### **Meeting Overview**

### Agenda:

The agenda for the session is as follows:

#### Start at 3:00pm ET

- 3:00 3:01 Welcome
- 3:01 3:50 Technical Exchange: Case Studies in Participatory Algorithmic Design
  - Case Study Presentations
  - Audience Q&A: (15 minutes)
- 3:50 4:20 Participatory Algorithms Design Lessons and Emerging Norms
- 4:20 4:28 Closing Remarks
  - Deirdre Mulligan, Principal Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer, White House
    Office of Science and Technology Policy
- 4:28 4:30 Thank you and Closing

#### About:

The U.S. Open Government Secretariat, U.S. Tech Policy Network, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy cohosted a 90-minute virtual event on participatory algorithm design, featuring local and federal officials and academic experts. This session highlighted experiences implementing participatory practices in algorithm design in government; shared research and emerging practices at the global and national levels on this issue; and identified lessons learned to ensure that methods used to design algorithms are equitable and inclusive.

### Speakers:

- Deirdre Mulligan, Principal Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Erin Dalton, Director, Alleghany County Department of Human Services, Allegheny County, PA
- Sheena Erete, University of Maryland, College of Information Studies
- Michael Hawes, Senior Advisor for Data Access and Privacy, U.S. Census Bureau
- Tim Hughes, Lead, Democracy and Participation, Open Government Partnership
- Zoe Kahn, University of California Berkeley, School of Information
- Min Kyung Lee, University of Texas at Austin, School of Information
- Chelsea Palacio, City of San José Public Information Officer, Information Technology Department

- Emily Royall, Smart City Administrator, Office of Innovation, City of San Antonio,
  TX and Policy Co-Chair of GovAl Coalition
- Devansh Saxena, Carnegie Mellon University, School of Computer Science

#### Hosts and Moderators:

- Daniel York, Director, U.S. Open Government Secretariat, U.S. General Services Administration
- Jennifer Anderson Lewis, Senior Advisor for Open Government and Tech Policy,
  White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (Overall Moderator)
- Shannon Arvizu, Ph.D., Senior Advisor to the Chief Data Officer, U.S. Department of Commerce (Session Moderator)

#### Welcome:

- Introduction by Daniel York Director of U.S. Open Government Secretariat:
  - Welcome to the session on participatory algorithm design.
  - The event is public, recorded, and will be posted online.
  - Mr. York leads the U.S. Open Government Secretariat, which oversees U.S. implementation of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) a voluntary, global alliance between governments and civil society to bolster democracy through openness, transparency, and public engagement.
  - The Secretariat is co-hosting the event with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the U.S. Tech Policy Network.
- Session Overview and Framing by Jennifer Lewis Senior Advisor for Open Government and Tech Policy, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy:
  - The focus of this session is to explore emerging practice of participatory algorithm design – or the use of public participation and community engagement - in the scoping, design, and implementation of public sector algorithms Framing:
    - Machine learning and algorithmic tools holds promise for delivering for communities, and are tools that are increasingly part of all aspects of American life. Al and the algorithms that underpin it has the power to transform the way our public needs are identified, and the ways in which they are delivered.
    - Likewise, participatory and inclusive technological tools are required to ensure effective public service delivery and bolster democratic dividends primarily, community trust.

- The session begins with a Technical Exchange, highlight pioneering experiences by leaders at the city, country and Federal level in implementing participatory algorithm design. It will then move to a moderated to explore evidence, research and emerging practices nationally and globally in participatory algorithm design. The event will end with closing remarks by White House/OSTP's Principal Deputy Chief Technology Officer Deirdre Mulligan.
- The event features a diverse group of experts and will explore national and global practices.

