2022

Year in Review
Hope in the Details
A Reflection on 2022 from Katy Knight, Executive Director

As we contemplate the events of the past year and anticipate what’s to come in 2023, I am once again privileged to be in the position to share my thoughts and reflections on where we find ourselves today — on the heels of a pandemic that transformed all aspects of society, in the midst of rising political polarization and immense generational shifts, and on the eve of a potential recession.

Despite this, I believe there’s reason for hope following our recent midterm elections — especially when you consider the details: Across major races, the political landscape looks much the same, but it’s encouraging that some of the worst case scenarios we feared for democracy did not come to fruition. Even more hopeful is the historic victories of diverse candidates throughout the country, including the election of our nation’s first openly lesbian governor, the first Gen-Z member of Congress, and Maryland’s first Black governor. These outcomes, as well as the promising results of local elections and crucial down ballot initiatives, already have in place with innovative and out-of-the-box ideas that spur greater opportunity for all.

That is why we’ve expanded our portfolio over the last year even further beyond traditional silos to focus on catalyzing systems-level change throughout and across our interest areas.

We’ve extended our understanding of schools to include much more than the classrooms in which learning takes place. Grounded by our latest whitepaper, we’ve laid out a vision of our education systems as vital pieces of community infrastructure with paths forward for how both schools and their communities can be strengthened in tandem. We seek to actualize this work by continuing to partner with grantees designing holistic ways to improve outcomes for all students, modernize curriculum, and support educators — all the while continuing our focus on future-forward skills like data science that play a critical role in student success. Our partners, such as Building 21, CSforALL, and the Stanford d.school are pioneering approaches to meet the rapidly evolving needs of young people in our education systems today and for the future.

We’ve introduced a refreshed workforce strategy centered around creating a more equitable innovation economy. Recognizing that not all individuals have equal access to the tools, resources, and mentorship that make innovation possible, we are committed to making investments that bring more diversity into high-growth and transformative industries. This is already underway through our longstanding partnership with Pursuit, which has expanded its reach in New York City to help more people access crucial job training and career pipelines. It also includes new investments in organizations working to remove the many barriers to inclusive wealth creation, capital markets, and entrepreneurship, such as ICA Fund. Moving forward, we’ll continue to aim to strengthen the connections between traditional education and workforce training, while also exploring ways to bring inclusive economic development to more communities across the country.

We’ve deepened our commitment to grantees pioneering a multidimensional approach to much-needed infrastructure solutions. And with technology’s role in our world continuing to expand, we’ve shaped much of this work around the growing field of Public Interest Technology, which aims to ensure all people have equal access to and are able to benefit from digital technologies, which we believe are the infrastructure of tomorrow. Our incredible partners in the space span the range of interventions that are needed to build this ecosystem — from working on capacity-building and governance like TechCongress and the Day One Project, to building alternative digital and data platforms like Mozilla’s Data Futures Lab and New Public, and beyond.

More broadly, we continue to place our grantees at the heart of everything we do. And while we have long based our grantmaking around the potential of people and ideas, this year we began seedng a cross-portfolio and place-based investment strategy starting in Atlanta that we are excited to grow in the months ahead. We also introduced responsive grants, which were rapidly deployed to address especially timely and pertinent issues affecting our grantee communities — such as the Sჯ0K in digital infrastructure grants we awarded this June in NYC following Mayor Adams’ cancellation of the NYC Internet Master plan.

What’s more, we invested further in our feedback capabilities. This past March, we ventured to our first in-person gathering since the pandemic to meet with other feedback leaders and discuss ways to incorporate more voices into both nonprofit and philanthropic work. We also shared our grantee-centric practices at conferences around the country and are in the process of planning a second feedback training for our partners to help them incorporate lived experience alongside more traditional practices like monitoring and evaluation.

