

Expanding the Toolkit for Equity Assessment: State-of-the-Art Methods for Federal Agencies

Speaker Biographies

A Whole-of-Government Equity Agenda

Sarah Rosen Wartell, President, Urban Institute

In 2012, Sarah Rosen Wartell became the third president of the Urban Institute since it was founded in 1968. Urban is an economic and social science research and policy organization whose more than 550 researchers, experts, and other staff believe in the power of evidence to improve lives and strengthen communities. During her tenure, Urban celebrated a milestone anniversary by moving into a state-of-the-art research and convening facility and launched its Next50—a strategy “to advance upward mobility, equity, and shared prosperity” by bringing the power of knowledge to help changemakers accelerate solutions. Under Wartell’s leadership, Urban aims to leverage cutting-edge technology and data science, understand and confront structural racism, and deliver timely, relevant, and actionable research to communities, capitals, boardrooms, and wherever innovators are pursuing bold ideas.

K. Sabeel Rahman, Senior Counselor, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget

K. Sabeel Rahman has previously served as the President of Demos (2018-2021) and as Visiting Professor of Law at Harvard Law School (2017), and has been a Fellow at the Roosevelt Institute and New America. Rahman’s research focuses on the themes of democracy, economic inequality, exclusion, and power. His first book, *Democracy Against Domination* (Oxford University Press, 2017) examines how democratic ideals fueled reform movements in the Progressive Era, and what their implications might be in today’s post-financial crisis debates about economic inequality. His second book, *Civic Power* (Cambridge University Press, 2019, with Hollie Russon Gilman) explores new approaches to organizing, power, and institutional reform in the face of the current crisis of American democracy. His next research project focuses on the problems of structural inequality and exclusion, private power, and inequality, exploring historical, social movement, and public policy approaches to tackling these issues. In addition to his academic writings in law, political theory, and political science, he has written for a variety of venues including *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Boston Review*, *Dissent*, *The Nation*, and others.

Creating More Equitable Outcomes through Policy Design

Shena Ashley, Vice President for Nonprofits and Philanthropy, Urban Institute

Dr. Shena Ashley is a leading expert in philanthropy and has a rich body of scholarship focused on the grant making practices of foundation and government agencies. Dr. Ashley leads the equitable grantmaking research portfolio and the newly launched Racial Equity Analytics Lab at the Urban Institute. She works extensively with foundation teams in strategy refinement engagements and in the development of learning cohorts for their grantee partners. Dr. Ashley also brings to the team extensive knowledge of the design and evaluation of networks and ecosystem-building strategies.

Nick Hart, President, Data Foundation

Nick Hart is the President of the Data Foundation. Prior to joining the Data Foundation, Dr. Hart was Director of the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Evidence Project. In that capacity, he championed a strategy for implementing the bipartisan recommendations issued by the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking.

Dr. Hart has spoken widely about the need for government capacity to facilitate using data to inform decision-making inside and outside of government. With nearly a decade of experience in the federal government, Dr. Hart worked on a wide range of issues including social security, disability, anti-poverty, environmental, energy, economic development, and criminal justice policies. He served at the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as a senior analyst and special assistant, writing executive branch budget proposals and encouraging increased capacity for evidence-based practices across government.

Michael McAfee, President and Chief Executive Officer, PolicyLink

Dr. Michael McAfee became President and CEO of PolicyLink in 2018, seven years after becoming the inaugural director of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink. During his time at PolicyLink, Michael has played a leadership role in securing Promise Neighborhoods as a permanent federal program, led efforts to improve outcomes for more than 300,000 children, and facilitated the investment of billions of dollars in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. He is the catalyst for a new and growing body of work – corporate racial equity – which includes the first comprehensive tool to guide private-sector companies in assessing and actively promoting equity in every aspect of their company’s value chain. Michael carries forward the legacy to realize the promise of equity – just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Concurrent Breakout Track: Simulating Program or Policy Effects for Federal Poverty Prevention Programs

Greg Acs, Vice President for Income and Benefits Policy, Urban Institute

Gregory Acs is vice president for income and benefits policy at the Urban Institute, where his research focuses on social insurance, social welfare, and the compensation of workers. Previously, he served as unit chief for Labor and Income Security in the Congressional Budget Office’s Health and Human Resources Division and as vice president of the Association for Policy Analysis and Management. His recent work examines economic and social mobility and economic security with a focus on low-income working families. In the past, he has studied the employment patterns of young women to determine the paths women take to obtain jobs paying enough to leave them better off working than on welfare. He has also examined the well-being of children across living arrangements, the ways welfare policies influence family composition, the status of families leaving welfare, and how policies affect the incentives families face as they move from welfare to work.