### Technical Exchange: Case Studies in Participatory Algorithmic Design

- Panel Moderator: Shannon Arvizu, Ph.D., Senior Advisor to the Chief Data Officer, U.S. Department of Commerce
- San Jose Case Study Presentation Chelsea Palacio, City of San José Public Information Officer, Information Technology Department
  - Public involvement in the design and implementation of new technologies is critical to success and public buy-in.
  - Current Technologies included AI-based systems such as automated license plate readers (ALPRs) and AI gunshot detection.
  - Initial Challenges included concerns about privacy and surveillance, with some viewing the technology as a "privacy nightmare."
  - In response, the City expanded public engagement to address concerns and guide technology use. Residents provide feedback on technology implementation and suggest improvements.
  - The City also held public meetings in underserved areas, multilingual, and aimed at reducing barriers.
  - Feedback and usage data are published online.
  - The City is exploring AI object detection for specific issues like road hazards and illegal dumping.
  - The City is seeing a positive impact on government practices through proactive engagement, increased trust, and transparency.
- Alleghany County Presentation Erin Dalton, Director, Alleghany County Department of Human Services, Allegheny County, PA
  - Discussed the challenges and lessons learned from a project related to identifying children at high-risk for abuse for support services.
  - Key Issues Identified:
    - High Stakes: The consequences of identifying children for support are significant, with potential for misuse or misunderstanding.

■ Technical Focus: Efforts were made to simplify the model technically (e.g., using smaller models), but this did not address the core concerns of the community.

### Community Concerns:

- Benefits vs. Risks: People were more concerned about the actual benefits of early identification and support, rather than the technical aspects of the model.
- Human Treatment: Emphasis was placed on how children would be treated and supported, and whether their needs (e.g., diapers, meals) would be met.
- Respect and Support: Key concerns included the respect and genuine support provided by the service, rather than just the technical details of the model.

#### Outcomes:

- Limited Impact of Technical Adjustments: Simplifying the model did not significantly improve trust or understanding among participants.
- Importance of Respectful Interaction: Ensuring respectful and practical support was more impactful for gaining trust and meeting community needs.
- San Antonio Case Study Presentation Emily Royall, Smart City Administrator, Office of Innovation, City of San Antonio, TX and Policy Co-Chair of GovAl Coalition
  - Project Background:
    - Objective: Improve communication about construction impacts from bond projects (2017-2024).
    - Issue: Ineffective communication channels and negative public feedback.

#### Solution Implemented:

- Al Tool: Al-powered Chatbot developed in partnership with Hello Lamppost.
- Functionality: Provides 24/7 real-time information via SMS or a mobile web app.
- Pilot: Installed signage at 40 locations, tested with 120 businesses.

#### Results:

■ Increased Engagement: From in-person meetings to 829 conversations and nearly 3,500 messages.

### Challenges:

 Al Issues: Initial Al responses included incorrect suggestions (e.g., contacting the mayor).

■ Response: Adjusted by restricting web access and improving prompt engineering.

### Adaptations:

- Public Prompt Engineering Model: Invited public testing in a sandbox environment to refine the chatbot.
- Feedback Integration: Public feedback used to improve chatbot accuracy and responsiveness.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Vendor Collaboration and links to Procurement: Cities typically do not have in-house AI capacity, and need to procure AI systems from vendors, requiring transparency and collaboration. Building participation requirements into these contracts is important.
- Prompt Engineering: Essential for creating effective AI services tailored to local needs.
- Public Testing: Crucial for developing robust technologies, applicable to all emerging technologies, not just AI.
- U.S. Census Bureau Case Study Presentation Michael Hawes, Senior Advisor for Data Access and Privacy, U.S. Census Bureau
  - Dual Mandate of the Census Bureau:
    - Produce accurate statistics about the nation's people and economy.
    - Protect the confidentiality of the information provided by respondents.
  - Triple Trade-off Challenge:
    - Balancing data protection, accuracy, and quantity of statistics.
    - Increasing one of these dimensions typically comes at the cost of the others.
  - Challenges with Previous Methods:
    - Prior confidentiality methods (1990-2010) were insufficient against modern threats from third-party data and machine learning algorithms.
  - New Approach: Differential Privacy:
    - Differential Privacy: A framework that injects statistical noise to protect individual privacy while publishing data.
    - Works by asking numerous questions about the data and adding noise to results to maintain confidentiality.
  - Algorithm Details:
    - Top Down Algorithm: Includes a critical stage known as "noisy measurement" which involves injecting noise into results of queries about census data.