As a result, we saw the deepening of our core equity practices, including co-authored grant recommendations, prioritizing general operating support, and offering various options for reporting. We continued to invest in diverse grantees, more than half of which are led by women and one-fourth of which are led by people of color. We also ground our giving on the basis of ideas and potential, rather than just age or experience, and are proud to share that our funding this year was broadly distributed between early stage (0-5 yrs), growing (5-10 yrs), and established organizations (10+ yrs).

While there is much to be proud of, there’s just as much work that still needs to be done. Our schools face catastrophic teacher shortages. A potential recession threatens our workforce. The rapid progression of climate change jeopardizes the infrastructure we all rely on. Democracy is still very much in peril. Our work continues to be more urgent than ever, but there do exist bright moments of hope, and we draw strength from our grantees and partners that exemplify that hope in action. Let’s use these instances as momentum to keep building the world we all deserve in the year to come.

As always, thank you for your support and I look forward to our continued collaboration in 2023.

Best,

[Signature]
Philanthropy has shaped educational change for centuries, for better and sometimes for worse. Our latest whitepaper, Schools as Community Infrastructure, lays out a vision of schools as more than buildings, but as vital and vibrant pieces of public infrastructure. They bring holistic value in the form of physical environments, people and relationships, and digital enablement, which includes both skills like computer and data science as well as the technology systems that facilitate teaching and learning. The implications for how we might then design and support this infrastructure drives our grant investments. Our grantees are thinking beyond traditional silos, scaling what works, and inventing new ways to serve students and communities - now and in the future.
Summary
Data Science for Everyone (DS4E) is assembling a broad and diverse coalition that is advocating for the incorporation of data science as a key component of K-12 education. The ability to collect, analyze, and interpret data—and to devise solutions that respond to data—will help students enter the high-paying careers of the future. Equally important, data science skills are crucial for developing equitable and engaged communities.

Our Partnership
Building on our partnerships with organizations that promote computational thinking in K-12 education, we’re working with DS4E to raise the profile of data literacy as a critical ingredient in creating engaged citizens, career-ready graduates, and solution-oriented communities. Our partnership with DS4E reflects our commitment to equity; both DS4E and its coalition members are committed to ensure that all students in all communities have equal access to future-resilient skills, and are making data literacy skills a cornerstone of their work.

Beyond equal access, the DS4E team is deeply focused on ensuring participation in technology education spans student identity, background, and geography, and prioritizes working with existing education stakeholders to integrate data science in existing student pathways.

I’ve been teaching math for 27 years, and I see the importance of data science. It is arguably more relevant than the material I teach in my Pre-Calculus and Calculus courses. [DS4E] has convinced me of the importance and relevance of data science. - DS4E Teacher
**Summary**

eLab at Columbia University is a program devoted to supporting edtech founders and leaders from around the world looking to reframe, rethink, and reinvent education with a collective mission to reduce the education inequality gap. eLab’s twelve-week online fellowship supports cohorts of 25 fellows each to collectively learn tools and tactics in leadership, culture-building, employee recruitment, retention and development, and making good decisions in times of uncertainty. Since its inception in 2020 during the early days of the pandemic, eLab has served 120 fellows from 11 countries.

**The Path Ahead**
eLab has reached 120 entrepreneurs to date and will expand in 2023 to reach another 75 – but with an eye towards not just scale but community building among current fellows. eLab held its first ever in-person ‘Summit’ in October 2022 where 42 fellows spent three days getting to know and learning from each other and meeting with experts in the field – among them Venture Capitalists Fred Wison and Matt Greenfield, and a dialogue with Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz. In addition, eLab is refining its model and programming as it conducts research to understand what elements of the program are impactful for participants and the larger education and workforce ecosystems, and in what ways. As the landscape of teaching and learning technologies continues to evolve, we’re excited to breed more entrepreneurs who center both equity and user experience as core to their products.

**Our Partnership**

Our work with the eLab at Columbia University offers an opportunity to build connections between our grantees and other education entrepreneurs around the world. Our two-directional relationship with the eLab also allows us to tap fellowship participants to understand emerging practices and equitable approaches to workforce and learning infrastructure that, in turn, inform our own thinking and grantmaking strategy. We are also supporting eLab’s efforts to collect and analyze data and conduct interviews to understand the impact of the eLab fellowship.