Jessica Banthin, Senior Fellow, Health Policy Center, Urban Institute

Jessica S. Banthin is a senior fellow in the Health Policy Center, where she studies the effects of health insurance reform policies on coverage and costs. Before joining the Urban Institute, she served more than 25 years in the federal government, most recently as deputy assistant director for health at the Congressional Budget Office. During her eight-year term at the Congressional Budget Office, Banthin directed the production of numerous major cost estimates of legislative proposals to modify the Affordable Care Act. Banthin has contributed to Congressional Budget Office reports and written about how reform proposals affect individuals’ and families’ incentives to enroll in coverage, influence employers’ decisions to offer coverage to their employees, and affect insurance market competitiveness. In her recent work, Banthin has written on competition in insurer markets and the accuracy of various data sources used in modeling health reforms.

William G. Gale, Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Federal Economic Policy, and Senior Fellow, Economic Studies Program, Brookings Institution; Codirector, Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center

William Gale is the Arjay and Frances Miller Chair in Federal Economic Policy and a senior fellow in the Economic Studies program at the Brookings Institution. His research focuses on tax policy, fiscal policy, pensions, and saving behavior. He is co-director of the Tax Policy Center, a joint venture of the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute. He is also director of the Retirement Security Project. Gale is the author of *Fiscal Therapy: Curing America’s Debt Addiction and Investing in the Future* (Oxford University Press, 2019). His research has been published in several scholarly journals, including the *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, and

Quarterly Journal of Economics. In 2007, a paper he co-authored was awarded the TIAA-CREF Paul A. Samuelson Award Certificate of Excellence.

Tracy Gordon, Interim VP and Acting Robert C. Pozen Director of Tax Policy, Urban Institute

Tracy Gordon is the acting Robert C. Pozen director of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, where she researches and writes about fiscal challenges facing state and local governments, including budget trade-offs, intergovernmental relations, and long-term sustainability. Before joining Urban, Gordon was a senior economist with the White House Council of Economic Advisers. She was also a fellow at the Brookings Institution, assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy, and fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California. Gordon was a member of the District of Columbia Infrastructure Task Force and the District of Columbia Tax Revision Commission. She serves on the board of trustees for the American Tax Policy Institute and the California Budget and Policy Center.

Benjamin M. Miller, Economist; Professor, Pardee RAND Graduate School; Quality Assurance Manager, RAND Social and Economic Well-Being Division

Benjamin Miller is an economist at the RAND Corporation, a professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School, and a Research Quality Assurance Manager for RAND's Social and Economic Well-Being Division. Dr. Miller conducts economic assessments that improve public systems, including infrastructure systems, regulatory systems, and financial systems. His research has been funded by a wide array of government agencies, including the California Department of Industrial Relations, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Performance Accountability Council. His work has been presented to multiple Congressional committees, published in academic journals, RAND reports, and textbooks, and cited by major news outlets such as the *New York Times* and Politico.

Jonathan Schwabish, Senior Fellow, Income and Benefits Policy Center Urban Institute (Moderator)

Jonathan Schwabish is a senior fellow in the Income and Benefits Policy Center and a member of Urban's communications team, where he specializes in data visualization and presentation design. His research agenda includes disability insurance, retirement security, data measurement, and nutrition policy. Schwabish is considered a leader in the data visualization field and is a leading voice for clarity and accessibility in research. He has written on how to best visualize data, including technical aspects of creation, design best practices, and how to communicate social science research in more accessible ways. Schwabish helps nonprofits, research institutions, and governments at all levels improve how they communicate their work and findings to their partners, constituents, and citizens. He teaches data visualization and presentation skills at Georgetown University and American University. He is also founder of PolicyViz, a consulting firm that helps clients improve how they work with and communicate data and analysis. He also hosts the PolicyViz Podcast, which focuses on data, open data, and data visualization. His new book, *Better Data Visualizations: A Guide for Scholars, Researchers, and Wonks* details essential strategies to create more effective data visualizations.

