?**

Activism & Advocacy

Refers to work intended to effect important social, political, and cultural changes through goal-oriented organization and strategy.

Encompasses local, national, and international organizations focused on advancing Human Rights, Social Justice, combating Climate change, etc.

Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief

Activities, goods, or services expended to support the health or safety of people affected by naturally occurring or man-made disasters.

Encompasses national or international humanitarian organizations, such as the UN Refugee Agency, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, or the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA.)

Agriculture

Includes crop and animal production, as well as agricultural engineering and production of agricultural machinery, fertilizers, and other kinds of products to support farming.

Encompasses farms and their suppliers and national and international agencies and organizations that oversee the regulation of agricultural practices.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Activities related to the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with individual and group/social differences within communities and organizations for the purpose of equity.

Encompasses organizations that advance the discussion around and inclusion of traditionally marginalized populations based on race, socio-economic status, class, gender, sexual orientation, caste, country of origin, ability, intellectual traditions, and perspectives, as well as cultural, political, religious, and other affiliations and individual differences.

Workforce Development & Employment

Development of new jobs in traditional and emerging sectors, and education and training to ensure appropriate skills and knowledge in the workforce.

May include measures to attract qualified workers from other locations and to extend sectoral opportunities to underrepresented groups, such as women in the trades.

Urban Development

Urban planning, also known as town planning, city planning, regional planning, or rural planning, is a technical and political process that is focused on the development and design of land use and the built environment.

Encompasses organizations that create or maintain physical systems that are crucial to running a modern, industrialized economy. It includes transport systems such as roads, highways, and bridges. For telecommunication infrastructure, such as telephone lines and broadband systems, please select Information and Communication instead of Urban Development.

Energy

Refers to the industry and activities involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of various forms of energy.

Encompasses all activities within: the fossil fuel industries (petroleum, coal, and natural gas); the electrical power industry; the nuclear power industry; the renewable energy industry (hydroelectric power, wind power, and solar power generation, and the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alternative fuels) and traditional energy industry based on the collection and distribution of firewood.

Financial Services / Financial Inclusion

Encompasses institutions, products, and services that facilitate financial transactions, manage money, and provide financial advice.

Includes a wide range of organizations and activities such as banking, insurance, investment services, asset management, pension funds, payment systems, and more.

Housing

Refers to the industry and activities related to the provision, development, and management of housing and residential properties.

Involves various stakeholders such as real estate developers, construction companies, landlords, property management firms, and government agencies working to ensure the availability, affordability, and quality of housing options for individuals and communities.

Rural Development

Promoting and assisting the healthy and productive development of rural communities and remote areas.

Includes the provision of technical assistance, venture capital, loans, loan guarantees, or other forms of management support to encourage the establishment and growth of business and industry, creating jobs, sustaining services, and building a healthier economy and environment in rural areas.

Formal Education

Formal education refers to the structured education system that runs from primary school (and in some countries from nursery) to university and confers formal diplomas or certificates.

Nursery, primary, middle, and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and specialized programs for vocational, technical, and professional training that confer formal diplomas or certificates.

If your organization teaches skills recreationally or outside the formal education system, please select Skills Development.

If your organization prepares people for employment outside the formal educational system please select Workforce Development & Employment.

Environment, Conservation & Sustainability

Activities seeking to ensure the fair distribution of benefits, hazards, and burdens related to the environment.

Includes all organizations related to the management of biodiversity, climate change, Recycling, Composting, Waste Management and Energy, Land, and Water resources.

Health

Refers to the industry and activities involved in promoting, maintaining, and restoring the physical and mental well-being of individuals and communities.

It encompasses a wide range of services, including healthcare provision, medical research, pharmaceuticals, public health initiatives, and the development and implementation of healthcare policies and systems.

Legal

Encompasses the industry and activities related to law, legal services, and the administration of justice.

Includes law firms, legal practitioners, judges, legal consultants, and legal support services involved in providing legal advice, representing clients, resolving disputes, interpreting and applying laws, and ensuring compliance with legal frameworks.

Skills Development

The service provided helps people keep, learn or improve skills for enjoyment and function in daily living.

