

Government Procurement from Small Businesses: Advancing Racial Equity and Removing Barriers to Participation

Speaker Biographies

Opening remarks

Brett Theodos is a senior fellow and director of the Community Economic Development Hub at the Urban Institute. His work focuses on economic and community development, neighborhood change, affordable homeownership, consumer finance, and program evaluation and learning. His research includes evaluations of the Economic Development Administration, New Markets Tax Credit, Small Business Administration loan and investment programs, Opportunity Zones, and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods, Community Development Block Grant, and Section 108 programs. He is studying how capital flows (or fails to flow) into communities, including the role of mission finance actors like community development financial institutions. He leads projects researching how entrepreneurs can access capital. Theodos has conducted studies of neighborhood change and geographic mobility. He is evaluating several place-based initiatives. He's led studies of affordable homeownership supports, including shared equity models like community land trusts. In the financial capability space, he's led studies of financial coaching, financial curriculum, and rules of thumb for decisionmaking. He's explored the geography of debt. Theodos is working to grow nonprofit capacity in performance measurement. He directs Measure4Change, which provides technical assistance and facilitates a community of practice for nonprofits and has led randomized controlled trial evaluations of youth workforce and education preparedness programs. Theodos serves on the Board of the Center for Community Progress, the Douglass Community Land Trust, and the Housing Authority of Prince George's County. Theodos received his BA from Northwestern University, MPP from Georgetown University, and PhD in public policy from George Washington University.

Jennifer Bradley is a senior fellow at The Kresge Foundation. Jennifer supports the American Cities Program at Kresge through convenings and thought leadership. She joined the foundation in 2021. Previously, Jennifer served as the director of the Center for Urban Innovation at the Aspen Institute, where she focused on inclusive innovation and equitable economic development strategies in cities. Jennifer has also held positions with the Brookings Institution, where she co-authored *The Metropolitan Revolution* and developed state-level strategies to support metropolitan economic growth, and with the Constitutional Accountability Center, where she co-authored amicus briefs in major appellate cases that supported environmental protections and community development. A native of Austin, Texas, Jennifer earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas, a Master of Philosophy from the University of Oxford and a juris doctorate from Georgetown University Law Center. She serves on the boards of the Edlavitch D.C. Jewish Community Center and the Open Contracting Partnership.

Fireside Chat

Neha Gupta is a non-profit executive and former senior government attorney. She is currently a Senior Advisor at the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab and a Non-Resident Fellow at the Urban Institute. In her role at Harvard, Neha devises and scales innovative strategies in collaboration with governments across the country to deliver community impact and accelerate social change. Previously, she held leadership roles in the Biden-Harris Administration White House Counsel's Office and the San Francisco City Attorney's Office. Neha's expertise spans issues of U.S. democratic governance and the rule of law; advancing equity through public policy and the way government functions; and escalating collaborative governance to drive public-sector innovation. Neha graduated from Harvard College with a B.A. in Social Studies and received her J.D. from Stanford Law School. She completed judicial clerkships at both the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Neha currently serves on the board of directors for both the education non-profit ScholarMatch and the Northern District of California Federal Court Historical Society.

Colette Holt represents public agencies and private firms on issues related to civil rights, public contracting and affirmative action. She has broad experience in conducting defensible disparity studies, expert witness consulting and testimony, drafting legislation and policies, designing programs, managing initiatives, defending affirmative action programs, and counseling private firms on compliance with diversity requirements. Ms. Holt serves as General Counsel to the American Contract Compliance Association and is an author and frequent media commentator on these issues. Ms. Holt received her B.A. in Philosophy from Yale University and her J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School. She was a Law Clerk to the former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Prior to developing her own practice, she was associated with a large law firm, Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of Chicago and Chief Operating Officer of the Chicago Park District. She is a former Adjunct Professor at Loyola University School of Law and the John Marshall Law School.

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Panel discussion

Kathrin Frauscher is the Deputy Executive Director of the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP), a global mission-driven non-profit organization that is transforming the trillions of dollars spent on public contracts to better serve people and protect our planet. Kathrin co-founded OCP in 2015 and helped grow it into a global team of 30 people working across 30 countries. Kathrin leads OCP's work in the United States to support cities and states in making public procurement more equitable and sustainable. Before OCP, Kathrin worked at the World Bank Group leading projects around the world that brought governments, business and civil society together to fight corruption and improve service delivery.

André Lima, director of the Department of Supplier Diversity for the City of Boston, works to ensure that small businesses owned by women, people of color, and veterans can grow and thrive in Boston through equitable access to City contracts. In collaboration with the Procurement Department, Lima helped launch numerous new supplier diversity initiatives after the publication of the City of Boston's 2020 Disparity Study, including the City's Sheltered Market Program and an expansion of the Written Quote Contract process. Since the introduction of these new programs and tools, the value of the City's awards to businesses owned by people of color has doubled. Before working in the Department of Supplier Diversity, Lima worked as a Product Manager on the City of Boston's Digital Team and the Research and Policy Director of the Mayor's Office of Health and Human Services, where his career in public service began. André was born, raised, and still lives in Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood of Boston.

Michael Owh is the Director of Los Angeles County's Internal Services Department (ISD). Prior to his appointment as Director, he served as ISD's Chief Deputy Director and General Manager for Purchasing and Contract Services. ISD supports the mission of L.A. County with an annual budget of more than \$872M and encompassing more than 2,100 staff and 5,100 contracted workers of varying professions in digital equity, facilities management, information technology, environmental, administrative, purchasing, and contracting. Michael is a passionate public servant and proven government executive with a track record of success in improving operational performance while prioritizing equity, transparency, and commitment to the public. Prior to joining the County of Los Angeles, Michael served as the City of Los Angeles' first Chief Procurement Officer and New York City's Chief Procurement Officer and Director of the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, where he modernized procurement processes and technology and increased contract awards to small, diverse, and local businesses. Michael received his B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley, and his J.D. from St. John's University School of Law.

Dan Symon is the former New York City Chief Procurement Officer, leading the overhaul and digital transformation of procurement operations encompassing \$20B in annual spend, 6,000 procurement staff, and 17,000 prospective and active vendors. Dan has spent the last 20+ years delivering demonstrable results in state and local government workstreams, including procurement and contract management, supply chain, human services policy, nonprofit management, capacity building, and external relations.