The Equity Imperative: Leveraging Technology to Advance Inclusion

Shared Accountability: The Public-Private Partnership

Speaker Biographies

Afua Bruce is the chief program officer at DataKind, a global nonprofit that harnesses the power of data science and artificial intelligence in the service of humanity. Before joining DataKind, she was at New America, where she was the director of engineering for the Public Interest Technology program. At New America, Bruce oversaw projects in technology and policy to improve outcomes in criminal justice reform, foster care, immigration, the opioid epidemic, and more. She also supervised the Public Interest Technology University Network. Previously, she spent several years leading science and technology strategy and program management in the federal government—as the executive director of the White House's National Science and Technology Council and in various positions at the FBI. She started her career as a software engineer at IBM. Bruce holds a degree in computer engineering from Purdue University and an MBA from the University of Michigan.

Tom Esselman has a passion for bridging the digital divide in Kansas City. With a heart for service and advocacy in the urban core, his vision and leadership drive the mission of Connecting for Good, where he has served as CEO since 2016. Connecting for Good links access and opportunities for digital skills training, hardware, and connectivity so people of all ages and backgrounds can pursue a path of prosperity. As an executive at Hallmark Cards in Kansas City for 22 years, Esselman led the development of technology-enhanced products. He retired in 2012 to pursue nonprofit leadership opportunities. Esselman is a graduate of Georgetown University, with a BS in foreign affairs, and of the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

Miguel Gamiño is executive vice president of Enterprise Partnerships at Mastercard and the head of Global Cities. He leads City Possible, a network of civic leaders from across the world dedicated to advancing inclusive and sustainable urban development through collaboration. The network focuses on various issues including modernizing public transit, the future of mobility as a service, enabling inclusive access to identity and financial services, and leveraging data-driven insights to inform critical policymaking and economic growth.

Khuloud Odeh is vice president for technology and data science and chief information officer at the Urban Institute, where she leads the strategic planning and implementation of research, operations, and communications technology. Odeh is not your typical technologist: she brings a unique blend of education, IT organization leadership, change management experience, and understanding of global and local sustainability challenges. Over her career, she has helped various organizations develop and implement strategic IT roadmaps that align with and support business process improvements, innovation, and organizational growth. Before joining Urban, Odeh was IT director for the Grameen Foundation, a global poverty-fighting organization. She served previously as the chief information officer of CHF International (now Global Communities) and as senior IT advisor to Jhpiego’s Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program. Odeh has a BS in computer science from the University of Jordan in Amman, Jordan; an MS in computer science from American University; and a PhD in information technology from George Mason University, where her research focused on the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of an IT organization’s practices. She also has a master’s degree in strategic leadership toward sustainability from the Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, Sweden, where her research focused on the enabling role of IT and broadband connectivity in sustainable urban development.

Rodney Stiles, head of policy at Populus, leads development of the team’s policy agenda, communications, and relationships with cities around the world. Previously, he worked at the New York Taxi and Limousine Commission where he led taxi and ride-hail policy and data reporting. He also worked as a demographer for the New York City Department of Planning, developing solutions to help the city plan for its future. His interests include walking, biking, and data visualization. Stiles is a 2009 graduate of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University.
Harriet Tregoning is the director of NUMO, the New Urban Mobility alliance, hosted by WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities. NUMO is a new collaborative effort that aims to guide policymakers, the private sector, and people toward a shared vision of cities and urban mobility.

Rick Usher has held 10 jobs in City Hall over the past 34 years and has been driven by opportunities to engage Kansas City and its residents with start-ups, entrepreneurs, small business owners, and all those in the field of entrepreneur ecosystem building. Currently, Usher is engaged in regulatory due diligence for emerging technologies and disruptive business models seeking to monetize the sharing economy. He also represents the city in the Coalition for Digital Inclusion and as it seeks to define the path from digital inclusion to economic mobility and entrepreneurship. Usher is a board member for a number of relevant organizations, including two Community Improvement Districts, Kansas City River Trails, Inc., BikeWalkKC, Kansas City Startup Foundation, and the Techweek advisory board. He received his BS in construction engineering technology from Louisiana Tech University.