“It is rare as a founder to have a group of people who are all working on similar missions. Further, it’s great to have prescribed time every month not to think about your to-do list, but to listen to other people who have a slightly different perspective to solving a problem.” - eLab Fellow

**KEY FACTS**

- **Grantee Name**: Columbia University eLab
- **Focus Area**: Learning
- **Reach**: Global

**Grantee Name**

Columbia University eLab

**Focus Area**

Learning

**Reach**

Global
Summary
Passport Atlanta empowers young people in Atlanta to explore the rich landmarks, cultural venues, and other spaces that have historically been off-limits to them or of which they might not have been previously aware. Through an app that offers curated journeys and rewards engagement, Passport Atlanta is giving students access to multiple dimensions of their city—and giving them inspiration for the future.

Our Partnership
Our partnership with Passport Atlanta is built on a shared belief in the power of employing a holistic lens to education and learning that leverages the whole of community as its classroom. Passport Atlanta employs all three dimensions of infrastructure that our multidimensional framework is built on: physical (through its place-based approach to learning and exploration), digital (through its app), and social (through its partnerships in the community and engagement of students).

The Path Ahead
By exposing students in Atlanta to the richness of their city’s history, culture, and physical spaces, Passport Atlanta has the potential to give young people opportunities to see themselves as part of a larger community—and to empower them to pursue meaningful opportunities as members of that community. We are working with Passport Atlanta to leverage existing relationships and build new partnerships with schools, cultural institutions, government, companies, and other groups to further the organization’s reach and impact. We also expect that this work will influence communities outside of Atlanta as the Passport Atlanta model is explored in other cities across the country.

“Passport Atlanta welcomed us in when COVID and social injustices shut us out—inviting us into a world of opportunities around the city. This technology empowers us to play, experience, be rewarded, and ultimately achieve new levels in our life.” - Kalid Truitt, Passport Student Intern and Beta Tester
Innovation – whether it is technologically or organizationally driven – can happen anywhere, in any industry, region, or community. However, the conditions that support innovation are not accessible to everyone. We’ve introduced a refreshed strategy that addresses this reality by fostering an “Equitable Innovation Economy” - one that sets the stage for innovation to occur and brings more people into high-growth industries. Our grantees explore three pillars that we believe can lead to more equitable participation and distributed growth: community-driven innovation, spurred on by the sustainable financing of lifelong skilling and access to empowering social connections.
A social-impact consulting group, Grove draws on its teams of experienced social entrepreneurs to help CEOs accelerate their sector-changing ideas. Launched in 2021, Grove is pioneering a new investment, workforce development, community revitalization, and wealth generation strategy that provides capital, expertise, and guidance to minority-owned and allied companies.

Our Partnership
Grove is developing relationships between leading minority developers, social innovators, institutional leaders, researchers, community members, educators, and others who contribute to a multidimensional understanding of infrastructure. Our partnership will enable Grove to develop the social infrastructure necessary for the success of its real estate development ecosystem approach. Grove’s initial analysis and investments focus on supporting Black-owned real estate in order to spur community-led development that recognizes the needs and untapped potential of systematically excluded groups. Ultimately, this investment in community ecosystems aims to create a more equitable economy, and more inclusive wealth creation opportunities for all members of those communities.

The Path Ahead
Grove’s work to elevate Black-owned real estate investments as a form of community building serves as a model for communities across the country to find more value in place. As its programming grows, so do its plans to share what it’s learning and offer opportunities for other stakeholders to engage. In 2023, it plans to release a directory of Black-and Hispanic-owned real-estate companies alongside its partner ICIC so that developers, buyers, and sellers can contribute to wealth generation among historically excluded groups in their own communities.

In 2023, Grove is looking forward to using our research and capacity building strategies to remove barriers to Black and brown wealth generation in the real estate development space.