- Privacy Loss Budget: Determines the trade-off between accuracy and protection. More budget results in higher accuracy but less privacy, and vice versa.
- Stakeholder Engagement:
  - Engaged stakeholders through 8 sets of demonstration data between 2019 and 2023.
  - Feedback from these demonstrations was used to refine algorithm parameters and improve the balance between data accuracy and protection.
- Outcome:
  - The final algorithm design for the 2020 Census was developed based on iterative feedback from stakeholders to ensure that protected statistics met user needs.
- Q&A:
- 1. Question: What worked best so far and what might be done differently in the future?
  - Emily Royall (City of San Antonio):
    - What Worked Best:
      - Integration of public perspective in AI and algorithmic projects.
      - Collaboration with a transparent vendor (Hello Lamppost) for prompt engineering.
      - Analyzing and leveraging feedback from public testing.
    - O What Might be Done Differently:
      - Continue to focus on public-facing aspects and usability improvements based on real user feedback.
  - Erin Dalton (Allegheny County):
    - What Worked Best:
      - Engaging in detailed discussions with potential participants and community members.
    - What Might be Done Differently:
      - Shift focus from technical model aspects to addressing community concerns about benefits, risks, and respectful treatment.
  - Chelsea Palacio (City of San José):
    - O What Worked Best:
      - Partnering with trusted nonprofit organizations for community engagement.
      - Providing translation services to ensure effective communication.
    - What Might be Done Differently:

- Addressing logistical challenges such as scheduling public meetings and providing childcare to facilitate participation.
- 2. Question: How to bring non-technical public stakeholders up to speed and create conditions for constructive participation?
  - Michael Hawes (U.S. Census Bureau):
    - Approach:
      - Utilize existing stakeholder engagement pathways and create new mechanisms as needed.
      - Invest in educational components to help non-technical stakeholders understand algorithm design and privacy concerns.
      - Iterate and refine educational materials based on feedback.
- 3. Question: Thoughts on participatory design and its emergence in algorithm development?
  - Emily Royall (City of San Antonio):
    - Observations:
      - Participatory design has been gaining traction in smart cities and other emerging technologies.
      - The sidewalk Labs case study and civic assemblies in Paris are examples of integrating public perspectives effectively.
- 4. Question: How to budget for participatory design activities?
  - Erin Dalton (Allegheny County):
    - Approach:
      - Include participatory design costs as a core part of the initiative's overall budget.
  - Chelsea Palacio (City of San José):
    - Approach:
      - Integrate public outreach and engagement into the broader city services budget.
      - Emphasize the importance of having dedicated public information officers.
- 5. Question: How to find public stakeholders—start from scratch or piggyback on existing engagements?
  - Michael Hawes (U.S. Census Bureau):
    - Approach:

- Start with established stakeholder groups and formal mechanisms.
- Expand outreach to missing segments of the community as identified through ongoing engagement.
- Erin Dalton (Allegheny County):
  - Approach:
    - Combine traditional stakeholder advisory committees with specific outreach to impacted groups.
    - Use public meetings to ensure broad participation and gather diverse feedback.
- 6. Question: Encouraging bravery in public officials dealing with big public meetings?
  - Erin Dalton (Allegheny County):
    - Encouragement:
      - Acknowledge the challenges of large public meetings but stress their importance for effective public engagement and decision-making.

