

• 2024

A Decade *of* Impact



Panelists onstage at A Decade of Impact: The Beeck Center at 10.

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Welcome to the 2024 Impact Report

Ten years ago, Alberto & Olga María Beeck and Carl Muñana set their sights on a broad and bold mission: make the greatest impact on the most people.

Fast forward to 2024, and they—along with a decade’s-worth of visionary leaders, celebrated experts, driven changemakers, and committed public servants—have brought that vision to life. Through dozens of projects and programs—tackling everything from inequities in financial systems to expanding student access to international fellowships and applying human-centered design to improve government—the Beeck Center has made an indelible mark on the field of social impact and civic technology. Our 2024 Impact Report takes you on that inspiring 10-year journey, highlighting the people, ideas, and moments that made us who we are today.

Bolstered by the support, vision, and service-driven mission of our academic home at Georgetown University, the Beeck Center has been a symbiotic environment since its inception, where students and experts with deep experience in their fields work, experiment, and innovate together—each bringing

their creativity, passion, and insights to some of the most challenging issues our society faces.

That mission has never been more vital. Throughout 2024, the Beeck Center worked with governments to deliver digital benefits and services that are accessible, secure, resilient, and meet the needs and expectations of the people who use them. As these critical services—and the government talent, technology, and infrastructure needed to deliver them—face growing threats, we know that it is a critical time to invest in government at all levels. With your partnership, the Beeck Center will be here to meet the moment and champion a people-centered, resilient, and digitally-enabled government that works for all.

Thank you for being here, and let’s get to work on the next decade of social impact and innovation together.



Lynn Overmann
Executive Director



[VIEW WEB VERSION](#)

2024 By the Numbers

10 networks + communities of practice	4 technical assistance + research programs
7,000+ practitioners engaged	58 states, territories, and provinces reached
103M media impressions	\$8.45M in funding secured
4,000 event attendees	30,000 users of our <u>digital library</u>
3 awards + nominations	23 Georgetown University students trained



Beek Center team at the 10th Anniversary Celebration.

Acknowledgements

We deeply appreciate the team whose contributions significantly shaped this impact report. Special gratitude is extended to Development + Grants Manager Lucie Bonneville for her project management, strategic and design direction, and editing; Deputy Director of Content Ashleigh Fryer, for her visioning, extensive writing, and editorial guidance; Communications + Marketing Associate Gerard Ramos for his thoughtful website, marketing, and dissemination management; Communications Student Analysts Evelyn Blanchette, Claire Stowe, and Jolene Ren for their diligent drafting, copyediting, and dissemination efforts; Executive Director Lynn Overmann for her incredible leadership and careful review; and Director of Communications Jessica Yabsley for her strategic guidance in directing this report.

Appreciation is also extended to all of our project teams—Data Labs, Digital Benefits Network, Digital Service Network, Family Benefits Lab, and The Opportunity Project for Cities—for their insightful contributions and editing. Thank you to Justin Duncan and Teal Media for their wonderful partnership on development and design. Our deep gratitude to the individuals who sat down with us to share their personal stories, challenges, and triumphs. The work of all these individuals has been essential in creating a report that celebrates our accomplishments over the last 10 years and launches the next decade of impact and innovation. This work would not be possible without the entire team's collaboration, dedication, and integral role in advancing the Beek Center's mission.



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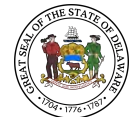
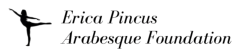


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Alberto & Olga Maria Beeck
Family Foundation



Thank you to our 2024 *partners & funders.*

● Past ○ Present ○ Future

Building *the* *foundation*



“Over these 10 years, our colleagues at the Beeck Center have brought a vibrant vision for what an initiative focused at the intersection of data, design, technology, and policy can be.”

JOHN J. DEGIOIA

President Emeritus of Georgetown University



10 Years of Social Impact

2010

The Beeck family sets their sights on social impact with ‘philanthropy, upside down.’

Over a period of six days in April 2010, Eyjafjallajökull—an ice cap-covered volcano in Iceland—erupted for the first time in nearly 200 years, blanketing large swaths of Europe in an impenetrable layer of ash and debris.

At the time, [Alberto Beeck](#) and his brother-in-law [Carl Muñana](#) were visiting Oxford University for the [Skoll World Forum](#) on Social Entrepreneurship, hoping to glean information for a passion project they had been researching with [Olga María Beeck](#) for the better part of two years. As the volcanic ash ground all air traffic to a halt across northern Europe, Alberto and Carl hunkered down in London with Olga María on speakerphone and decided to put pen to paper on the idea they hoped would shape the emerging field of social impact.

“Our key question was, ‘How can we maximize the impact we can have on society?’” Alberto said. “We were happy to experiment and try different initiatives to get to our goal ... It was philanthropy, upside down.”

What the trio initially proposed was a university-based center that would provide “undergraduates, graduate students, practitioners, and faculty with the opportunities to learn about and engage with all aspects of social impact and innovation.” And, unlike many centers housed in academic institutions, this organization would not be tied to a particular school within the university, nor would its scope be limited to a specific subject, faculty member, or theory of



Beeck Center Co-Founders Olga María and Alberto Beeck.

change. By design, it would break down academic silos, experiment with ideas, and—most importantly—train the next generation of changemakers to have the greatest impact on the most number of people.

“Our premise was ... let’s let the center be a place that’s alive and can transform over time to meet the goals that we think are important, and can have a lasting impact on the world,” Carl said.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF IMPACT

The pull toward impact was not a new one for either the Beecks or Carl. Alberto came from a family of social entrepreneurs and, in the mid-2000s, he and Olga María set their sights squarely on philanthropy.

Alberto started his involvement in social impact by joining Ashoka’s support network,

as well as the board of an organization that gave students education grants in return for a portion of their future earnings. He also conceptualized and launched *Misión Impacto*, a reality television show that highlighted the work of social impact leaders in Colombia.

After observing these initiatives from the inside out, the Beecks saw the lightning-fast pace at which the field of social impact and entrepreneurship was growing and changing—with no structured efforts to train or develop the talent pool in sight.

“There’s a lot of myth[s] around social entrepreneurship,” Alberto said. “But, at its core, you have to really be an entrepreneur ... You have to understand how to achieve sustainability and maximize impact.”

They turned to Carl, who had been doing his own research and work in social impact since leaving his investment banking career in the late 90s. He had been inspired at a young age through his service in the Peace Corps, where he worked on health and sanitation issues in Sierra Leone.

“That experience was, in its own way, transformative, as it is for many people,” Carl said. “So, you might say it’s in my DNA and ... those years after 1999 were very much like a big experiment in different areas and subsections of the ecosystem.”

After nearly three years of attending conference after conference—meeting with experts from social impact organizations like [Ashoka](#), [Endeavor](#), and the [Aspen Institute](#), as well as social entrepreneurs and academic minds from Oxford, Stanford, and other institutions—and days spent distilling their ideas down to a cohesive, targeted approach, the only thing left to do was identify and secure a home for their endeavor.

The trio debated whether to create an independent center, but quickly realized that being based at a university would connect them to future leaders (students) and the

brightest minds (faculty and practitioners), further amplifying their reach and impact.

“Selecting Georgetown was the easiest decision for us,” Olga María said. “It has values at its core and attracts people that want to impact society and serve others. Also, there was a deep personal connection that played an important role in the decision.”

GROWING A LEGACY OF INNOVATION

Olga María always knew that she wanted to study and experience the world in whatever ways she could.

Enrolling in Georgetown University helped her achieve that goal. She immersed herself in courses on Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, and added several more languages to the three she already spoke.

She went on to lead a successful career in finance before starting her family with Alberto, never forgetting the foundation of curiosity, exploration, and generosity she had built in her college years. Olga María spent the next few decades deepening her connection to Georgetown through her service on the Board of Advisors for the School of Foreign Service, the Board of Regents, and various other initiatives. Alberto followed suit, co-founding Georgetown’s Latin American Board and serving as a member of the Georgetown Board of Trustees.

Then, one day in 2014, their name became a part of the university in a new and even more enduring way, when a sign for “the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation” went up outside Georgetown’s Edward B. Bunn S.J. Intercultural Center. What started as a proposal three years earlier to Georgetown President Emeritus John DeGioia, Interim President Robert Groves, and Vice President for Advancement Bartley Moore had become a tangible center in the heart of Georgetown’s Main Campus, promising to contribute to the field of social impact.

As the ultimate testament to the longevity of their commitment—in addition to their generous [\\$10 million founding gift](#)—the Beecks gave their name to the center.

“It really commits you to a completely different level,” Alberto said. “It’s not just writing a check ... It’s really a lifetime commitment because it’s your reputation. It’s your name.”

For Olga María, even before the Beeck Center officially opened on campus, her primary ambition was for the organization to give students a taste of what she had valued most about her time as a Georgetown student. To her, the center had to be a place that upheld the university’s commitment to serving others, above all else.

“I was able to see and experience so many things [abroad],” she said. “It was so important to see how other people live and learn how to become a global citizen and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.”

That principle gave rise to the Beeck Center’s first program: [GU Impacts](#). The fellowship guided students through an immersive experience centered around a 10-week independent summer project with one of the Beeck Center’s social impact partners across the globe.

“It was about taking students out of the traditional classroom setting and connecting them with communities and causes that were working toward meaningful, sustainable change,” Olga María said.

In total, 155 students worked in teams with local organizations, advancing their efforts toward sustainable change. GU Impacts partners included nonprofits, NGOs, and corporations whose goal was to show students positive social impact in any sector.

“The independence of my project has instilled in me a bigger sense of pride in my work,” said Ziyue Zhang, a GU Impacts alum.

“Having now experienced challenges in the classroom and in experiential learning, it has expanded my academic repertoire for a more diverse set of situations.”

To Olga María, Alberto, and Carl, GU Impacts was not only an ideal flagship program for the center, but one that felt emblematic of Georgetown’s mission. The Beecks and Carl found the university leadership—President Emeritus DeGioia, Interim President Groves, and Vice President Moore—to be stalwart supporters of their experimental ideas and “unusual” approach, as well as instrumental in providing “navigational skills in our journey with the university,” Carl said.

“Values drive Georgetown,” Alberto said. “And that made a big difference in terms of how we related to the university, because we were aligned on our core principles from the start.”

With one program already underway, the founders focused their energy next on the search for the Beeck Center’s inaugural leader. The group agreed that this person needed to harness the center’s “entrepreneurial spirit” and marry a “start-up mentality” with the founders’ social impact motivations and the university’s service orientation. They knew one thing for certain: whoever stepped into the role would be stepping into something new, with immense untapped potential for the future.