- Derwin Sisnett, Lead Partner, Grove Impact
Summary
The Knowledge House (TKH) provides training in technology and workplace skills to young people from low-income communities in the Bronx, Atlanta, Newark, and Los Angeles. Key to their model is their focus on relationships, facilitating connections between their young people and the tech sector in their communities. Through these programs, TKH is both empowering youth and transforming local economies.

Our Partnership
Our support of TKH dates back to 2016, when they were a young organization responding to high unemployment in the Bronx. Since then, they've launched and scaled a number of programs that are proving the model of securing high-paying careers through alternatives to college, most notably the Karim Kharbouch Coding Fellowship and the Innovation Fellowship. Our most recent round of funding will help them take their model to Atlanta, and expand pathways for economic mobility.

The Path Ahead
Atlanta is a site of emerging tech sector growth. It’s crucial that legacy communities be uplifted by this growth, rather than displaced or further marginalized by it. TKH offers a pathway for young people to contribute to and shape this burgeoning tech community in equitable ways that prioritize the voices, health, and talents of the local community. Over time, this work has the potential to lower unemployment, diversify the tech workplace, build connections between business and local communities, and fundamentally reshape educational and social pathways to tech sector jobs.

“TKH opened me up to a world that I didn’t think was possible without going to college first.”
- Kamili Saint-leger, Snap Lens Academy Scholar at Snap Inc.
Summary
The Black River Innovation Campus (BRIC) provides state-of-the-art space, high-speed internet, classes, and other resources for digital and technology entrepreneurs and small businesses in and around Springfield, Vermont. BRIC offers a model for how investments in local infrastructure can help eliminate the barriers of entry for digital and technology entrepreneurs, and propel regional economic growth in rural areas.

Our Partnership
BRIC was among the first rural projects nationwide to receive Economic Development Administration (EDA) i6 funding in 2016 in order to build a digital economy ecosystem hub and startup incubation/acceleration program. Following our funding, it became one of the first to receive follow-on funding EDA funding for their Venture Challenge Scale, which will expand its ability to support early and growth stage technology companies in rural communities. The startups will receive training, connections to other innovation resources from around the country including those at Dartmouth College, and mentorship and support from LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman of Greylock Partners.

The Path Ahead
In addition to growing its on-campus offerings, BRIC is working with employers to provide brick-and-mortar space, digital infrastructure, and living space to remote employees based in Springfield, Vermont. This cross-sector approach is elevating BRIC as an important player in the overall innovation ecosystem, building partnerships with other types of institutions, including local school systems. As part of this work, BRIC will also draw on its own community and organizational experiences to advise other towns in rural areas to catalyze an emerging Rural Innovation Network.

“BRIC is excited to expand its entrepreneurship incubator in ‘23 so that it focuses on cultivating the ecosystem of support needed for rural innovation to thrive. This will include not only world-class curriculums developed with partner organization experts in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity, but a "lifestyle" curriculum that provides experiential learning and engagement with the rural Vermont way of life in order to help startups explore how they can benefit from living, working, and growing within the region.” - Marguerite Dibble, BRIC Executive Director
Strong social, physical, and digital infrastructure is a prerequisite for cultivating an engaged, resilient and equitable society. However, our definition of infrastructure is ever-evolving. This year, we’ve doubled down on our work to ensure that the technologies and digital systems poised to become the infrastructure of tomorrow are oriented in the public interest. As a leader in the growing field of public interest technology, we’ve worked with both public and private sector partners who seek to design and steward technology in ways that are not only innovative, but equitable, inclusive, and accountable to society.
Summary
The nonprofit Mozilla fights for a healthy internet—one where Big Tech is held accountable and individuals have real agency online. Mozilla’s Data Futures Lab is a space where builders and researchers are coming together to rethink our data economy for public benefit through new platform prototypes, infrastructure, convenings, and research.