### Participatory Algorithms Design – Lessons and Emerging Norms

- Panel Moderator: Jennifer Anderson Lewis, Senior Advisor for Open Government and Tech Policy, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Panel Speakers:
  - Sheena Erete, University of Maryland, College of Information Studies
  - Zoe Kahn, University of California Berkeley, School of Information
  - Min Kyung Lee, University of Texas at Austin, School of Information
  - Devansh Saxena, Carnegie Mellon University, School of Computer Science
  - Tim Hughes, Lead, Democracy and Participation, Open Government Partnership
- Question #1: What norms are emerging around open or participatory algorithmic design? What lessons are we starting to glean?
  - Understanding dynamics from a power -and power-shifting perspective.
    Who is at the table and why? Who is not at the table?
  - Importance of inclusion, diversity, transparency, ethics, and public engagement.
  - Need for diverse representation in teams designing algorithms, and in bringing stakeholders in to ensure the design is fit for purpose and benefits from their experience.
  - Building trust and engaging deeply with community members.

- Empowering communities to own their data and be involved throughout the design, evaluation, and deployment process.
- Benefits of Participation in AI Design:
  - Community members provide valuable ideas on what to build and how to build it.
  - Participation helps community members learn about AI and reflect on their own work practices.
  - o Innovative methods and tools are necessary for effective participation.
- Impact on Participants:
  - Participation in design processes can positively affect participants, fostering learning and empowerment.
  - Engagement with AI tools can lead to reduced perceived barriers and increased acceptance.
- Power Dynamics and Accountability:
  - Ensuring that communities can hold designers and policymakers accountable.
  - Addressing issues of power in AI design to ensure equitable outcomes.
- Global Comparative Experiences:
  - Lessons from different regions and contexts highlight the importance of local empowerment and tailored solutions.
- Expertise in Algorithm Design:
  - Need for various types of expertise, including experiential experts (everyday people) and domain experts.
  - Collaborative approach ensures that different aspects of the problem are addressed effectively.
  - o Emphasizes dignity and accountability in considering all forms of expertise.
- Key Themes and Norms
  - Intentional Design:
    - Engaging stakeholders and communities in the design process to ensure purpose-fit solutions informed by real experiences.
  - Transparency and Civic Engagement:

■ Building trust through transparent processes and meaningful civic engagement.

### Accountability:

■ Ensuring accountability for who participates and how algorithms are used.

#### • Challenges and Barriers

- Knowledge Gap:
  - Lack of understanding among community residents and technologists on meaningful engagement.
  - Need for frameworks to build trust, shift power, and center communities in technology design.
- Procurement and Contracting:
  - Developing policies to hold tech companies accountable for engaging non-dominant voices in technology development.
- Power Dynamics:
  - Addressing the difficulty of shifting power to communities to set the context and use of algorithms.
- Participation Quality
  - Defining Good Participation:
    - Challenges in selecting participants, communication, decision-making, and resolving conflicts.
    - Varying roles and power levels of participants depending on the AI application context.
- Continuous Engagement:
  - Moving beyond event-based participation to continuous, longitudinal engagement.
- Creative and Accessible Engagement Strategies:
  - Utilizing culturally relevant and simple visuals to explain technical details to communities.
- Power and Decision-Making:

 Questions of who decides on participation, questions posed, and mental models provided.

### **Closing Remarks**

- Deirdre Mulligan, Principal Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Public Participation and Democratic Values:
  - Public participation and community engagement are fundamental to democratic values.
  - Strengthening trust between government and the public.

#### OSTP Mission:

- Maximize benefits of science and technology for health, prosperity, security, environmental quality, and justice.
- Advise the President and coordinate federal technology policy.

#### Nation's Aspirations:

- Achieve health and opportunity for all, tackle climate crisis, restore nature, secure environmental justice, and build a competitive economy.
- Biden Administration's Commitment:
  - Ensure technology is developed and implemented to benefit and protect the public.
  - Ready to tackle challenges and seize opportunities from new technologies.