“[The Beeck Center] came at the right moment ... where the entire environment was ready for rethinking how young people learn,” Interim President Groves said. “Now interdisciplinary problem solving activity [at Georgetown] is just booming ... I’m willing to say [the Beeck Center] was a causal factor in more traditional academic programs rethinking how they teach.”

2013

GU Impacts fellowship program launches, supporting the future of social impact leaders on a global scale.

GU Impacts was a student fellowship program started by the Beeck family, born from a commitment to serving others and contributing to the betterment of society as a whole. The fellowship guided students through an immersive experience centered around a 10-week project with partners across the globe—including nonprofits, NGOs, and corporations—whose goal was to show students positive social impact in all sectors. In total, 155 students worked in teams with global organizations, advancing their efforts toward sustainable change. As the Beeck Center's very first program, the legacy of GU Impacts laid an important foundation for future student-facing programs and our commitment to fostering experiential learning.



GU Impacts Fellow in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2014

The Beeck Center finds its home at Georgetown University, led by Sonal Shah and an ethos of 'do it differently.'

Late into the night on February 10, 2014, Sonal Shah sat on the floor of room 100 in the Intercultural Center on Georgetown University's main campus, surrounded by half-built office furniture, mismatched chairs, and crowds of students. It was the eve of the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation's official launch day and, despite exhaustion, the group's energy was electric with possibility.

"Nobody was focused on how nice the space looked as much as we were focused on having a space and showing that we were a real place," Shah said.



Beeck Center founding Executive Director Sonal Shah.

Two years earlier, Shah had been leading the White House Office for Social Innovation and Civic Participation when she got a call from Olga María and Alberto Beeck, Carl Muñana, and Georgetown University Interim President Robert Groves.

The group described an idea for a new kind of center—one that would be based at Georgetown, but would not be tied to a particular school within the university, nor see its scope limited to a specific subject, faculty member, or theory of change. By design, it would break down academic silos, experiment with ideas, and—most importantly—train the next generation of changemakers to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people.

“Sonal is a person who is entrepreneurial by nature and who works well with a variety of collaborators,” Interim President Groves said. “She and the Beeck Center were a perfect match given her ability to think strategically.”

Shah’s career had been as agile and multi-faceted as the Beeck Center itself would grow to become under her leadership. She led Goldman Sachs’ environmental strategy and Google’s global technology and impact investment initiatives, and had served as the interim vice president of United Way Worldwide, among other crucial roles across academia, government, and the private and philanthropic sectors.

More important than her resume, though, was her mindset as a changemaker and outside-the-box thinker.

“I’m always counterculture in large institutions,” Shah said. “Whether it’s in the White House or Treasury or in large institutional settings, I’m always asking, ‘Why are we doing things the way we are doing them? Why can’t we do it differently?’”

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

“Differently” was precisely how Shah approached the early days of the Beeck Center as its founding executive director. With GU Impacts already up and running as the Beeck Center’s first program, Shah, Interim President Groves, and the Beecks started hypothesizing about including students in social impact and public service efforts beyond a 10-week summer project. Shah met with deans and professors across campus, and began using the leadership and social impact course she was teaching to recruit students to work at Beeck in “student analyst” roles. These students would work and learn side-by-side with experts in fields ranging from impact investing to fair finance to data and technology—and everything in between—all while engaging in changemaking across the university.



Sonal Shah speaking at Beeck Center launch event in 2014.

“We threw a lot of spaghetti on the wall,” she said. “But our North Star was always the students.”

Within this experiential environment, students would learn to succeed and fail, experiment and iterate, and build the knowledge and confidence base necessary to go out into the world and make a meaningful impact. For Shah, Georgetown students represented the ideal group of aspiring changemakers, given the university’s “both into one” motto and commitment to serving others.

“You can’t teach that—that’s the sort of ethos that a student comes here with, and it is instilled in every student at Georgetown,” Shah said.

Through it all, the physical space on campus remained the beating heart of the center. True to its founding ethos, the center didn't belong to one person, idea, or purpose. On any given day you could find students drawing murals with dry-erase markers on the walls, networking with guest lecturers, or brainstorming with staff members on their next big project.

By maintaining this open-door, cross-disciplinary environment, the Beeck Center was able to reach a far greater number of students than those directly involved in the center's project work. Anyone who walked through the doors would walk away with a new curiosity about and understanding of the Beeck approach to social impact.

"Everyone can think about social impact, no matter their discipline," Shah said. "It's the intentionality you bring to the work."

CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY OF IMPACT

As the Beeck Center matured, Shah and the team deepened their commitment to the Beecks' original mandate of creating the greatest impact for the greatest number of people. The 2019 addition of Cori Zarek—a public interest technologist with deep experience in government, civil society, and the tech sector—to the Beeck Center paved the way for an expansion of the center's Data + Digital portfolio. This focused on action-oriented research and projects using data and technology for greater impact.

"Social impact and innovation in this century has to have a technology base," Interim President Groves said. "Everything is technology-informed."

In 2021, Shah passed the torch to Zarek, who would lead the Beeck Center into its next phase as an organization committed to improving systems for all through data, design, policy, and technology.

"I came in with a point of view that we needed to turn the corner into becoming a more unified and aligned organization with a narrowed and focused body of work," Zarek said. "In many ways, it was a continuation of the work we'd always done, but we were drilling down into a more targeted set of activities."

As the Beeck Center navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications it had on the fragile digital infrastructure of systems underpinning people's lives, the team continued to embrace its agile and experimental nature, helping state governments use American Rescue Plan Act funds to modernize their systems and practices.

Those activities included building out the Beeck Center's capacity and expertise as a convener and network hub through the State Chief Data Officers Network, the Digital Benefits Network, and the Digital Service Network. It also meant increasing data capacity in state and local governments and community-based organizations, supporting and upskilling the public interest technology workforce, and establishing new approaches for digital identity or open-source software in government.

The throughline in each iteration of the work remained the symbiotic relationship between Beeck Center fellows, staff, and student analysts. Maintaining a supportive, curious, and ever-adapting environment for the next generation of social impact leaders to learn, create, and problem solve with the current generation became a recipe that could be replicated across the Georgetown community.

"What the Beeck Center pioneered is now just kind of how the university works," Zarek said. "Experiential learning is in Georgetown's DNA, at this point."

2015

The Beeck Center launches its Student Analyst program, training the next generation of changemakers.

Building on the success of the GU Impacts program and its mission to develop the next generation of social impact leaders, the Beeck Center launched its Student Analyst program. This immersive, hands-on experiential learning opportunity allowed undergraduate and graduate Georgetown students to work alongside fellows and subject matter experts in topics ranging from impact investing, fair finance, data and technology, and more. Since its inception, the Student Analyst program has remained a core underpinning of the Beeck Center's work. Each year, the Center hires three exclusive cohorts from more than 300 applicants to support our projects and operations. Today, student analysts collaborate with experts and government practitioners on a diverse range of projects from research on large language models in public benefits, to user experience research, to



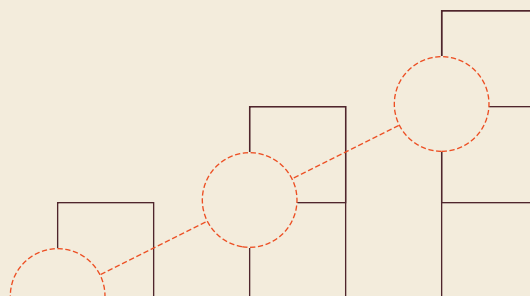
Beeck Center student analysts with former Fellow Natalie Evans Harris.

digital marketing, program evaluation, and much more. Through a unique combination of experiential learning, mentorship, and professional development, students that graduate from the Student Analyst program have gone on to become incredible leaders in social impact, civic technology, and policy, including at the White House, congressional offices, federal agencies, nonprofits, and philanthropies.

2018

The Beeck Center develops its Fair Finance portfolio to reimagine equitable financial systems.

With the goal of building more equitable systems for all, the Beeck Center developed its Fair Finance portfolio to tackle underinvestment in communities of color and underlying mistrust in financial institutions. Led by experts in community development, philanthropy, impact investing, and public policy, the Fair Finance team leveraged and accelerated ideas to improve access to financial capital and economic opportunity, particularly for historically excluded communities. Their efforts played an integral role in supporting and shaping the emerging impact investing field, including guiding the Group of Seven (G7) Social Impact Investing Task Force's development of a policy framework and recommendations that galvanized global interest and bipartisan reform in impact investing.



2019

The Beeck Center ventures into data and digital technology to support and improve public institutions.

As public interest technology organizations and awareness expanded, the Beeck Center recognized an urgent need to bridge the gap between digital technology and public service. The rapidly evolving landscape required a coordinated approach to harness data and technology to support public institutions, modernize services, rebuild trust, and yield better outcomes for the public. To meet that demand, the Data + Digital portfolio was established with a core set of projects led by expert fellows. They covered topics across safety net benefits, state software, responsible data sharing and governance, and government technology workforces. The portfolio attracted top talent and senior federal leaders like former U.S. Deputy Chief Technology Officer Denice Ross, former General Services Administrator Robin Carnahan, and former 18F Technologist Waldo Jaquith. This portfolio also included the formal launch of the State Chief Data Officers (CDO) Network, led by former Connecticut CDO Tyler Kleykamp, and connected emerging state data



State Chief Data Officers Convening in 2023.

leaders with important resources and recommendations. Since the founding of the State CDO Network, the number of state chief data officer positions has grown from 25 states to 39. Today, the network lives on at the Beeck Center, where it empowers state data leaders to innovate and co-develop solutions for better governance.



State Chief Data Officers Convening in 2023.

2021

The Beeck Center expands its footprint as a leader in civic technology, led by Cori Zarek.

After leading the Beeck Center's Data + Digital portfolio for two years, Cori Zarek was selected as the Beeck Center's next executive director, bringing a wealth of expertise in public interest technology, policy, and social systems, including a stint in the White House as United States deputy chief technology officer. Under Zarek's leadership and strategic direction, the Beeck Center entered its next phase of impact as a leading organization at the intersection of design, data, policy, and technology. On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, this included a sharper focus on increasing access to critical benefits and services like cash assistance, health care, child care, unemployment insurance, and food assistance. With this new, ambitious agenda in mind, the Beeck Center launched two technical assistance projects in 2021—The Opportunity Project for Cities and Data Labs—focused specifically on merging data and technology with state and local government



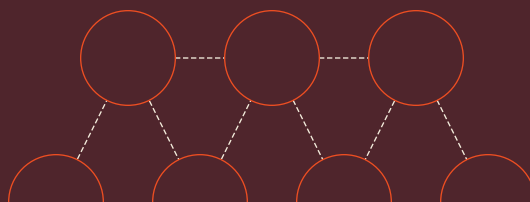
Former Beeck Center Executive Director Cori Zarek.

efforts across the country to better connect residents with services related to housing, education, employment, pandemic relief, and more. To date, these technical assistance programs have collectively supported more than 28 state and local teams, engaged more than 1,800 residents, and developed more than 12 digital products and prototypes.

