The Equity Imperative: Leveraging Technology to Advance Inclusion

Why Technology Matters for Inclusive Cities

Speaker Biographies

Gary Brantley is the chief information officer at the Department of Atlanta Information Management (AIM). As CIO, Brantley oversees the technology-related activities associated with the delivery of products and services managed by every department of the City. Before his role at AIM, Brantley served as the chief information officer of DeKalb County School District—the 26th largest school district in the US—in Atlanta. Brantley began his career about 16 years ago in information technology after graduating from Youngstown State University and earning his master’s degree from the University of Phoenix. He also is a graduate of the CIO Leadership Institute with MIT Sloan School of Management.

Majestic Lane serves as the deputy chief of staff and chief equity officer for Mayor William Peduto. As chief equity officer and deputy chief of staff, Lane leads the Peduto administration’s focus on opportunity for all residents of the city of Pittsburgh concerning education, workforce development, safe and healthy communities, and digital inclusion. Additionally, he leads the administration’s engagement with national organizations regarding equity and inclusion strategies. Before serving as deputy chief of staff, Lane was the deputy chief of neighborhood empowerment, where he coordinated the administration’s neighborhood equity efforts through community-driven development and affordable housing initiatives.

Lori Nelson is the chief resilience officer for the city of Boston. She was most recently the director of communications and constituency services for the City of Boston's Housing Authority. Alongside that role, she commits time to community work, serving on the advisory council for the Barbara Lee Foundation and chairing the Political Action Committee for the Black Ministerial Alliance since 2013, where she was appointed to the executive leadership team in 2017. She also served as the first vice president of the NAACP Boston branch from January 2017 through April 2018 and continues her advocacy as a member within the branch. Before joining the City of Boston’s Housing Authority, Nelson was the deputy chief of staff for the MBTA. Prior to joining the MBTA, she worked for Governor Deval Patrick as the deputy director of community affairs and special projects, where she was a liaison on community-related affairs, particularly concerning youth, ethnic groups, and coalitions across the Commonwealth, faith-based initiatives, and worked with Public Safety and Health and Human Services on youth violence reduction. Nelson specializes in coalition and partnership building, as well as political strategy in urban areas. Nelson studied English Literature and African American Studies at Northeastern University.

Erika Poethig is vice president and chief innovation officer at the Urban Institute. She leads the Research to Action Lab, an innovation hub serving decisionmakers and creative thinkers eager to effect social change. Before joining Urban, Poethig was acting assistant secretary for policy, development, and research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. During her tenure in the Obama administration, she was also deputy assistant secretary for policy development and was a leading architect of the White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities. At the MacArthur Foundation, she was associate director for housing. She was also assistant commissioner for policy, resource, and program development at the City of Chicago’s Department of Housing. In the 1990s, she developed Mayor Richard Daley’s campaign to combat predatory lending, prevent foreclosures, and stabilize communities. Poethig was a Phi Beta Kappa member at the College of Wooster and has a master’s degree with honors in public policy from the University of Chicago.

Alena Stern is a data science fellow at the Urban Institute studying policy solutions to advance equity and inclusion in cities. Before joining Urban, she worked as a senior program manager with AidData, an Open Cities fellow at the Sunlight Foundation, and a graduate research assistant at the Center for Data Science and Public Policy, where she used machine learning, natural language processing, statistical analysis, and geospatial data to inform the design of government policies and international development programs. Stern holds a BA in economics and international relations from the College of William and Mary and an MS in computational analysis and public policy from the University of Chicago.