Would encompass everything from organizations that focus on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills development to those that deliver lessons in recreation, leisure, sports, and the arts activities or domestic skills, among others.

Information and communications

Encompasses industries and activities involved in the creation, storage, processing, transmission, and dissemination of information and data.

Includes telecommunications, internet services, broadcasting, publishing, software development, information technology, and other related fields that facilitate the exchange and utilization of information for various purposes such as communication, entertainment, education, and business.

Water & Sanitation

Refers to the industry and activities involved in the provision, management, and treatment of water resources and sanitation facilities.

Encompasses organizations devoted to ensuring access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation systems, and effective wastewater management to promote public health, hygiene, and environmental sustainability.

Other

Select this option if none of the definitions provided above apply to your organization.

*** * Q: Which of the following best describes the model of your organization/initiative?**

Academic Institution

Organization primarily dedicated to education and research, whether for-profit or non-profit.

Elementary, middle, and high schools; college or university; research think tanks. Associated roles: professor, fellow, researcher, or administrator.

Government Entity

Any nation or government, any state, province, or other political subdivision thereof, any entity exercising executive, legislative, judicial, regulatory, or administrative functions of or pertaining to government. Would also include international and multilateral organizations.

Employers may include organizations such as: Health or Education Ministries, Agencies and Departments; World Health Organization, United Nations, OECD, EU, etc. Associated roles include: politicians, judges, diplomats, members of the military, national or international civil service professionals and general staff, etc.

For Profit Entity

Organization or company that operates with the primary goal of generating profit or financial gain for its owners, shareholders, or stakeholders.

The 3 types of business entities that are most common are the sole proprietorship (e.g. independent consultants, freelance journalists), limited liability company (LLC), and corporation.

Social Enterprise

Business entity that actively pursues both a social or environmental mission and generates profit. It seeks to achieve financial sustainability while addressing societal challenges and creating a positive social impact.

Benefit Corporations (B Corps): These are for-profit companies that are legally required to consider their social and environmental impact alongside financial returns. They operate with a dual focus on generating profits and making a positive difference in society.

Social Enterprises: These businesses pursue a social or environmental mission while generating revenue through their products or services. They may reinvest their profits back into their mission or use them to support community initiatives.

Community Interest Companies (CICs): These are specifically designed as hybrid entities that aim to benefit the community. CICs generate profits but have a legal requirement to use their assets and profits for the public good.

Social Purpose Corporations: These corporations have a legal structure that allows them to prioritize social or environmental goals in addition to financial returns. They can make decisions that benefit society, employees, and the environment, not just shareholders.

For-Profit Cooperatives: These are member-owned organizations that operate for the mutual benefit of their members. They can be for-profit or nonprofit, and their primary focus is on serving the needs and interests of their members rather than maximizing profits. Please select Social Enterprise if your organization is a for-profit Cooperative; for non-profit Cooperatives, select Not-for-Profit Entity.

Hybrid (for profit and not for profit) business: It operates with a dual purpose of generating profits while reinvesting them towards social impact rather than solely distributing them to shareholders.

**** Q: Please select the activity type for your organization/initiative:**

Manufacturing

A business or individual that incurs in the making of products; generally using machinery; industrial production.

Example: An organization that produces farming products for smallholder farmers.

Technology

A business or individual that provides a digital technical service/product/platform/hardware.

Example: An organization that hosts an online marketplace for smallholder farmers to sell their crops.

Not for Profit Entity

Organization that operates for a specific cause or mission without the primary goal of generating profit. It uses its resources and revenue to fulfill its mission and reinvest in the betterment of society.

Nonprofit social enterprises are more likely to rely on foundation grants and government grants as their primary sources of revenue. Most nonprofits have tax-exempt status.

Charitable organizations: organizations whose primary objectives are philanthropy and social well-being (e.g. educational, religious, or other activities serving the public interest or common good.)

Churches and associated religious or faith-based organizations: organizations that provide the infrastructure for religious activities.

Private foundations: Private organizations generally, but not always, claim to serve humanitarian purposes.