2022

The Beeck Center scales its networks tackling digital benefits and service delivery.

Thanks to the deep research and expertise of past staff and fellows including Cori Zarek, Sara Soka, Emily Tavoulareas, and Christopher Wilson, the Beeck Center quickly gained a reputation as the go-to hub for knowledge, connections, resources, and recommendations on the social safety net and service delivery. The addition of senior experts Ariel Kennan and Kirsten Wyatt enabled the Beeck Center's large networks and research agendas in digital public benefits and services to blossom into the Digital Benefits Network and Digital Service Network in 2022. Today, these networks continue to mobilize and collectively reach more than 7,000 practitioners from 57 states, territories, and provinces in North America. They support an infrastructure of shared tools, drive collective influence and goals, and shape implementation—all in the name of ensuring more accessible, secure, and equitable benefits and services for the public.



• 2023

Lynn Overmann is tapped to lead the Beeck Center in its next phase of people-centered impact.



Beeck Center Executive Director Lynn Overmann at BenCon 2024.

One of Lynn Overmann’s most memorable possessions is a snakeskin belt—not because of the way it fits her or the brand name on the label, but because of where she got it: Louisiana State Penitentiary.

In the 90s, Overmann was a young New York University law student and summer intern for a firm handling death penalty appeal cases. She spent months getting to know clients who were incarcerated on Angola’s death row—interviewing them, reviewing their case information, and helping her bosses prepare their appeals. It was exactly the work she had gone to law school to do: “take the tools it would provide me with and “apply them in the place that felt the most unfair.”

Then, one day, she was able to meet those clients in-person in an unlikely setting: a barbecue. The event was created by the prison warden as an incentive for good behavior, offering people imprisoned on death row the chance to spend an afternoon with their family members. They could enjoy food and games and participate in a raffle of items they’d handmade—from snakeskin belts to beautifully carved wooden boxes and everything in between.

Overmann remembered the event not just because of the belt, but because of the lesson she learned: human connection is the most valuable thing you can offer someone.

“Your client is your priority; they are your job,” Overmann said. “The litigation is obviously important, but keeping who you are serving at the center of all you do is the hardest and most important part of the job.”

The internship also gave her an unobstructed view into the ways in which the government can and does fail the people who need it most. Most often, she learned, the crimes people commit are the result of a lifelong pattern of being underserved by crucial systems like education, health care, and social services, among others. It was then that Overmann decided to become a public defender.

“You know how little kids have this really strong sense of fairness?” she said. “I just never quite grew out of that.”

FIGHTING FAIR

As a public defender in Miami, Overmann put her sense of fairness to the test on a daily basis. She was constantly faced with the reality that her clients’ legal problems were merely a symptom of a larger, more systemic issue in the public benefits and social services spaces.

One of her juvenile clients, Dell, was the only son of a father who had died in prison. Dell became the recipient of his father’s Social Security benefits, and those benefits helped support his entire family. When Dell himself became incarcerated, those benefits were abruptly cut off, leaving his family struggling to pay for basic necessities. And when Dell was released, the benefits were not reinstated with anywhere near the same speed or efficiency.

“I was constantly on the phone with the Social Security Administration or the power company telling them, ‘You have to turn the electricity back on, there’s an infant in the house.’” Overmann said. “It turned out there was a special program to help low-income families with their power bills when there were children in the house, but no one ever told them about it. Why are these systems failing at things they’re meant to do? Why did it take a lawyer calling to get them the help they needed?”

These questions guided Overmann into the next phase of her career: pursuing fairness by influencing policy.

She joined the Department of Justice and helped launch the Office for Access to Justice. Later, Overmann served during the Obama administration as a senior policy advisor to the U.S. chief technology officer in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where she launched the Data-Driven Justice Initiative (DDJ). The initiative was born out of a human-centered design workshop that brought together criminal justice practitioners from counties across more than 20 states and allowed Overmann to ask: “What is the biggest problem that you’re facing that you think data or technology could actually help you solve?”

The overwhelming majority agreed that far too many people with mental illnesses were ending up in their jails, which were severely ill-equipped to handle their needs. To tackle that challenge, DDJ brought together a bipartisan coalition of 140 city, county, and state governments who committed to using data-driven strategies to divert people with mental illnesses out of the criminal justice system if they were convicted of low-level offenses.

Overmann continued to spearhead DDJ in her subsequent role as vice president of criminal justice at Arnold Ventures, which funded a pilot initiative to better understand how local governments were coping with this confluence of problems and seeking better ways of using limited resources at their disposal. The pilots showed that the problem did not begin and end with the jails. Police officers were unprepared to respond to calls for service for people experiencing mental health crises. Even when they opted to bring an individual to the hospital instead of arresting them, hospitals were understaffed and similarly undertrained to address the needs of people with mental illnesses.

“We realized that the crisis moment was actually a moment of opportunity, because it was a chance to do something differently,” Overmann said.

Ultimately, governors and state legislators combined block grants for mental health services, housing support, and other social services to support more comprehensive and coordinated care at the local level, using a network of crisis response centers. These included access to professionals trained to treat substance use overdoses and to de-escalate situations involving people experiencing mental health crises. The initiative was a deep collaboration across federal, state, and local governments that maximized different policy, funding, and delivery mechanisms at each level.

Overmann took that experience into her roles as a senior advisor for data and technology in the Biden administration in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and as a senior advisor for delivery working with the director of the Domestic Policy Council and senior White House leadership on implementation of high-priority domestic policies using data, technology, and human-centered design. She worked on everything from addressing the infant formula crisis to clarifying and streamlining the asylum application process—all while keeping fairness at the forefront.

“The common thread across these initiatives is that when all levels of government—federal, state, and local—use human-centered design, data, and digital tools and coordinated action to understand and respond to hard problems, we can significantly improve outcomes for the people we serve,” Overmann wrote earlier this year.



Beeck Center's 10th Anniversary Celebration.



Lynn Overmann meeting with Georgetown University students.

BUILDING BETTER

In 2022, when Cori Zarek transitioned from the Beeck Center back into the White House as the deputy administrator of the United States Digital Service, Overmann knew exactly where her pursuit of equity would take her. She had seen the Beeck Center’s evolution into an organization focused on helping governments serve people’s needs through data, design, and technology—a mission that perfectly aligned with her lifelong commitment to fairness.

“Every leader [the Beeck Center] has had has been perfectly chosen for the moment at hand,” said Georgetown University Provost Robert Groves.

In March 2023, she joined the Beeck Center as executive director to lead a cross-functional, multidisciplinary team of experts dedicated to ensuring that systems worked equitably for all.

“If we, collectively, as the civic tech ecosystem, want governments to get better at delivering services, we have to meet governments where they are,” Overmann said. “That’s what [the Beeck Center’s] networks do. That’s what our public resources do. That’s where our superpowers are.”

To Overmann, the future of the Beeck Center—and of the public interest technology movement—must be centered on its ability to work backwards. This involves understanding the needs and experiences of the public in

order to understand what actions the government must take to adequately serve them. To meet this goal, there is a crucial role to play for trusted, informed, vendor-neutral organizations in supporting governments in agile, responsive ways.

“If you’re pitching a product to an agency head, you’re only going to pitch that product because that’s what you can deliver,” Overmann said. “Whereas what we can do is talk to the agency head and ask, ‘What do you need? Let us help you figure it out.’”

Now, 10 years after the Beeck Center first opened its doors, what began as an idea in the minds of Olga María and Alberto Beeck and Carl Muñana to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people, is now a cornerstone of the Georgetown community, a network catalyst, a research hub, an advocate for modern and equitable service delivery, and a training ground for tomorrow’s innovators.

“How do you have a consistent mission centered on social impact and innovation, but adapt to the environment’s ever-changing definition of what that is?” Interim President Groves said. “Getting the institutions of democracy to work better will always, by definition, be a sustainable mission.”

2024

The Beeck Center celebrates 10 years of impact and reimagines the future of civic technology.

In 2024, we celebrated our 10th anniversary as a leading organization in social impact and innovation. We hosted two events that brought together friends, partners, supporters, and students to commemorate and recognize all of our accomplishments in the last decade. Our first event included remarks from former Georgetown University President Emeritus John J. DeGioia and Beeck Center Co-Founder Alberto Beeck, along with an engaging panel featuring the voices of Beeck Center alums and social impact leaders Robin Carnahan, Amen Ra Mashariki, and Alberto Rodríguez Alvarez.

As we reflect on the last decade, we also take stock of the major milestones we hit as a center this year, including the launch of our Digital Government Hub—an open-source digital library with thousands of resources on government design, data, and technology to improve the delivery of benefits and services for those who need them most. We also launched our Innovation + Incubation Fellowship program, to experiment and push the boundaries of what's possible in civic technology and government innovation around benefits access, AI and automation, and data sharing.



Beeck Center team at A Decade of Impact: The Beeck Center at 10.



Beeck Center Co-Founder Carl Muñana.

○ Past ● **Present** ○ Future

Shaping *the moment*



“We want to be an easy entry point for government partners who are just coming to their digital transformation journey.”

LYNN OVERMANN
Executive Director of the Beeck Center



In 2024, we reached all corners of the U.S. *and beyond*



Our broad networks, trusted communities of practice, hands-on technical assistance programs, and actionable research projects continue to impact governments at all levels across North America. From Colorado to Georgia to Canada, and everywhere in between, the Beeck Center has a wide range of offerings that invite governments, nonprofits, businesses, academia, and philanthropy to join our mission, wherever they are.

Together, we can create a people-centered, digitally-enabled government for all.

