
Dylan Terrell Named into Ashoka Fellowship Network A Powerful International Network of Social Entrepreneurs Welcomes Caminos de Agua

By Dave Barrett

"Social entrepreneurs are the essential corrective force. They are system-changing entrepreneurs. And from deep within them, and therefore their work, are committed to the good of all."

— Bill Drayton, Ashoka Founder



Background: What is Ashoka?

Ashoka is an international organization that pioneered the field of social entrepreneurship more than 40 years ago. Since then, Ashoka has promoted social entrepreneurship by affiliating individual social entrepreneurs into the Ashoka organization. Their stated mission is *"to shape a global, entrepreneurial, competitive citizen sector: one that allows social entrepreneurs to thrive and enables the world's citizens to think and act as changemakers".*

Ashoka identifies leading **social entrepreneurs** with solutions to social problems who seek to make large-scale changes to society. Ashoka searches for individuals who have vision, creativity, and determination and are motivated by improving the public good rather than personal gain.

Ashoka supports these individual "changemakers," and their organizations, through their exclusive Fellowship Network. Since 1981, Ashoka has helped support roughly 3,500 Ashoka Fellows around the world. These leading social entrepreneurs are working tenaciously to create innovative solutions that tackle society's most pressing social and environmental challenges, together impacting millions of people around the globe.

Why was Caminos de Agua Selected?

In late 2020, Caminos de Agua's Executive Director, Dylan Terrell, received notification that he was nominated for an Ashoka Fellowship for the work of Caminos de Agua. A rigorous 8-month process followed, which included an intensive application process, both virtual and

physical site visits, hours of in-depth interviews with Latin American and later Ashoka Global leadership, and a final deep-dive review and interview by a panel of experts. Dylan and Caminos de Agua were evaluated on five core criteria:

1. The “New Idea” – Ashoka looks to support innovative projects that are creating new strategies, solutions, ideas, methods, and movements that have the potential to radically modify a given sector.
2. Systemic Change – Ashoka supports initiatives that can create positive social impact at the system-level and are working to resolve problems at their root causes. They look for ideas that have the potential to solve social problems at the national or international scale.
3. Entrepreneurial Trajectory – Ashoka Social Entrepreneurs must be completely dedicated to their cause and demonstrate their determination and ingenuity to obtain results in new ways and be unphased by the reality that systemic change may take years or decades to achieve in their field.
4. Creativity – Ashoka looks for those with the ability to engineer different approaches to the problems in the world and generate original solutions.
5. Ethical Fiber – The motivation of Ashoka Social Entrepreneurs must be firmly rooted in a commitment of service to others.

To state what should be clear from the above, they don't just let anyone into the Ashoka network. The standards for becoming a Fellow

are extremely high, and there are no corners cut in the vetting process.

Happily, in late July of this year, Dylan, and by association the entire Caminos de Agua team, was honored by being approved as a provisional member into the Ashoka Fellowship Network of Social Entrepreneurs. The “provisional” part is only due to COVID preventing a required final in-person review process. Once the situation becomes safe, Dylan will be invited to Mexico City to present the work of Caminos de Agua in a live format and be named an official “Ashoka Fellow” at that time.



Photo: Caminos de Agua's Executive Director, Dylan Terrell (left), talks with partner Agustín Madrigal (right) about rainwater harvesting systems. Dylan was recently welcomed into the Ashoka Fellowship Network.

What does an Ashoka Fellowship mean for Caminos de Agua?

To create the pressure needed for truly systemic change, social entrepreneurs and their organizations need access to new global connections and networks that can help them in their mission and to scale their impact. Many need more visibility to spread their ideas and solutions or to change people's mindsets.

Others need strategic, business, or other professional services to strengthen their organizations and models of implementation and growth.

Ashoka provides access to these resources and more through their Global Network. They provide free and subsidized workshops, in-depth trainings, and capacity-building opportunities for their Fellows as well as members of their organizations. Ashoka provides on-going advice and accompaniment, especially in the first three years of the Fellowship, when Fellows also receive a financial stipend that allows them to devote their time fully to their cause.

Perhaps most importantly, being a part of the Ashoka Fellowship Network legitimizes the years-long work of Caminos de Agua in the eyes of many key stakeholders and opens the organization up for new sources of collaboration, funding, and investment to carry our mission into the future.

Next Steps

Dylan and the Caminos team have already been welcomed as a member into the Ashoka Network and began receiving financial support from Ashoka earlier this month. Already the association is beginning to bear fruit: Caminos was also recently named a national finalist for the UBS Visionaris Award, due in part to our membership in the Ashoka Fellowship

Network. Caminos is also evaluating current network opportunities for its staff, and Dylan is working with Ashoka Latin America leadership on a needs assessment for the organization to see how Ashoka can better support the growth of the organization.

Dylan and Caminos' Ashoka Fellowship is a huge honor, and represents important high-level international recognition for their work. With access to this distinguished global network, Caminos is poised to have an even greater positive impact on our water crisis.

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