Political organizations: encompasses political parties, non-governmental organizations, and special interest advocacy groups. May include tax-exempt activities like lobbying, community organizing, and campaign advertising aimed at achieving clearly-defined political goals.

Social organizations: such as lodges, fraternities, societies, and recreation clubs.

Non-profit financial institutions: such as retirement fund associations, pension trusts, and credit unions.

None of the above

Select this option if none of the models listed above apply to your organization.

Service

A business or individual that incurs activities that benefit a company/person without supplying physical products.

Example: An organization that trains communities in new farming practices.

Other

Select this option if none of the models listed above apply to your organization.

**** Q. Please share a short summary of WHAT issues your organization/initiative is tackling?**

Please include how you see this connects with issues of poverty in the [country/region] 100 words max

40% of Nigeria's 200 million population lives in off-grid areas; these communities are spread across roughly 50,000 villages and they primarily depend on firewood and dung cakes for their domestic energy needs. Many of these families burn extensive amounts of firewood or dung cakes for their domestic cooking needs every day, releasing a lot of harmful gasses into the air. These practices are not only harmful to the environment in the long run but also to these families directly in the short as well as long run, who often face respiratory health issues leading to innumerable deaths. Moreover, these families spend as much as 40% of their total household income on hazardous solid fuels.

**** Q. Please share a short summary of HOW your organization, project, or initiative tackles these issue(s). 100 words max**

XYZ Solar Organization is producing clean cookstove products to provide a sustainable solution to reducing the current usage of firewood and solid fuels by half for all our customers. We are doing this by (1) Bringing our clean cookstove movement to millions of people across Nigeria through baseline surveys; (2) Developing awareness and a behavior change campaign to facilitate the use of our products; and (3) Evolving our clean cookstove using a human-centric design approach.

**** Q. Can you please provide us an overview of the impact that your organization/initiative has created?**

| Population of Focus (Women, Children, etc) | Lives Impacted (Mention Direct and Indirect lives impacted separately) | Outputs |
|--|---|--|
| Off-Grid Households in Nigeria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct impact: 50,000 products sold to 50,000 individuals = 50,000 lives impacted directly Indirect impact: Products sold x Average size of household (e.g. 50,000 x 5 people per household = 250,000 lives impacted indirectly) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced carbon emissions by x% Saved xx USD in household income as a result of using our product x% reduction in reported illness due to clean stove usage |

Other Examples:

| Population of Focus (Women, Children, etc) | Lives Impacted (Mention Direct and Indirect lives impacted separately) | Outputs |
|---|---|--|
| Teachers trained | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Impact: 2,000 teachers trained = 2,000 lives impacted directly • Indirect Impact: Teachers trained x number of students they taught (e.g. 2,000 teachers trained x 40 students per year = 80,000 lives impacted indirectly) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in student: teacher ratio in the district • % decrease in teacher vacancies in the district • Point or % increase in standardized testing outcomes |
| Women employed in a community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Impact: 500 jobs created = 500 lives impacted directly • Indirect Impact: Women employed x Average size of household (e.g. 500 people employed x 4 people per household = 2000 lives impacted indirectly) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average increase in household income in USD due to new employment • USD re-spent within the local economy by vendors/suppliers and households (multiplier effect) • # of products manufactured or tons of food harvested, depending on the type of job |

**** Q. What does the impact for your organization/initiative look like in the next 3 years?**

In the next three years, XYZ Solar would have reached another 15000 households which is 2x of our current growth rate. We would have expanded to 3 new off-grid towns. We aim to deepen our impact by building more alliances with the local communities to create awareness about the product and its benefits. We are also working with similar organizations to create a forum to raise awareness at the government level, and working towards subsidizing these products for the customers.

**** Q. Provide a real example of someone who has benefited from your work to show us what the most significant impact of your work can be. The response is to provide guidance on what we are looking for.**

Habib is a shop owner in Abuja. His wife and daughters used to spend more than 50 minutes every day making dung cakes to burn for fuel. They had no other choice because they had to cook two daily meals by burning dung cakes as fuel, as firewood has become more expensive. Through a friend, Habib found out about XYZ's clean cookstoves. After seeing a solar cookstove in operation in a village nearby, Habib decided to purchase one for their house. Not only does his family now pay half of what they were paying for their domestic cooking needs, but they are also releasing fewer harmful fumes into the environment, and reporting fewer incidences of their children falling sick from respiratory illnesses.