[Concurrent Breakout Track: Privacy-Preserving Technologies for Expanded Administrative Data Use and Sharing](#)

Claire Bowen, Lead Data Scientist for Privacy and Data Security, Urban Institute

Claire McKay Bowen is the lead data scientist for privacy and data security at the Urban Institute. Her research focuses on assessing the quality of differentially private data synthesis methods and science communication. In 2021, the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies identified her as an emerging leader in statistics for her technical contributions and leadership to statistics and the field of data privacy and confidentiality. Bowen holds a BS in mathematics and physics from Idaho State University and an MS and PhD in statistics from the University of Notre Dame. After completing her PhD, she worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where she investigated cosmic ray effects on supercomputers.

Amy O'Hara, Research Professor in the Massive Data Institute and Executive Director of the Federal Statistical Research Data Center, Georgetown University; Nonresident Fellow, Urban Institute

Amy O'Hara is a research professor in the Massive Data Institute at Georgetown University and the director of Georgetown's Federal Statistical Research Data Center. She also leads the Administrative Data Research Initiative, improving secure, responsible data access for research and evaluation. O'Hara addresses risks involved with data sharing by connecting practices across the social, health, computer, and data sciences. She was previously a senior executive at the US Census Bureau, where she founded their administrative data curation and research unit. O'Hara has published on topics including the measurement of income, longitudinal linkages to measure economic mobility, and the data infrastructure necessary to support government and academic research. Her current research focuses on population measurement, data quality, and record linkage. She received her PhD in economics from the University of Notre Dame.

Leonard Burman, Institute Fellow, Urban Institute (Moderator)

Len Burman is Institute Fellow at the Urban Institute, the Paul Volcker Professor and a Professor of Public Administration and International Affairs at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, and senior research associate at Syracuse University's Center for Policy Research. He co-founded the Tax Policy Center, a joint project of the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution, in 2002. He was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax Analysis at the Treasury from 1998 to 2000 and Senior Analyst at the Congressional Budget Office from 1988 to 1997. He is past-president of the National Tax Association. Burman is the coauthor with Joel Slemrod of *Taxes in America: What Everyone Needs to Know* and author of *The Labyrinth of Capital Gains Tax Policy: A Guide for the Perplexed*, and co-editor of several books. He is often invited to testify before Congress and has written for scholarly journals as well as media outlets such as the Washington Post, New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and a B.A. from Wesleyan University.

Concurrent Breakout Track: Leveraging Data without Increasing Burdens

Steven Brown, Senior Research Associate and Associate Director of the Racial Equity Analytics Lab, Urban Institute

Kreg Steven Brown is a senior research associate in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population and associate director of the Racial Equity Analytics Lab at the Urban Institute. His primary research focuses on employment, particularly career pathways, earnings, and workplace protections; financial well-being; and economic mobility. Previous work includes federal evaluation and academic research on segregation and homeownership, access to affordable housing, and educational equity. Brown received his bachelor's from Princeton University and his master's in sociology from Harvard University, where he was also a fellow in the Multidisciplinary Program for the Study of Inequality and Social Policy at Harvard Kennedy School.

Ajjit Narayanan, Data Scientist, Urban Institute

Ajjit Narayanan is a data scientist at the Urban Institute, where he works on research to advance equity and inclusion in rural and urban communities. He enjoys building open-source data and mapping tools for researchers and advises on tools such as interactive mapping, big data platforms, and data visualization methods to relevant public policy issues. Narayanan also coleads Urban's R Users Group and Mapping Users Group to encourage the use of R and geospatial analysis for statistical analysis, data visualization, and automation. Narayanan holds a BA in economics and a BA in urban studies, along with minors in math and statistics, from the University of Pennsylvania.