ADVANCING DATA-DRIVEN GOVERNMENT	IMPROVING BENEFITS ACCESS + DELIVERY
The Data Labs program has supported cross-agency data initiatives in 14 states across the U.S. to enhance service delivery and improve the lives of residents. These efforts have helped states better assist small businesses, expand access to workforce and education opportunities, address housing and homelessness challenges, and strengthen public benefit programs.	The Digital Benefits Network brings together more than 2,300 individuals from across government and civic technology to improve access, accuracy, and security of essential public benefits—food and nutrition, health, cash assistance, child care, and unemployment insurance—by enhancing the technology and services used to deliver them.
EMPOWERING DIGITAL TALENT + TRANSFORMATION	SUPPORTING MATERNAL + FAMILY SERVICES
The Digital Service Network supports more than 5,000 practitioners working at the intersection of government, technology, and design to deliver important digital services—like tax e-filing, benefits applications, and permitting—that are people-centered and meet the needs and expectations of those who use them.	The Family Benefits Lab is a people-centered research project that partners with state and local governments and community institutions to support teen and young mothers in accessing health care services, meeting their educational goals, pursuing family-sustaining career pathways, building economic security, and caring for their children.
MODERNIZING GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY	BUILDING COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS
The GovTech team supported 19 states and territories to transform the way governments build and buy technology in order to make unemployment insurance more accessible, resilient, and secure. In addition to their work in unemployment insurance, the GovTech team also explored the use of digital public goods—like software, AI models, and datasets—and their impact on digital service delivery in the U.S.	The Opportunity Project for Cities has helped develop 14 digital tools in partnership with local government teams, community organizations, and technologists across the country. From wireframes to live products, the tools address residents' most pressing challenges related to climate and the environment, economic development, housing and homelessness, mobility and transit, and broadband services.

‘*A future* where homelessness is rare and brief’

How Colorado’s data-driven commitment to supportive housing was kickstarted with Data Labs support



By **Ashleigh Fryer**
Deputy Director of Content



With support from the Beeck Center’s Data Labs, Colorado expanded supportive housing by strengthening its data systems—leading to impactful pilots, new Medicaid reimbursements, and a lasting commitment to data-driven solutions for homelessness.

By the time Thomas* was 17, he was accustomed to living under the near-constant threat of homelessness.

“Growing up, we moved about every six months,” he said. “We were always loading up our suitcases as they changed the locks.”

Data on unhoused populations are notoriously difficult to obtain and often inaccurate. In 2024, 18,715 people were experiencing homelessness in Colorado during an annual Point-In-Time count. That number includes 8,519 families with children—a 134-percent increase from the year prior, one of the biggest increases in the nation.

Thomas cycled through evictions, foster placements, and group homes before eventually moving in with his grandmother. When she passed away, he feared that living on the street was inevitable.

“Where personal tragedy meets system failures, that’s so often where homelessness occurs,” said Zac Schaffner, community partnerships and development manager for the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Division of Housing.

Then, in October 2017, Thomas became one of the first individuals selected to receive assistance through Colorado’s supportive housing programs funded through cannabis tax revenue. The next month, he moved into stable housing for the first time in more than a decade.

He stayed there until January 2023, the longest he had ever lived in one place. During that time, and with the help of his case manager, Thomas was able to utilize services he had never had

consistent access to before; he scheduled regular dentist visits for the first time in his life, and even underwent a surgery to address the limp he had from a childhood injury.

“There is actually a solution for homelessness and that’s just to give people housing,” said Connor Everson, analytics manager for DOLA’s Division of Housing.

While the idea may sound simple, the practice of supportive housing—which combines affordable, community-based housing with access to voluntary wraparound supportive services for households and individuals with extremely low incomes without barriers to entry—was still a fairly new practice in 2021. That’s when the State of Colorado joined the inaugural cohort of Data Labs, a technical assistance program created by the Beeck Center and the National Governors Association to directly support and empower state governments to use data more effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

The Colorado team—which included Everson and other dedicated staff in the Executive Branch—joined the Data Labs program to determine who of the estimated 9,800 Coloradans could benefit from supportive housing services. At the time, the Division of Housing funded project-based and tenant-based rental assistance for nearly 1,200 permanent supportive housing units throughout the state; however, a significant number of participants were either exiting the program or were never able to successfully obtain a lease. The reasons for those exits were tracked in the Division of Housing’s administrative data, but the team knew little about individuals’ outcomes following exit.

*Pseudonyms are used throughout

To address this, the Colorado team worked with Data Labs experts to develop a plan that would inform homeless system performance measures more completely; enable a data-driven yet holistic view of persons experiencing homelessness; and maximize the effectiveness of housing, health, and safety programs.

“A lot of this data work can’t happen alone, and the intersectionality is what really adds value for us,” Everson said.

“Where Data Labs helped us was to give us a starting point and some methods with which we could talk to partners ... and say, ‘This is what we’re interested in doing and here’s how we can make it work better together.’”

Fueled by their Data Labs learnings and a historic \$243 million investment in affordable housing transformation programs and homelessness response and data infrastructure, Colorado successfully launched the Statewide Supportive Housing Expansion (SWSHE) pilot project in August 2022. The pilot aimed to create as many high-quality supportive housing opportunities as possible across the state for individuals with complex needs, including those with serious mental illness, a history of homelessness, and repeat hospitalizations.

The pilot, which ended in Spring 2024, added crucial knowledge to the evidence base on how to end homelessness and improve health care across Colorado, including in rural areas where providers and resources are often limited.

For Schaffner, the pilot project reinforced what he has come to understand deeply throughout his years working in homelessness prevention policy: “There has to be an emphasis on the services,” he said. Those services include anything from physical and mental health care navigation, to apartment hunting, transportation, or even purchasing furnishings and home essentials.



“Yes, we need affordable housing interventions, but that alone will not get us to a future where homelessness is rare and brief,” Schaffner said. “We’ve got to stop the inflow, but we also have to think about the people currently experiencing homelessness and what they need to exit homelessness.”

For people with complex barriers who are the least likely to self-resolve their homelessness, we need special tools and resources, and that special resource is often supportive housing.”

Thanks to the efforts and findings from the SWSHE pilot, in July 2024, DOLA announced a new enrollment type specifically for supportive housing agencies—a comprehensive Section 1115 waiver that allows supportive services, including pre-tenancy and tenancy sustaining services, to be reimbursed through Medicaid.

On its face, the waiver may seem like technical minutiae, but, Schaffner said, it is fundamentally changing the way the State is able to support its most vulnerable people.



“We’re able to get every dollar we can from our partners at the federal level and then maximize our state dollars to ensure that when we are creating supportive housing, it’s high-quality, it meets the needs of our residents, and they aren’t put in a position where they’re returning to homelessness because they don’t have the services needed to keep them in safe, stable housing,” he said.

The hard-fought victories for supportive housing are thanks in large part to what Schaffner considers a shift to “data-driven decision making” in the State of Colorado over the last several years. The leadership of Chief Data Officer (CDO) Amy Bhikha, who joined the Colorado Governor’s Office of Information Technology in early 2021, has been a catalyst for much of the State’s efforts to strengthen its data practices to improve outcomes for Coloradans.

A member of the Beeck Center’s [State CDO Network](#), Bhikha has also helped shepherd the State of Colorado through three different

[cohorts](#) of Data Labs, tackling some of the states most challenging issues, including [understanding the impact of Long COVID](#) on the state’s workforce and tackling talent shortages in behavioral health and direct care.

In November 2024, DOLA, in partnership with the State of Colorado’s Reducing Homelessness Working Group, requested new funding specifically to accelerate data-driven decision making within Colorado’s ongoing efforts to address homelessness. With proposed technology upgrades to the [Colorado Homeless Management Information System](#), and added staffing to support the collection and analysis of data to better understand and measure the impact of current efforts, Schaffner hopes the State can forge an even stronger path forward.

“We’ve got to do it all,” Schaffner said. “In a time of scarce resources, that’s hard to do, but we’ve got to take a full systems view of these challenges.”



SPOTLIGHT

State Data Leaders



State Chief Data Officers Convening in 2023.

Data is a powerful asset for improving government transparency, accountability, and service delivery. As the role of data in policymaking grows, state chief data officers (CDOs) have been tasked with guiding this transformation and spearheading new approaches to advance data-informed decision making. Since the first state CDO role was established in 2010, the increasing presence of CDOs in state government—more than 75 percent of U.S. states have established a CDO or equivalent role—has sparked important discussions on how these roles are created, structured, and resourced.

State CDOs play a crucial, collaborative role in overseeing the management, accessibility, and strategic use of data across government agencies. Their work is essential for breaking down silos and informing decisions on everything from understanding the impact of Long COVID on the workforce to making government procurement more equitable.

The Beeck Center's State CDO Network is the only vendor-neutral space designed exclusively for state CDOs. Throughout 2024, members of this trusted community engaged in candid conversations and developed practical resources—such as the State Data Maturity Assessment—to strengthen their role and improve the use of data in government. By collaborating on key issues—including the ethical use of AI in state government—members of the State CDO Network continue to develop strategies that drive data-informed decision making for the public good.

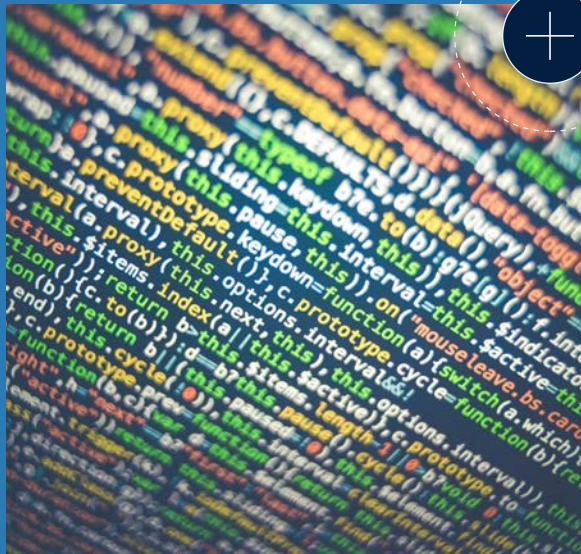
As state CDOs work to enhance data practices, they need visibility into how their counterparts in other states are establishing and structuring their roles, as well as the policies and strategic frameworks shaping their work. Without a clear picture of how other states are operating, it can be challenging to benchmark progress, advocate for investment, and identify proven strategies for strengthening state data operations.

To meet this need, in 2024, the Beeck Center began developing the State Chief Data Officer Tracker, a first-of-its-kind resource to track the evolving role of CDOs and how they structure data operations in their states. Launched in early 2025, the State Chief Data Officer Tracker is more than a repository; it's a tool to connect stakeholders, inspire innovation, and scale effective models for data-informed decision making in states.

As states increasingly rely on data to shape policy and deliver services, CDOs will continue to play a defining role in modernizing government. Ensuring they have resources, visibility, and community to support their work is essential to unlocking the full potential of data in the public sector.