**** Q: Please give an estimate of beneficiaries or customers that are directly served through your product/service/solution, who experience problems of poverty.**

Poverty traditionally entails lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. However, its causes, manifestations, and consequences include:

- discrimination, inequality, and marginalization due to:
 - race
 - religion
 - ethnic identity
 - caste
 - gender
 - age
 - sexual orientation
 - disability status
 - national origin or legal status
 - prior arrest or conviction record
 - homelessness
 - domestic violence
 - low health literacy
 - substance use and addiction
- violent conflict
- hunger, malnutrition, and stunting
- limited access to education
- little or no access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene
- little or no access to electricity

We understand that the word "poverty" carries different meanings in different contexts. To familiarize yourself with how we use the concept at Acumen, please refer to the following:

- [Lessons Learned - 15 years of tackling poverty](#)
 - Lesson 1 - The opposite of poverty is not wealth, it's dignity
- [The Opposite of Poverty](#)

D: About You and Your Experiences

In this section, we'll ask you to share information on:

- Your current work in building solutions to solve problems of poverty
- Your prior work, education, and other information - in a form of a C.V. a resume or another document that shows the experiences you've had to this point
- Traction and impact of your current work - if you have recently started working in your current role, please make sure to include your major achievements - including the impact you've achieved - in your prior experiences in the CV/resume that you upload along with this application or in a summary format.

Regards to a C.V., a resume, or any equivalent document, it should include:

- Highlights of your work experience that show us what roles you've taken on, what work you've done, and what you've learned from it
- Highlights of other relevant experiences (academic qualifications, volunteering, etc.) that add to the story of you, your work, and your growth over time

You may either upload a .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .rft file with a maximum size of 5MB. Please limit your submission to 1-2 pages, single-sided. Documents longer than 2 pages will not be considered or you may share a written summary as part of the form. Please limit your submission to 500 words max. And feel free to share bullet points or paragraphs as per your preference.

E: About you as a Leader

In this section, we'll ask you to share more about yourself that you haven't already shared in other areas of the application. We're looking to understand who you are as an individual, your reasons for applying to this program, and your commitment to the work of tackling poverty.

Tips for completing this section:

- Get personal. Use the essay questions to show us a side you have not shown in other parts of your application.
- Be authentic. Don't just write what you think we want to hear. Use stories to show us, rather than tell us, about yourself and your experiences.
- Be concise. Please answer the essay questions as directly and concisely as possible, being mindful of stated word limits, which are 200-300 words for each question, as the application will not allow you to exceed them.
- Give Examples and be as specific as possible to help us understand you and your work better.

**** Q: What is ONE area of personal growth that would make the biggest difference to your effectiveness as a leader? 200 words**

Please try to be specific and include examples from your professional life that would help us understand why this would make a difference.

**** Q: Challenge and failure are part of the journey. Please share a video telling us about the failure in your professional life and the lessons you learned from that experience. Video Format. Please make this answer relevant to your pursuit of your vision.**

Please try to be specific and include examples from your professional life that would help us understand this. If you applied the lessons learned from this experience in your professional life, please do mention that.

[Go to next page for video format guidance](#)

**** Q: If selected for the Fellowship, what do you hope to GET from this community? And what do you hope to GIVE to this community? 300 words**

After the Fellowship, the graduates become part of Acumen Academy's alumni community, the Foundry. We would like you to share how you will continue to give and receive from this community. Please be as specific as possible and provide 1-2 examples of how you will contribute and receive support from the Foundry.

**** Q. What is the impact you hope to have on your country? How does your work contribute towards that vision? 300 words**

Imagine what an ideal future would look like, share all the key stakeholders involved, and how you plan to engage with them to bring about that change. This is not just related to your current role or work. We would like you to think about all your past and future work and how that may contribute towards this vision.