Alena Stern, Senior Data Scientist, Urban Institute

Alena Stern is a senior data scientist 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. Alena 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.

Graham MacDonald, Interim Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Technology & Data Science, Urban Institute (Moderator)

Graham MacDonald is the interim vice president and CIO of technology and data science at the Urban Institute, where he works with researchers to improve access to data, analytics tools, and innovative research methods. MacDonald uses and advises on such tools as machine learning, natural language processing, web scraping, big data platforms, and data visualization techniques and their application to relevant public policy issues. Before starting his current role, MacDonald worked for the Turner Center for Housing Innovation, the San Francisco Planning Department, and the California Housing Partnership Corporation, where he used innovative data collection, machine learning, data linking, and microsimulation techniques to solve problems. Before that, he was a research associate in the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center and was the lead data visualization developer for interactive digital communications projects.

Concurrent Breakout Track: Examining Algorithm-Based Decisionmaking Tools for Bias

Judah Axelrod, Senior Data Scientist, Racial Equity Analytics, Urban Institute

Judah Axelrod is a senior data scientist at the Urban Institute studying policy solutions to advance equity and inclusion in cities. Before joining Urban, Judah studied Data Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Judah's career is characterized by his continued research into the dynamic relationship between socialization and economics, often looking into the areas that highlight inequity. He was a recipient of the SAS Academic Excellence award as well as an Aresty Research Assistant, receiving honorable mention for his project studying Social Impact Bonds with Dr. Steve Barnett. Judah is currently a research assistant at the National Institute for Early Education Research, focusing on the financing and economic benefits of early childhood interventions.

Emily Bembeneck, Director, Center for Applied AI at The University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Emily leads operations and strategy for CAAI, and previously led digital learning strategy for the University of Chicago. Her background is in digital storytelling, having earned her PhD in classics at the University of Michigan, where her research focused on narrative and cognitive theory in video games and oral epic. Bembeneck works with academics, industry leaders, and policy professionals to help guide decisions around the development, deployment, and assessment of equitable AI in society. Working and thinking together, her research determines that it can help ensure that AI leads to better outcomes in healthcare, finance, and criminal justice. Her background is in humanities and technology, specifically storytelling in video games. Bembeneck designs games in my spare time and considers play an essential element to a healthy and creative life.

Michael Neal, Senior Research Associate, Housing Finance Policy Center, Urban Institute

Michael Neal is a senior research associate in the Housing Finance Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Previously, he worked at Fannie Mae where he was a director of economics in the Economic and Strategic Research division. Before his service at Fannie, Neal was the assistant vice president at the National Association of Home Builders' Economic and Housing Policy department. As a housing economist, Neal has an in-depth knowledge of housing market trends and has provided expert analysis and commentary on housing to media outlets around the country. Previously, Neal worked at Congress's Joint Economic Committee, the Federal Reserve System, the Congressional Budget Office, and Goldman Sachs. Neal has a bachelor's degree in economics from Morehouse College and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Pennsylvania.

Anna Zink, PhD Candidate in Health Policy, Harvard University

Anna is a PhD candidate in Health Policy with a secondary degree in Computational Science and Engineering. I'm interested in algorithmic fairness applications in health care. Most of her recent research looks at fairness for health plan payments with a focus on identifying groups defined by multiple attributes that are undercompensated in different U.S. health insurance markets and the effect of health insurance tools like prescription drug formularies on prescription use. Her published work has appeared in *Biometrics*, *American Journal of Health Economics*, and *Health Affairs*, among others. Her doctoral work is supported by an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. Before coming to the program, Zink worked as a data analyst at Acumen, LLC, where, among a small team of analysts, she partnered with the Department of Justice on cases of Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse and helped develop fraud surveillance methods. Zink also worked as a data engineer on the research team at athenahealth, a health care IT software and services company.