SPOTLIGHT

Digital Public Goods Inventory



The frequency of governments using digital public goods (DPGs)—openly accessible resources like software, datasets, AI models and standards—in the delivery of public services has been steadily growing across the globe in recent years. While governments and philanthropic organizations have encouraged more international use of DPGs, there is still limited awareness and utilization of DPGs in the U.S., where state, territorial, and tribal governments could be benefiting from them as they replace and update digital systems for public service applications. DPGs offer governments opportunities to lower costs, spur innovation, and provide transparent, safe, trustworthy, and inclusive services to their constituents.

That's why in October 2024, the [GovTech](#) team [launched](#) a research initiative to develop a deeper understanding of conditions shaping the delivery of digital services by U.S. state, territorial, and tribal governments, and how DPGs can help improve how those governments deliver services and engage people.

The team created an accessible, [open dataset](#) that documents where and how 50 DPGs are being used to support the delivery of public services both internationally and domestically. In November, the team presented their research at the [OpenForum Academy Symposium](#) hosted by Harvard University's Digital Data Design Institute, which brought together an interdisciplinary set of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers from around the world to explore the transformative power of open-source software and hardware.

Ultimately, the GovTech team's research found that DPGs offer a transformative opportunity for state governments to leverage shared resources and collaborative innovation, significantly impacting the choice, value, and quality of public service delivery. By leveraging the insights from the dataset, state and territorial agencies can enhance their discourse and strategic planning for adopting DPGs to support the delivery of public services.

‘This is *the best* of government’

How Jeramia Garcia Ramadan innovates in Arizona
with help from the Digital Benefits Network



By **Ashleigh Fryer**
Deputy Director of Content



Jeramia Garcia Ramadan at BenCon 2024.

Jeramia Garcia Ramadan turned crisis-driven innovation into lasting change, modernizing Arizona’s public benefits systems through human-centered design and collaboration with the Beeck Center’s Digital Benefits Network.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Jeramia Garcia Ramadan learned a lesson that will stay with her for the rest of her career: “There is innovation in crisis.”

From her position at the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), she witnessed thousands of people simultaneously trying to access an outdated and overrun unemployment insurance system for benefits many had never used before. The rollout of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program soon followed, thrusting states into the challenge of establishing entirely new systems without any precedent.

“I’d be on the phone at five in the morning with people in the national office in D.C., and then I’d be on a call at midnight watching something go live in production,” Garcia Ramadan said. “[The pandemic] was heartbreaking and difficult, but it also made me think, ‘This is the best of government.’”

By this point in her life, Garcia Ramadan had seen government from virtually every angle. Growing up in a family committed to civic activism, she fondly remembers her grandmother—an immigrant who came to the United States to pick cotton in rural Arizona—serving on community boards in their small mining town. It inspired Garcia Ramadan to pursue service, leading her to join the Peace Corps in Guatemala after graduate school, where she worked on a project to help municipal governments increase civic participation.

“We would get people together, and we had all these trainings and activities planned, and they would tell us, ‘I really just came because I need to figure out how to feed my family,’” Garcia Ramadan said.

She found it striking that many Guatemalans farmed and raised livestock for a living, but struggled to provide food for their own families. When she returned home and began

working at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), she realized that food access in her own country was not as dissimilar from Guatemala as she had once thought.

For years at FNS, Garcia Ramadan worked on projects that put food directly into the hands of those in need. But it eventually became clear that raising families out of poverty and giving them true economic mobility required more than food assistance.

“Instead of focusing on benefits, benefits, benefits, what are we doing to make sure they don’t even need those benefits?” she said. “I came full circle to this idea that the fastest way to lift people out of poverty is through sustainable income.”

Today, as the administrator of the Governance and Innovation Administration at Arizona DES, Garcia Ramadan is able to do just that. Her job largely consists of uniting disparate teams at DES under a common driving force—a process she calls “getting everyone to ‘yes.’”

“[My job is about] asking, ‘What do you want to do? What outcome are you seeking?’ Then let me help us get there,” she said. “It’s that shift to innovation.”

That process would be next to impossible without the support and insights found in the “global knowledge repository” that is the Beeck Center’s Digital Benefits Network (DBN), she said. A project of the Beeck Center since 2022, the DBN supports governments in delivering public benefits, services, and technology that are accessible, effective, secure, and equitable in order to ultimately increase economic opportunity.



Garcia Ramadan first learned about the DBN in 2022, two years after navigating a “tsunami” of fraudulent claims that overwhelmed Arizona’s unemployment assistance portal after PUA’s rollout.

“We’re talking about millions of claims we had to sift through to find the real people,” Garcia Ramadan said. “And it wasn’t like we had weeks or months or years to come up with a solution ... We had days to think of a solution.”

To help secure their systems, DES quickly obtained a contract with a vendor to conduct identity verification, an unprecedented move for the department. But while the system succeeded in stemming the tide of fraudulent claims, leaders at DES wanted to ensure continued access for all legitimate claimants. This included members of Arizona’s 22 federally recognized tribal nations, whose IDs are not universally recognized. As DES transitioned from crisis management mode to system maintenance and long-term planning, Garcia Ramadan leveraged resources and tips from the [Digital Government Hub](#) to iterate and problem-solve effectively.

Launched in October 2024, the Digital Government Hub merges the DBN’s and the American Public Human Services Association’s (APHSA) collection of exemplary research, tools, and policy with that of the Beeck Center’s [Digital Service Network](#) into an open-source library designed to assist those using design, data, and technology to improve government service delivery. The Digital Government Hub itself was built using an iterative, user-centered product development approach, designed to build trust among the civic technology ecosystem, lift up the work of other organizations, and model what governments *should* do.

“Being able to bring in organized, thoughtful information and perspectives from people who’ve already done it—that was key,” she said.

Soon after, Garcia Ramadan was invited by DBN Senior Director [Ariel Kennan](#) to speak at the DBN's first-ever [Digital Benefits Conference](#) (BenCon). The event gathered practitioners across government sectors, nonprofits, academia, and industry to explore current and emerging research on digital benefits delivery topics.

It was there that Garcia Ramadan was able to connect with peers from [Code for America](#) and other civic technology organizations, and began laying the groundwork for a long-desired project.

“Almost a year to the day after BenCon 2023, we signed an agreement and we’re now designing an integrated benefits form,” she said. “The goal is to set up a social safety net that helps people face whatever in their life that has put them in a position to not have economic stability.”

This significant undertaking is using human-centered design to create an all-in-one public benefits application, so that Arizonans can access support when needed. Garcia Ramadan feels empowered by this challenge, backed by both the expertise and crucial connections formed through the DBN.

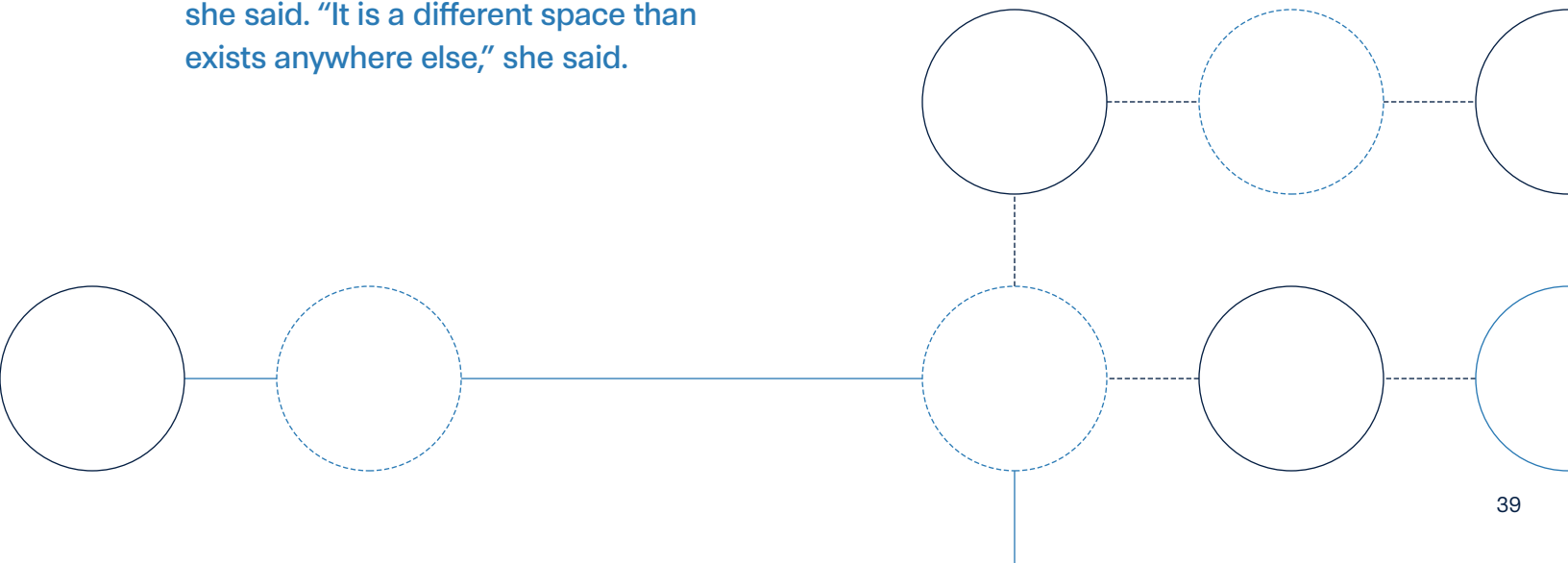
“It’s this idea of having a network—of information and of people—that exists within your agency and outside of your agency, bringing state partners together, bringing feds to the table,” she said. “It is a different space than exists anywhere else,” she said.



Attendees gathering at BenCon 2024.

For Garcia Ramadan, the integrated benefits application is much more than a tech interface; it symbolizes how innovation is the natural solution to challenges in systems built without considering people or progress.

“It’s the idea of providing stability for an unemployed worker and for the labor market,” she said. “It’s the idea of providing nutrition assistance that then impacts the safety and security of communities. It’s the concept of reimagining what’s possible.”



SPOTLIGHT

Digital Identity in Benefits

In June 2024, the Digital Benefits Network (DBN) launched a collaborative two-year project with the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Center for Democracy and Technology to support the secure delivery of public benefits. The research and development effort focuses on adapting NIST's digital identity guidelines to better support state administrators in the implementation of integrated online applications for SNAP and Medicaid, while also balancing security, privacy, equity, and usability.

A cornerstone of the DBN's portfolio is its open dataset documenting identity proofing requirements across online SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants & Children), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Medicaid, child care, and unemployment insurance applications. First published in 2023, the team rolled out an updated dataset in December 2024, to understand states' use of account creation, authentication, and identity proofing in initial online public benefits applications.

Understanding the current landscape is only the first step in improving how digital identity is used to promote access and security in public benefits applications. The DBN also aims to better understand what works for beneficiaries and applicants, identify shared challenges, and implement people-centered approaches in benefits delivery.