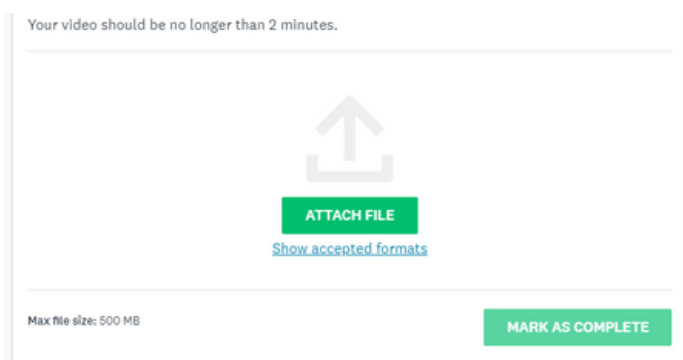
Video Format guidance

Please note that you'll be asked to respond to a couple of questions in video format. When doing so, you can decide whether you want to submit your video by:

1. Directly uploading your file on the platform.
2. Upload your video on a cloud-based file storage system (i.e. Google Drive, Box.com, or Dropbox) and share a link. Please have in mind that if you choose this option you must ensure that the link has public access.

If you choose option 1 you'll be allowed to upload your video once you click "MARK AS COMPLETE". A new task will appear in your screen's upper left corner with the name "Lives Impacted Example Video", "[Failure Example Video](#)", or "[Impact Video](#)" depending on which one you've selected to upload directly to the platform.

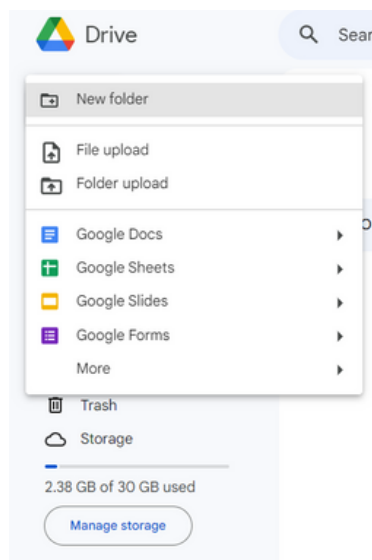
Upload your video file (must be either .avi, or .mp4, file format) directly using "ATTACH FILE" as shown below. Then click "MARK AS COMPLETE":



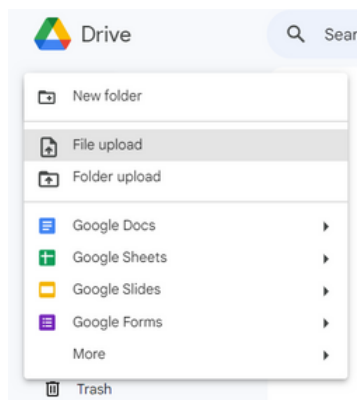
If you choose option 2 please go through the following instructions:

a) UPLOADING VIDEO ON GOOGLE DRIVE AND SHARING A LINK

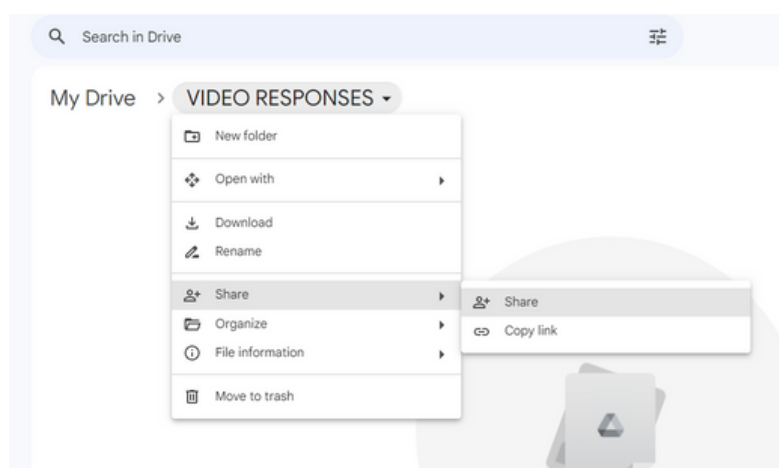
1. If you have a Google account, go to your [Google Drive](https://drive.google.com/drive/) (<https://drive.google.com/drive/>)
2. Click "+New" at the top left corner and choose Create a new folder using the "Folder" icon



