#### **Meeting Overview**

#### Agenda:

The agenda for the session is as follows:

#### Start at 3:00pm ET

- 3:00 3:01 Welcome
- 3:01 3:51 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 4:25 Closing Remarks
  - Deirdre Mulligan, Principal Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer, White House
    Office of Science and Technology Policy
- 4:25 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 are pleased to cohost a virtual event featuring local and federal officials and academic experts. This 90-min session highlighted experiences implementing participatory 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 (Moderator)
- Shannon Arvizu, Ph.D., Senior Advisor to the Chief Data Officer, U.S. Department of Commerce (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 domestic implementation of our membership in the global 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 by Jennifer Lewis Senior Advisor for Open Government and Tech Policy, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy:
  - Focus: Participatory algorithm design involving public input in algorithms.
  - The session includes a Technical Exchange, panel discussion, and closing remarks by 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 buyin.

- 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 we expanded public engagement to address concerns and guide technology use. Residents provide feedback on technology implementation and suggest improvements.
- We 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
  - Discussing the challenges and lessons learned from a project related to identifying people for support services.
  - Key Issues Identified:
    - High Stakes: The consequences of identifying individuals 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 individuals 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: Cities typically procure AI systems from vendors, requiring transparency and collaboration.
    - 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 (Hela Lampost) for prompt engineering.
      - Analyzing and leveraging feedback from public testing.

- 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):
  - 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

- o Devansh Saxena, Carnegie Mellon University, School of Computer Science
- Tim Hughes, Lead, Democracy and Participation, Open Government Partnership
- Emerging Norms in Open and Participatory Algorithmic Design:
  - Importance of inclusion, diversity, transparency, ethics, and public engagement.
  - Need for diverse representation in teams designing algorithms.
  - 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.
  - 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.

- 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.
  - 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.
  - 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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| Ethan Benatan          | TriMet  |
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| Brad Levine            | Synergist Technology, LLC                         |
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| Caroline Nihill        | FedScoop  |
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| Nancy Pleasant      | City of Austin, TX                         |
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| Nicholas Mencacci   | U.S. Dept of Interior                      |
| Nick Goldstein      | U.S. Small Business Administration         |
| Nicole Broyles      | Harris County, TX                          |
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| Sarah Grubb         | City of Dallas, TX                                      |
| Sarah Kennedy       | Open Government Partnership                             |
| Sarah Stubblefield  | City of Arlington, TX                                   |
| Shannon Arvizu      | U.S. Dept of Commerce                                   |
| Sasha Anderson      | University of California, Berkeley                      |
| Stephen Buckley     | Int'l. Assn. for Public Participation (U.S.)            |
| Sheena Erete        | University of Maryland                                  |
| Soledad Guilera     | University of California, Berkeley                      |
| Silona Bonewald     | Foundation for Open Source Ecosystem Technology         |

| First and Last Name | Organization   |
|---------------------|--|
| Smita Bhattacharjee | City of San José, CA   |
| Sachin Padmawar     | City of Sacramento, CA   |
| Suzanne Piotrowski  | Rutgers University Newark, School of Public Affairs and Administration |
| Sahil Singh         | Partnership for Public Service   |
| Sahana Srinivasan   | Center for Democracy & Technology                                      |
| Stephanie Deitrick  | City of Tempe, AZ  |
| Stephen Gaither     | Klamath County, OR   |
| Steve Rosenberg     | Federal Communications Commission                                      |
| Sue Hartman         | City of Richmond, CA   |
| Sumedh Supe         | N/A  |
| Supriya Menon       | County of Marin, CA  |
| Syed Alam           | DuPage County, IL  |
| Tanish Kumar        | University of California, Berkeley                                     |
| Taylor Danielson    | City of Clovis, CA   |
| Tara Duckworth      | City of Kent, WA   |
| Temujin Baker       | King County, WA  |
| Thomas Asher        | Columbia University  |
| Grace Thomson       | Center for AI and Digital Policy                                       |
| Tim Hughes          | Open Government Partnership  |
| Terrence King       | AmeriCorps   |
| Tim Flanagan        | County of Solano, CA   |
| Trib Narain         | N/A  |
| Tricia Ruiz         | U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development                       |
| Michelle Tu         | N/A  |
| Dr. Dwight Sanders  | Federal Reserve Board  |
| Vanessa Sloane      | EoP - Office of Management and Budget                                  |
| Vanetta Pledger     | City of Alexandria, VA   |
| Virginia Burke      | U.S. Department of Defence   |
| Rich Wagreich       | County of Monterey, CA   |

| First and Last Name | Organization                           |
|---------------------|--|
| Wolff Bloss         | Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1, CA          |
| 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   |
| Zachary Withers     | U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services |
| Zoe Kahn            | University of California, Berkeley     |

<sup>\*</sup>Meeting notes are based on the transcript of the event, consolidated by ChatGPT, and reviewed by the U.S. Open Government Secretariat.