Attendee at BenCon 2024 session.

In 2024, in direct response to these questions, the team announced a new community of practice focused on digital identity in public benefits. The mission of this cross-sector community—comprising 125 people to date—is to inform how and when digital identity practices should be integrated, and to promote the delivery of public benefits to all eligible individuals, including the most vulnerable populations.

SPOTLIGHT

Digital Transformation Policy Scan



In 2023, the Digital Service Network (DSN) launched a new research initiative to build a deeper understanding of the policy and legislation tools that influence digital transformation at the state and territorial level.

The initial [State-Level Digital Policy Scan](#) analyzed how governments implement digital transformation through executive orders (EOs). The scan revealed that 84 percent of

states or territories have passed at least one EO related to government digital transformation since 2013. It also offered a comprehensive look at how EOs and legislation can shape the modernization of government services, improving efficiency and accessibility for all. One standout example is a 2019 Ohio EO that aimed to provide a common digital platform, establish a definitive digital identity for state agencies, and facilitate data-sharing across agencies and programs.

In November 2024, the team built on that work by [documenting AI-related legislation](#) introduced in states and territories. This news scan revealed that nearly 75 percent of states and territories have introduced 894 bills related to AI since 2019, 126 of which were ultimately enacted.

This AI legislation scan is a timely resource for governments seeking policy examples about AI's role in the public sector and in service delivery. As state legislative sessions in 2025 bring forth more bills related to AI, the DSN will continue to update this tool, providing valuable insights into the evolving landscape of state policies and priorities.

The Digital Transformation Policy Scan serves as both a research tool and an important resource for government leaders, technologists, and nonprofit partners, exemplifying how policy tools can be effectively leveraged to enact real change and transformation.



‘A just transition to a *sustainable* future’

How Saint Paul and Ramsey County are accelerating access to climate-resilient jobs with TOPCities



By **Elham Ali**

Project Researcher, The Opportunity Project for Cities



In Saint Paul, a new tool aims to help job seekers break into high-quality green careers—especially women and people of color long shut out of the field. Co-created through the Beeck Center’s TOPCities program, the effort strives to build a more inclusive, sustainable economy—one career path at a time.

Tamara*, a resident of Saint Paul, Minnesota, hoped to build a career in sheet metal work, a field she had trained extensively in. However, at the age of 51, she found herself working in tile installation instead, a job she described as her "last choice."

Despite her qualifications, Tamara faced systemic barriers that limited her career options, reflecting a national trend where women and people of color are significantly underrepresented in green jobs. Currently, women account for just 30 percent of the clean energy workforce. Many workers like Tamara are funneled into less desirable roles, leading to frustration and a sense of stagnation.

To address the challenges faced by workers like Tamara, the City of Saint Paul and Minnesota's Ramsey County joined The Opportunity Project for Cities (TOPCities)—a program co-led by the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation and the Centre for Public Impact. Through TOPC, and in partnership with Google.org and Goodwill-Easter Seals, Saint Paul and Ramsey County co-designed the Green Jobs Career Pathways Tool, which connects local job seekers to green careers. Using human-centered design, the project gathered insights from focus groups and interviews with approximately 30 job seekers—mainly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents—and surveyed local employers to identify barriers and co-create solutions that met the needs of both groups.

As climate change intensifies, the demand for green jobs—roles in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green construction—is growing rapidly. Minnesota recently reached a record of more than 62,000 clean energy jobs, thanks to a \$446 million investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2022 (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA). The state's clean energy companies are adding jobs nearly five times faster than the overall

economy, with last year's six-percent job growth supporting infrastructure renewal and environmental justice.

These jobs present new pathways for economic growth and wealth-building, particularly for communities facing high environmental risks. Green jobs generally offer higher quality and better pay, with some positions paying up to 19 percent more than the national average. For example, in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region, green jobs have an average annual wage of \$84,562, approximately \$7,369 more than the national average.

Despite the growing demand, however, more than 60 percent of clean energy roles are held by non-Latino white men. One focus group participant noted the challenges for women in green construction: "Out of seven women hired, most did not pass the physical test. It is very hard."

Gender pay gaps and limited advancement opportunities are another problem. As one participant noted: "Gender plays a role, as women are paid less. Women in construction are still rare ... There are barriers and gender expectations, especially for someone of color." Indeed, in Saint Paul, women and workers of color are underrepresented in high-quality green jobs and often stuck in low-paying roles, despite women comprising over half of the population and Black workers representing nearly 16 percent. Advanced degrees, often required for high-quality jobs, further sideline those with only high school diplomas or vocational training. As one focus group participant summarized, "Not everybody will have the education to be ready."

*Pseudonyms are used throughout

Employers recognize these challenges. A Ramsey County employer survey found hiring practices favor roles like machine operators and technicians—where technical skills, hands-on experience, and problem-solving are prioritized. “A degree can be useful, but it is not necessary to get hired or promoted within our field,” one employer said. However, many still prefer candidates with technical certifications, creating barriers for those without them.

High-quality roles like sustainability managers often require advanced degrees or certifications, which are less accessible to non-white and low-income groups. Delayed graduation times and the lack of relevant coursework hinder these students’ opportunities. “Everyone might not have the education that others get,” a participant explained.

Job seekers also lack awareness of green career paths and struggle to navigate job fairs and online job platforms like LinkedIn and Indeed. As Kim, a 33-year-old carpentry graduate, noted, “People don’t know where to start; they feel like there aren’t opportunities, and they don’t know where to look.” TOPCities research revealed that job boards often overlook green roles and fail to provide details about the required skills or local training, making it harder for job seekers and employers to connect effectively.

Other groups encounter additional challenges. Immigrants like Lin, a 43-year-old with IT training, face language hurdles: “I went to school for [CompTIA] A+ and Network+ and was excited to apply, but I’m worried about language barriers and whether I’ll fit in. So, I’ve held back from applying.”

For formerly incarcerated groups, additional hiring concerns exist. As one participant shared, “I used to worry about [my] criminal history and getting hired.” Others face practical challenges such as child care and transportation, making it harder to access training or job openings in suburban areas.

The Green Jobs Career Pathways Tool combats these challenges by connecting job seekers with tailored career pathways while providing information on required skills and local training resources. The tool is designed to be user-friendly for residents holding different levels of digital literacy, and has received pro bono support from technologists at Google.org.





“These initiatives will help to provide clear, accessible career paths for job seekers and connections to local support while also helping local businesses find the talent they need to meet the growing demand for clean energy solutions,” said Liz Boyer, Saint Paul’s climate action coordinator.

Saint Paul’s [Climate Action and Resilience Plan](#) and Ramsey County’s [Climate Equity Action Plan](#) also promote equitable access to clean energy and green construction careers for BIPOC communities. “Addressing the underrepresentation of women and BIPOC individuals in high-quality clean energy jobs is critical to achieving a just transition to a sustainable future,” said Boyer. “Roughly 85 percent of participants in our green construction and HVAC programs are non-white,” said Rachael Molenaar, Ramsey County’s interim planning manager.

Ramsey County has also launched resources to guide companies looking to build a diverse workforce. These include a free job board ([Job Connect](#)), the [Inclusive Hiring Connections Summit](#), and the [Inclusive Employer Toolkit](#). “These tools are helping employers across sectors build and retain a more diverse workforce, aligning with our broader goals for an inclusive green economy,” said John O’Phelan, a planning specialist working with [Ramsey County’s Workforce Solutions](#) department.

Testing is ongoing for the Green Jobs Career Pathways Tool ahead of its public launch. The tool, led by Ramsey County’s Workforce Innovation Board, also aids employment counselors, school staff, parents, and others in exploring routes to clean energy jobs.

With initiatives like TOPCities leading the way at the local level, there is hope for creating pathways that empower individuals like Tamara—transforming their aspirations into sustainable careers and building an inclusive, sustainable green economy in Minnesota.



SPOTLIGHT

Beeck on the Hill



Attendees at BenCon 2024 meeting.

In 2024, the Beeck Center played a crucial role in shaping conversations on Capitol Hill around technology modernization efforts and Unemployment Insurance (UI) reform. Drawing on the expertise of Beeck's leaders, the Center shared high-level perspectives that advocated for more efficient, secure, and equitable solutions to some of the nation's most pressing challenges.

In June, Jennifer Phillips, program lead for network collaboration for the Digital Benefits Network, testified before the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Work and Welfare to advocate for more equitable access to Unemployment Insurance benefits.

“States need Congress to champion additional technology modernization and customer experience improvements to restore faith that when an eligible American worker loses their job, UI will work for them. Fast, fair, and fraud-free,” she said in her testimony.

In October, Beeck Executive Director Lynn Overmann collaborated with the Federation of American Scientists’ Day One Project to co-author a memo to the General Services Administration’s Technology Modernization Fund. The memo advocated for important changes to help government agencies shift from purchasing static software to applying a model focused on adaptability, training, and user-centered design to meet governments’ long-term missions and needs.

Overmann took that message to the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs in December, when she was invited to testify before its Subcommittee on Technology Modernization. In her testimony, she recommended adopting a “product model,” which empowers internal agency digital service teams with full ownership of product development and avoids one-size-fits-all solutions in favor of modular development that meets the needs of real people.

“By adopting these recommendations, Congress can ensure that agencies ... are equipped with the tools, resources, and flexibility to deliver modern services that are focused on the end user—parents, veterans, seniors, and more—that meet the evolving needs of the American people, ending the cycle of costly technology failures,” she said.

SPOTLIGHT

2024 Convenings



Audience at BenCon 2024.

In 2024, the Beeck Center hosted many events attracting more than 4,000 attendees. The convenings included large, in-person convenings, tactical community of practice discussions, government-only spaces, student-facing workshops, and everything in between.

The year's largest events—BenCon and FormFest, both in their second year—brought together thousands of government practitioners, technologists, designers, and experts to collaborate on a future where systems work equitably for all.

Hosted by the Digital Benefits Network, BenCon welcomed 200 people from more than 100 organizations to Georgetown University's Capitol Campus in September, with nearly 600 people from more than 350 organizations joining plenary sessions online. Government leaders, cross-sector practitioners, researchers, advocates, and

students working to improve the digital delivery of vital programs—such as SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, TANF, unemployment insurance, child care, and basic income—explored topics on how to make public benefits technology more accessible, effective, and equitable.

A highlight of the convening were demos from the Policy2Code Prototyping Challenge, featuring 12 impressive prototypes from teams in the U.S. and Canada. Organized in partnership with Georgetown's Massive Data Institute, the Policy2Code Prototyping Challenge was a testing ground for teams made up of technologists, AI experts, academics, policy analysts, designers, and data scientists. They explored both the limitations and benefits of using generative AI technologies in policy implementation and benefits delivery.

