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IIMs open doors to train public policy experts without CAT

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As many as 9 IIMs have launched the two-year Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) in partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The fellowship will provide IIM exposure to public policy enthusiasts without toiling for CAT.

Anish Suganthan, assistant professor, IIM Ahmedabad, says, "Not every programme admission at IIMs is necessarily based on CAT. The admission to the MGNF will be based on a process to select young professionals with a strong interest in contributing to the skill development sector in the country. They will spend more time in the field than in classrooms."

The fellowship is being offered by IIMs in Bangalore, Jammu, Kozhikode, Lucknow, Nagpur, Ranchi, Udaipur and Visakhapatnam. Around 660 fellows will be recruited for the 2021-23 session. They will get a monthly stipend of Rs 50,000 during the first year and Rs 60,000 during the second year.

Ajay Garg, faculty, IIM Lucknow, says that the fellows will spend around 10 days at IIMs and 3 months in the districts, which will create a system of skill development at the district level.

Arnab Mukherji, programme director, MGNF at IIM Bangalore, says that the fellowship will help in bridging the demand-supply gap by training more professionals in the field of public policy with its blended academic programme at the district level. "It started as a PG course

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at IIM-B and now it has been launched as a national fellowship. Youngsters can join the MGNF to make an actual impact while learning the academic aspect at IIMs. On completion, they will get a certificate in public policy and management from the institutes," says Mukherji.

Venkata Rao, faculty, IIM Udaipur, believes that the fellowship fills the long-felt need for professionals who can strengthen the functioning of institutions at various levels in the skilling and training sector. While working with the District Skill Committees (DSCs), the fellows will also write a position paper on the district's eventual growth trajectory and long-term skilling strategy.

"There is a need to launch such fellowships in partnership with premier institutes as they get the majority of funds, have the academic and professional expertise, and attract the best talent from across the country," says Garg.

At the end of the programme the fellows can be absorbed by various ministries and government departments, says Mukherji. "MGNF will also provide a learning framework for the candidates to develop startups that cater to livelihoods. Based on the unique experiences during the two years, fellows will be able to shape their careers."