#### • Executive Order on AI:

- Safe, secure, and trustworthy development and use of Al.
- Federal guidance requires consultation and feedback from affected communities.
- Importance of Engagement and Expertise:
  - Engage in conversations and learn from experts on AI and technology.
  - Need for new approaches and expertise in technology.
- Impact of Algorithms on Public Service:
  - Algorithms affect various public services (e.g., identifying at-risk children, issuing tickets, monitoring infrastructure).

- Potential for both benefits and risks, including deepening discrimination and eroding privacy.
- Addressing Algorithmic Bias:
  - OSTP researchers identify and address algorithmic discrimination.
  - o Academics study how algorithms can drive inequity.
- Community Engagement in Algorithm Design:
  - Community engagement helps mitigate algorithmic risks.
  - Acknowledge successes and challenges in participatory algorithm design.
- Technical and AI Capacity:
  - Need for technical expertise in government.
  - Efforts to bring AI experts into government through talent searches.
- Federal Guidance on Community Engagement:
  - Community engagement is crucial for design and mitigation choices.
- Global Perspective and Collaboration:
  - Importance of global action on technology with global impact.
  - Government must start with communities to ensure technology reflects stakeholders' needs.
- Conclusion and Commitment:
  - Emphasize the importance of public participation in algorithmic design.
  - OSTP's commitment to ensuring technology serves the public and protects rights.

### Thank you and Closing

- Thank you by Jennifer Lewis Senior Advisor for Open Government and Tech Policy, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
  - Expressed gratitude to Deirdre for insightful reflections.
  - Thanked panelists for sharing their knowledge and expertise, which helped unpack the topic and identify promising practices for government replication and learning.
  - Appreciated fellow moderator Shannon Alvizu and the teams at GSA, U.S.
    Open Government Secretariat, and US Tech Policy Network for supporting the event.
- Closing by Daniel York Director of U.S. Open Government Secretariat:

- Joined in thanking panelists and speakers.
- Note that the event recording will be available on the U.S. Open Government Secretariat's website under the 'Public Meetings' page: <a href="https://open-staging.usa.gov/meeting/July-29-2024-Open-Government-in-Action/">https://open-staging.usa.gov/meeting/July-29-2024-Open-Government-in-Action/</a>
- Invited participants to join USTPN and Open Gov listservs and check the upcoming US Secretariat webpage for future events and engagement opportunities.
- o Thanked attendees and wished them a great evening.

### Full Attendee List:

#### Virtual:

First and Last Name	Organization
Alexa Barton	City of Parkville, MI
Amy Cone	Humboldt County, CA
Adam Larson	Washington County, MN
Alex Izotic	EDM Council
Andrea Lassett	Klamath County, OR
Albert Gehami	City of San José, CA
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Alina Semo	National Archives and Records Administration
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Felicia Johnson	City of Little Rock, AR
Geoffrey Urbach	City of San Antonio, TX

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Sarah Grubb	City of Dallas, TX
Sarah Kennedy	Open Government Partnership
Sarah Stubblefield	City of Arlington, TX
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Sasha Anderson	University of California, Berkeley
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Sheena Erete	University of Maryland
Soledad Guilera	University of California, Berkeley
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Sachin Padmawar	City of Sacramento, CA
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Sahil Singh	Partnership for Public Service
Sahana Srinivasan	Center for Democracy & Technology
Stephanie Deitrick	City of Tempe, AZ
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Steve Rosenberg	Federal Communications Commission

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Syed Alam	DuPage County, IL
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Tara Duckworth	City of Kent, WA
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Terrence King	AmeriCorps
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Trib Narain	N/A
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Michelle Tu	N/A
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Virginia Burke	U.S. Department of Defence
Rich Wagreich	County of Monterey, CA
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Tripp Wray	Chesterfield County, VA
Yvette Gibson	U.S. General Services Administration
Yan Zhao	City of Saratoga, CA
Zachary Rollyson	U.S. General Services Administration
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Zoe Kahn	University of California, Berkeley

Meeting notes are based on the transcript of the event, consolidated by ChatGPT, and reviewed by the U.S. Open Government Secretariat.