In December, FormFest—co-hosted by the Beeck Center and Code for America—drew more than 2,000 virtual registrants from 30 nations to discuss improving government through forms. The event kicked off with a mainstage session about the ways that state governments are prioritizing form innovation, featuring an inspiring conversation with Pennsylvania First Lady Lori Shapiro and a keynote from Maryland Governor Wes Moore. Thirteen additional sessions covered topics like the City of Reykjavik's people-centered form improvements, future uses of AI in forms, and South Carolina's efforts to increase access to child care with improved forms.

By convening the talent and know-how of government, academia, and civic tech through our events, the Beeck Center remains committed to leveraging the collective power of experts in design, data, and technology to shape the digital services that support millions of people every day.

‘A different way of working’

How Bry Pardoe taps into the Digital Service Network to change how Pennsylvanians experience government



By **Ashleigh Fryer**
Deputy Director of Content



Bry Pardoe at the Chief Digital Service Officers Convening in 2024.

When Bry Pardoe stepped into her new role leading Pennsylvania’s digital services agency, CODE PA, she found support and inspiration in the Beeck Center’s Digital Service Network. In just 18 months, she and her team reimaged how millions of Pennsylvanians interact with government—creating a unified, user-centered web experience and launching innovative programs like the “Forms That Suck Less” internship.

In May 2023, Bry Pardoe walked into a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform how [Pennsylvanians] interact with state government” as the executive director of Pennsylvania’s brand new Commonwealth Office of Digital Experience (CODE PA).



On day one, Pardoe didn’t have experience in government and needed to quickly get up to speed on the unique scale and scope of digital service delivery. With that goal in mind, she immediately found herself in community with the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation’s Digital Service Network (DSN)—a powerful network that brings together government workers, technologists, academics, and nonprofits to gather, share ideas, solve problems, and transform the way services are delivered to those who need them most.

The DSN—which empowers governments to use people-centered digital strategies to deliver services that meet the needs of people—played an early role in the conceptualization of CODE PA. Established to improve Pennsylvania’s digital services, CODE PA invited DSN Senior Director Kirsten Wyatt to help advise and provide a valuable perspective on how the new agency might build an effective team from the ground up.

Pardoe came to her new role at CODE PA having previously worked in nonprofit health care—a space that helped her identify a non-negotiable for her career moving forward: the ability to tangibly impact the lives of those around her. She knew that taking the leap into government would have its challenges, but she was driven by the opportunity to apply her health care experience and serve her community in a space where the ripple effect of her efforts could have an even larger radius. It didn’t take long for her to grasp the gravity of the impact CODE PA was poised to make.

“Pennsylvania is one of just a few states with an in-house digital services team like CODE PA—and our goal since day one has been to transform how Pennsylvanians interact with state government by making their digital experiences easier and more accessible,” Pardoe said in a 2024 press release. “Over time, we hope that CODE PA can be a model and resource to the larger civic tech community across the nation that has given us so much support ... to be able to do this amazing work.”

By January 2025—just 18 months after her first week on the job—Pardoe and the CODE PA team had completely revamped the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s web presence. The overhaul was informed by interviews with more than 300 Pennsylvania residents, resulting in a seven-month effort that saw 64 separate Commonwealth websites transformed into a single online experience.

A crowning achievement of the PA.gov redesign was the launch of the [Services Directory tool](#), which allows users to search nearly 1,000 state government services, including housing assistance, health insurance assistance, career opportunities, maternal health and child care, and low-cost prescription medication services, among others.

“The Services Directory demonstrates how we are reimagining the way people interact online with the Commonwealth to be simple, seamless, and secure,” Pardoe [said](#). “The new PA.gov gives the Commonwealth a solid digital foundation to build upon, and I look forward to seeing how we continue to improve through research and talking to Pennsylvanians about their experiences using the website.”

As the CODE PA team navigated the overhaul, thousands of resources, tools, and templates on the [Digital Government Hub](#)—an open-source library for anyone using design, data, and technology to improve and enhance government service delivery—were never more than a click away. And, as part of the DSN’s Chief Digital Service Officers (CDSO) Community of Practice—which expanded from an initial list of six CDSOs to 63 CDSOs from 26 states and provinces—Pardoe also had access to a brain trust of public servants and civic tech leaders all working toward the same goal.

“They’ve evolved into an incredibly supportive network of people who trust each other,” Wyatt said. “They can text, email, or Slack at any time and ask about a challenge they’re running into, and know that at least three other people are in the same boat.”

In addition to continuing to iterate on the new website and improving the way Pennsylvanians experience government services and interactions, Pardoe and her team—in partnership with Pennsylvania First Lady Lori Shapiro—launched the “Forms That Suck Less” Internship. The program gives students interested in careers in user experience design an opportunity to inventory and evaluate existing online forms through interviews and focus groups to make them more accessible and user-friendly.

“We were able to put user experience research at the forefront of what we were doing, [and] put some real, beautiful rigor around evaluating these forms ... Not just taking something on paper and turning it into something digital, but really reimagining it to improve the experience,” Pardoe said at [FormFest 2024](#), an event co-hosted by the Beeck Center and Code for America. “This feels like the beginning of a really fantastic forms transformation movement in the Commonwealth.”

Going forward, ensuring the longevity of CODE PA’s work will depend on the agency’s ability to recruit and retain talent with the skills, vision, and commitment to constantly improve the constituent experience, Pardoe said.

“[Government] can be an incubator, where people can come in and see ... literally everything from the mainframe to generative AI, and you can have an impact on what that looks like,” Pardoe said. “We need to tell more stories about the ways [people] can make a difference for their friends, their neighbors, their families. [Government] can give them a space where they can have real, meaningful impact.”



Attendee at the Chief Digital Service Officers Convening in 2024.

SPOTLIGHT

Chief Digital Service Officers



Attendees at the Chief Digital Service Officers Convening in 2024.

In April 2024, the [Digital Service Network](#) (DSN) convened 23 chief digital service officers (CDSOs) from the CDSO Community of Practice—a Beeck Center-led group that connects leaders from government digital services teams across North America. These senior government officials are at the forefront of using human-centered design and data to inform policy- and decision-making, all with the goal of improving public-facing digital services.

At the convening, the CDSOs and DSN team shared insights, learned, and strategized about how to deliver easy-to-use, people-centered digital services. Together, they developed a replicable [toolkit](#) for government digital service teams, featuring exercises designed to spark conversations about problem-solving, information-sharing, and the unique challenges that affect recently-established digital service teams.

In 2024, the CDSO Community of Practice also partnered with a team of graduate students from the University of North Carolina’s Master of Public Administration program to create the [Government Digital Service Team Tracker](#)—a living database that maps the locations, structures, operations, and mandates of digital service teams across the United States.

In addition to developing actionable resources for the field, the CDSO Community of Practice continues to meet monthly to explore collaborative problem-solving approaches, deeply understand the challenges and opportunities of serving in a CDSO role, and inspire promising practices across jurisdictions for hiring, emerging technology, change management, and digital transformation.

SPOTLIGHT

Digital Benefits Leadership Council



Attendees at the Digital Benefits Leadership Council meeting in 2024.

At the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, state Medicaid systems were neither equipped nor prepared to renew Medicaid coverage for the tens of millions of Americans who relied on it. As a result, and in part due to administrative errors, millions of eligible individuals and families lost critical access to Medicaid services. In 2024, the Beeck Center, responding to concerns from the White House, convened leading civic technology organizations to strategize, leverage cross-organizational capacity, and quickly support states in deploying automated renewals. With this surge in support to states, the national average for automatic Medicaid renewals is now more than 60 percent, with some states reaching more than 90 percent.

Soon thereafter, the Digital Benefits Network formally launched the Digital Benefits Leadership Council—a group composed of executive leaders and senior program

directors from nine leading organizations within the benefits ecosystem. The Leadership Council provides a dynamic space for sharing strategies, identifying common challenges, and fostering opportunities for collaboration on projects, funding, and advocacy. It aims to build a shared understanding of the digital benefits landscape, strengthen community ties among leaders, and address both current strengths and gaps in the system.

Through virtual and in-person convenings and communications tools, the Leadership Council is uniquely positioned to respond quickly and strategically to emerging digital benefits issues. By gathering insights and coordinating efforts, the Leadership Council works toward building a stronger, more efficient digital benefits ecosystem that benefits government and communities alike.

SPOTLIGHT

Student Engagement



Beeck Center student analyst and Ambassador Susan Rice.

Rooted in our deep commitment to the Georgetown University community and our founding mission of building the next generation of changemakers, the Beeck Center continued expanding its efforts to engage and reach more students across campus in 2024.

With 305 applicants across 10 Georgetown schools, the Beeck Center team trained an exclusive cohort of 23 students in civic technology, public service, and social impact principles throughout the year as part of our sought-after [Student Analyst program](#). Student analysts collaborated with subject matter experts and practitioners on researching digital identity in public benefits programs, interviewing state and local government officials, digging deep into Large Language Models (LLMs) and the use of AI in government settings, and much more.

“I have always been fascinated by the ways in which the public and private sectors intersect to shape our society, from local and federal governments to corporations,” 2023-2024 Student Analyst Jaida Forbes said. “The Beeck Center has nurtured this passion by introducing me to the world of civic technology—a space where innovative strategies and digital tools can be leveraged to transform underserved communities and create lasting social impact.”

Alongside our ongoing Student Analyst events and programming, the Beeck Center also launched [Civic Tech Live](#), an event series bringing together esteemed speakers and the Georgetown community to give students valuable insights into the intersection of government and civic technology. The series was inspired by Erica Pincus, a distinguished Georgetown University alum and former member of the Obama administration’s White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, who passed away in 2021. The [Erica Pincus Arabesque Foundation](#)—founded by her parents, Holly and Clifford Pincus—offered generous support to help launch Civic Tech Live in Erica’s honor and to connect the next generation of Hoyas to social impact and civic tech.

The [first Civic Tech Live installment](#) featured an inspiring conversation with trailblazing public servant Susan Rice, who served in various roles in the Clinton, Obama, and Biden administrations, including as a domestic policy advisor, national security advisor, and United Nations ambassador. The discussion featured practical advice for students looking to pursue careers in public service, as well as anecdotes and experiences that highlighted the role government service delivery has played in her career.

“Be about the mission, not about yourself,” Ambassador Rice said.



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○ Past ○ Present ● Future

Accelerating *innovation*



"Serving as a student analyst ... has only solidified my passion for pursuing a career that allows me to be at the forefront of public policy and government digital transformation."