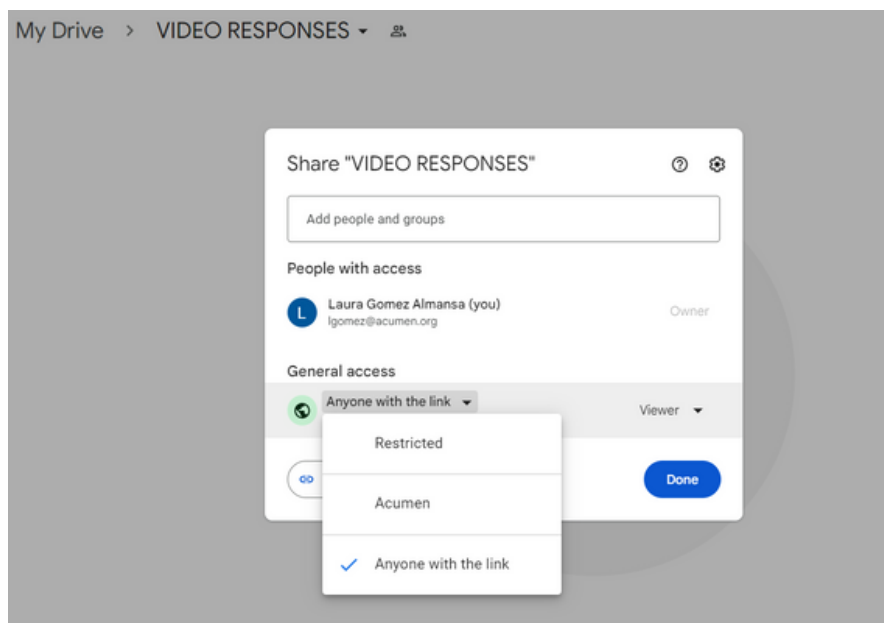
3. Click “+New” at the top left and upload your video files (for the questions you’re responding to) using the “File upload” icon. Rename your folder



4. Click the folder name i.e. Video Responses and select “Share” and “Share” once again



5. Change the general access option from “Restricted” to “Anyone with the link”. Then copy the link and try it on your browser from an incognito window to make sure the link is working



b) UPLOADING VIDEO ON DROPBOX AND SHARING A LINK

If you want to use Dropbox, see [Dropbox Help article > How to share a Dropbox folder here](#)

c) UPLOADING VIDEO ON BOX.COM AND SHARING A LINK

If you want to use Box.com, see [box Support > Creating Shared Links](#). Please select the “People with the link” option.

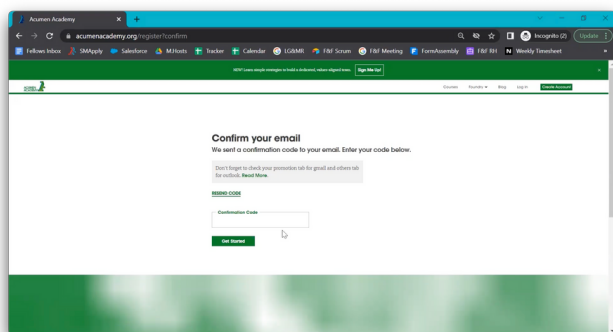
If you experience any technical difficulties, please send an email to [regional email] as soon as possible.

F: Terms and Conditions

Please read the terms and conditions carefully before agreeing. We know it is tempting to select “Yes” without reading the text, but we include the terms on the application so you are aware of important program information upfront. All selected Fellows must attend all program meetings (seminars) and complete assignments between seminars or face possible removal from the program. Any candidate whose application is found to contain falsified or plagiarized information will automatically be disqualified from consideration.

2. Platform Navigation Guidance

How to apply to create a New Account video example [here](#).



How to apply with an Existent Account video example [here](#).