Matt Rogers, Senior Advisor, Institutional Initiatives, Urban Institute (Moderator)

Matt Rogers is a senior advisor for institutional initiatives at the Urban Institute. He works with Urban executive leadership to identify and execute on institutional priorities and works with research and policy experts to build bodies of work in multiple policy areas. He has helped manage Urban initiatives, including work informing presidential elections, the US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, and Urban's Next50. Previously, Rogers was deputy political director at ActBlue, a political nonprofit. A graduate of Brandeis University, he has a master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy. Rogers is a member of the board of directors of ActBlue Charities, which democratizes and facilitates giving to charitable organizations, and chair of the board of McCourt Policy in Practice.

Agency Perspectives on Executing the Executive Order***Laren Damme, Deputy Director of the Chief Evaluation Office, US Department of Labor***

Lauren Damme is the Deputy Director of the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), where she is responsible for helping oversee CEO's evaluation research portfolio, staff and office functions. Before joining CEO in 2019, Ms. Damme served as the Senior Evaluation Research Advisor in the DOL's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT). There, Ms. Damme led strategic guidance and stakeholder engagement efforts; and provided technical oversight of the impact evaluation and survey research portfolios for OCFT. She has over 18 years of experience in quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation, primarily in international development, and has worked in around 30 countries. Ms. Damme has served in Ecuador, Japan, Switzerland, the UK and the US in multilateral United Nations organizations, corporate and nonprofit sectors, and has worked with the Japanese government. She holds an MSc in development management from the London School of Economics and Political Science, a BSc in marketing/survey research from Iowa State University, and is a doctoral candidate in the Public Policy Ph.D. program at George Washington University.

Natalie Evans Harris, Senior Advisor for Delivery (Tech and Data), US Department of Commerce

Natalie Evans Harris is known for working with a broad network of academic institutions, data science organization, application developers, and foundations to advance the responsible use of data standards, APIs, and ethical algorithms to directly benefit people. Natalie co-founded and currently serves as Head of Strategic Initiatives of BrightHive, a data trust platform delivering a suite of smart data collection, integration, and governance products to social services providers for improved access to and usability of social sector data. She founded the Community-driven Principles for Ethical Data Sharing (CPEDS) community of practice with over 1200 active members focused on strengthening ethical practices in the data science community through crowd-sourcing of a Data Science Code of Ethics. Now the Global Data Ethics Project (GDEP) she serves as a Strategic Advisor in advancing the adoption of tools, techniques, and practices developed by the community.

Bhavya Mohan, Fellow at Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES), US General Services Administration (GSA); Assistant Professor, University of San Francisco

Bhavya is an Assistant Professor in the Marketing department at the University of San Francisco. In her research, she studies the effects of transparency on consumer behavior, using both lab and field experiments. Specifically, her research investigates how consumer behavior changes when organizations are transparent about the costs incurred to provide a service, and the wages they pay their employees. She previously served as an academic advisor to the United Kingdom's Behavioral Insights Team, on research examining the effects of disclosing firm-level gender pay gaps. She received her doctorate in marketing, with a focus on consumer psychology, from Harvard Business School in 2016.

Daniel Morgan, Chief Data Officer, US Department of Transportation

Daniel Morgan is the first Chief Data Officer of the United States Department of Transportation, having served in this capacity for five years. As the CDO, he has overall responsibility for the Departmental data program and data compliance across the Department. He is responsible for establishing a clear vision of the data managed in DOT and the application of DOT data for decision-making. He serves as data strategist and adviser, steward for improving data quality, liaison for data sharing and developer of new data products. Prior to assuming this role, Mr. Morgan spent 15 years as a management consultant, providing services to public and private sector clients in a variety of areas, including: open government, information technology governance, capital planning and investment control, enterprise architecture, and human capital planning.

Christina Yancey, Chief Evaluation Officer, US Department of Labor

Christina Yancey, PhD, is the Chief Evaluation Officer for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). She is responsible for coordinating the Department's evaluation agenda and working with all its agencies to design and implement evaluations. Dr. Yancey has more than 15 years of experience examining the effectiveness of employment and other social policies and programs on the lives of people in the United States, with a focus on vulnerable populations. Before joining DOL in 2014, Dr. Yancey served in the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP), conducting performance management and strategic planning activities for the agency. Before joining the federal government in 2010, Dr. Yancey developed, coordinated, and directed field-based evaluations of social programs for the state of Maryland.