TRINISA FUNG

Former Student Analyst at the Beeck Center



‘Making a *meaningful* change’

How Ashlee Sellung charted a path from emergency response to civic tech at the Beeck Center



By **Evelyn Blanchette**
Student Analyst



Beeck Center Digital Government Hub Coordinator Ashlee Sellung.

After witnessing firsthand how broken systems can fail people during disasters, Ashlee Sellung found her way to civic tech. Now, as coordinator of the Digital Government Hub, she helps connect public servants with tools, resources, and community to improve how government serves people.

In 2020, Ashlee Sellung was no stranger to public service. As a disaster response team member with the Red Cross, she had done everything from battling wildfires to helping residents apply for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Red Cross disaster-relief benefits. But one interaction in a parking lot in the fall of that year fundamentally changed her understanding of how government systems impact community safety.

While distributing supplies to fire victims, Sellung encountered a woman who lost her RV and everything in it, despite living in what was considered a low-risk area—far from brush and other fire hazards. A malfunction in the local alert system had failed to warn her in time to evacuate.

“All these folks did all the work themselves to stay prepared, be involved, be informed, and be ready... but the system in place that their local government set up failed,” Sellung said.

Beyond emergency alerts, Sellung saw firsthand how outdated and inefficient systems could impede access to essential services. The digital forms for shelter, food, and water stipends were archaic and difficult to navigate, she said, often requiring identification and paperwork that victims had lost in the fire.

This experience opened Sellung’s eyes to the broader issues of how people interact with government systems during crises. It was a turning point, eventually leading her to civic technology as a means to improve disaster response and public service delivery.

“[I learned] the ways that folks interact with government or systems around them to try to receive different services and benefits, and how it can be a really terrible process,” Sellung said.

After finishing a degree in political science from California State University, Northridge, Sellung came to Georgetown University to complete her Master of Professional Studies in Emergency and Disaster Management.

While on campus in the fall of 2022, she discovered the Beeck Center’s Student Analyst program, and saw the opportunity to increase her knowledge and experience in the civic technology space.

Sellung joined Beeck’s Data Labs team as a student analyst and worked hands-on with state agencies to improve their efforts to track and manage data across key areas like safety net benefits, student outcomes, and workforce development. After graduating from Georgetown in 2023, Sellung stayed on as a contracted analyst, supporting the final programming of the Data Labs cohort before finishing her time at the Beeck Center.

But she couldn’t stay away. When Sellung heard about an open role to work on the Digital Government Hub with the Digital Service Network and the Digital Benefits Network, she decided to throw her hat in the ring. The next thing she knew, she was returning to the Beeck Center.

“Rather than solve for a specific problem, [we are] trying to get all of the brightest minds and best people in the room together talking about the problems each of them are having, and collectively finding solutions together,” Sellung said.



Ashlee Sellung at BenCon 2024.

Today, Sellung is the coordinator for the Hub and her role incorporates a range of functions—from curating and sharing relevant content, to informing new features and addressing technical issues with the site, to connecting technologists and government practitioners with resources and tools through demos, training, and inbound requests. Sellung’s ultimate goal is to create a sense of community for individuals working toward similar goals across civic technology, all with the aim of improving the government’s ability to serve people.

For Sellung, both her education and her experiences—with the Red Cross, and with the D.C. Homeland Security Emergency Management’s Resilience Bureau—have equipped her with many skills she continues to use in the world of civic technology.

Most importantly, Sellung learned how crucial it is to listen deeply and communicate effectively, and to always center people in her approach so that “the procedures and systems that we set up to help people are actually fulfilling their real needs ... instead of just needs that we predict or assume.”

Compared to the fast-paced nature of emergency management, working on civic tech at the Beeck Center feels like a “marathon, rather than a sprint,” Sellung said. While there was an initial learning curve, she values the opportunity to expand her capacity to serve the public in new and exciting ways, she said.

“Not only do I love the work, but I love the people,” she said. “Everybody just really cares about this work and what they do—and making a meaningful change in the world.”



Beeck Center's Kirsten Wyatt, Michaela Caudill, and Ashlee Sellung at the 10th Anniversary Celebration.

‘Always with *the people* in mind’

How the Beeck Center prepared Alberto Rodríguez Alvarez for a people-centered career



By **Claire Stowe**
Former Student Analyst



Alberto Rodríguez Alvarez speaking at A Decade of Impact: The Beeck Center at 10.

From hurricane relief in Veracruz to digital policy in D.C., Alberto Rodríguez Alvarez has always kept people at the center of his work. At the Beeck Center, he found a community that helped him connect policy and technology—shaping a career focused on ethical, people-first innovation in government.

When Hurricane Karl struck the state of Veracruz, Mexico in 2010, Alberto Rodríguez Álvarez sprang into action. He was working for the Veracruz government at the time, and was tasked with locating people who had been displaced by the hurricane or whose homes had been flooded. But the rapidly changing situation on the ground in the aftermath of the hurricane rendered the paper maps and resources at his disposal immediately useless.

“I knew that if ... [I had] a digital document, it could have been easily updated and consulted so that ... more lives could be saved,” Rodríguez Álvarez said.

He carried that lesson with him all the way to the Mexican president’s office, where he worked on implementing the country’s digital strategy at a time when governments across the world were becoming attuned to the role of civic technology, digital services, and AI. The experience crystallized for Rodríguez Álvarez just how important technology is for effective governance.

“I really wanted to study and work [at the intersection] of policy and tech, but always with the people at the center,” he said.

In 2018, Rodríguez Álvarez came to Georgetown University to earn his Master’s in Public Policy from the McCourt School. Before even arriving at Georgetown, he researched centers on campus and zeroed in on the Beeck Center, recognizing it as a place with a mission that aligned deeply with his own drive to make systems work better for all.

“The first thing I did when I stepped foot in Georgetown was ... go to the Beeck Center and try to talk to [Founding Executive Director [Sonal Shah](#)] directly, and we hit it off almost immediately,” Rodríguez Álvarez said.



Shah offered him a role as a student analyst working on the Digital Service Collaborative, a project launched in 2019 to bring together digital service leaders and conduct research on the emerging digital government ecosystem. Rodríguez Álvarez immediately got to work documenting the increase of digital innovation efforts at all levels of government. Tapping into his own personal and professional experience, he soon expanded his research to include Latin American countries, writing case studies on the Mexican and Argentine governments’ experiments with digital innovation.



Alberto Rodríguez Alvarez at A Decade of Impact: The Beeck Center at 10.

“It was something that was really interesting to me, because it meant that all of the skills that I had from my previous employment and previous experience, I could bring to the Beeck Center and apply them there,” he said.

After completing his degree, Rodríguez Alvarez knew what he wanted to do and how to do it, thanks to his experience at Beeck. He joined the digital services team at New America and picked up where he left off with much of the work he had begun at the Beeck Center.

“Even though public interest technology is growing, it’s still a small piece of the puzzle ... You will see the same people in different jobs with different positions, but doing the same work,” he said.

For Rodríguez Alvarez, the progression of his post-Beeck Center career brought a broader focus to his commitment to public service. In addition to his work at New America, he also co-founded Datamorfosis, a start-up focused on helping state and local governments in Latin America be “data ready” by creating data governance structures and building innovation teams so they are able to “implement digital government solutions safely and reliably.”

Two years in and the team has already worked with the Organization of American States, CAF Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF, and others.

Now, as director of partnerships at InnovateUS, Rodríguez Alvarez coordinates with cities and states to provide free training on responsible AI use in the public sector.

For Rodríguez Alvarez, cultivating and educating the next generation of leaders who can ethically harness digital tools and technologies for the public good is crucial. To this end, he said, one of the most valuable contributions to the social impact and civic technology space is the Beeck Center’s efforts to engage students, starting early in their undergraduate years and continuing through the end of their graduate programs.

“You have to work on capacity building, and this means training the students of tomorrow, not just with technical skills ... but also the ethics and the social impact,” he said. “We have to marry those two in their minds.”

SPOTLIGHT

Innovation + Incubation Fellowships



From its inception, innovation and experimentation have been core to the DNA of the Beeck Center. In keeping with that ethos, the Beeck Center launched the [Innovation + Incubation \(I+I\) Fellowship](#) in October, which expands the Center's work to identify and establish people-centered solutions that make government services more accessible for all communities. Through these fellowships, the Beeck Center aims to incubate emerging ideas, explore new technologies, test innovative approaches in digital delivery, AI, benefits, data, and security, and push the boundaries of possibility in civic technology.

[Maya Uppaluru Mechenbier](#)—a former White House official and policy expert in health care, digital innovation, and social safety net programs—joined the Beeck Center as the inaugural I+I fellow and launched the [Family Benefits Lab](#). The project designs people-centered strategies that, when scaled, can improve the lives and economic empowerment of millions of teen and young mothers across the United States. This includes co-designing services and systems with frontline workers and mothers to support them in accessing and delivering health care and nutritional services, meeting their educational goals, pursuing family-sustaining career pathways, building economic security, and caring for their children.

In 2025, the Family Benefits Lab team will collaborate with state and local government agencies and educational institutions in California and Maryland to develop new research insights and shape scalable state pilots to support young mothers. The project in California will focus on county-level opportunities to more seamlessly enroll mothers in critical services like Medicaid, WIC, and SNAP using cross-agency data sharing. In Maryland, the team will focus on understanding and scaling support for student mothers, such as better understanding how to connect them to programs for child care and social connection. Building on these initial collaborations, the Family Benefits Lab plans to expand its engagement to more states across the country.

“It’s more important than ever to build capacity at the state and local government level to support young families. Deeply understanding the needs of these mothers, their partners, and their children, and providing critical benefits in a family-centered way, can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of families for years to come,” Mechenbier said.





Our *collective future*

We are currently facing a growing crisis—core government functions and operations are being dismantled, fracturing the systems meant to support people when they need it most. Charting the path forward to a future where government truly meets the needs of those it represents will take unwavering vision and commitment.

Government is made by people, for people. At the Beeck Center, we work tirelessly to advance a people-centered, digitally-enabled government for all, and that mission has never been more critical than it is today. We are committed to a future rooted in opportunity and economic mobility for everyone, and we know that vision cannot become a reality without a dedicated, skilled workforce committed to serving the public.

Just as it has for the last 10 years, the Beeck Center will continue striving to create the most impact for the most people. By training those closest to the work, attracting a new generation of talent to the sector, connecting people around shared opportunities, and helping governments develop initiatives that prioritize the needs and experiences of people, we are building toward the future everyone deserves.

Onward,
The Beeck Center Team