Our Partnership
Our partnership with the Data Futures Lab harnesses the power of a holistic, multidimensional lens to build digital infrastructure that responds to the needs of communities and that is not dictated by the demand for profit. In focusing on the nascent field of data stewardship, the Data Futures Lab hopes to inspire new prototypes and models for enacting better and more equitable models of data stewardship, with community and individual oversight of their own data as key elements. Furthermore, the lab plans to engage new networks by sharing learnings about how these models work, where there is room for growth, and in what ways with communities implementing their own data stewardship plans.

The Path Ahead
As the Data Futures Lab moves into the next stage of its growth, it will strive to serve as a bedrock of support and community for innovators in the data governance space - all while reframing the conversation about ethics and financing in data-driven business models. This work will be underpinned by a new cohort of projects that are building technology platforms that mobilize communities to contribute their data for a shared benefit across domains - health, transportation, labor rights, gig-work, research, consumer advocacy, and beyond. Together these efforts hope to bring about a new understanding of what role data should play in society, and who should benefit from that data.

“Mozilla Foundation has been at the forefront of convening thought leaders and organizations around disrupting the extractive data economy – already a unique focus within the funding space. With a particular lens on data stewardship, our time in the cohort has amplified our work as a new model for data stewardship and provided us a platform with a robust international audience for our work.” - Chelsea Eversmann, PLACE and Data Futures Lab Cohort Member 2022
Summary
TechCongress places technologists as fellows in Congressional offices on both sides of the aisle in order to augment technical capacity and understanding. In doing so, TechCongress is filling a knowledge gap by giving federal lawmakers the opportunity to leverage fellows’ technical expertise in order to craft more responsive and impactful tech policies. It is also diversifying Congressional offices by recruiting many fellows of backgrounds that are underrepresented in the halls of Capitol Hill.

Our Partnership
Technology touches every issue before Congress and is reshaping society in fundamental ways. Yet, of the 3,500 legislative staff on Capitol Hill, fewer than 20 have any technical training or experience. TechCongress not only provides this much-needed capacity, but also demonstrates the value of having in-house technical expertise in the institution. Fellows have been involved in many high-profile tech cases, from managing the Senate Commerce Committee’s investigation into the revelations by Facebook Whistleblower Frances Haugen to organizing Congress’ first hearing into facial recognition technology. Furthermore, the program incentivizes Congress to invest in and build its own technical capacity; more than a third of Fellows have received full-time staff positions after the end of the one-year fellowship program despite limited budgets for congressional offices.

The Path Ahead
The amount of interest in the program from fellows and Members of Congress has increased each year since its founding. As such, TechCongress will expand the program to serve more Congressional offices and to provide more opportunities to technologists who want to be part of federal policymaking for both fixed and more permanent terms. It is our shared hope that the summation of these efforts will lead to the creation and regulation of technology in the public interest and in service of all people.
Summary
New Bedford Research and Robotics (NBRR) is helping to revitalize the port city of New Bedford, Massachusetts by making cutting-edge technologies accessible to local companies, entrepreneurs, universities, and community organizations. NBRR operates in a variety of sectors, including robotics, clean energy, data science, and AI and machine learning. By extending opportunities for learning, research and development in these areas, NBRR is empowering the residents of New Bedford to craft their own futures and power the local economy.

Our Partnership
Our partnership with NBRR is built on a shared belief that local communities should be given the resources and learning opportunities that will allow them to chart their own futures. NBRR is an excellent example of what it looks like to simultaneously invest in physical, social, and digital infrastructure in order to harness the full potential of both people and place. This holistic approach also includes engaging many institutions and stakeholders in the community in co-creating equitable and innovative programs and products.

The Path Ahead
NBRR’s long-term ambitions are to spur economic recovery across the community of New Bedford, a once thriving industrial port city that has since seen economic decline. In the coming year, it plans to engage more partner institutions—including startups, entrepreneurs, universities, and corporations—in order to develop an ecosystem of innovation and economic development. NBRR sees technological access as a tool for equitable growth in New Bedford—and a model for economic growth in other communities across the country.

“The New Bedford Economic Development Council (NBEDC) is deeply focused on the connections between locally-driven entrepreneurship, sustainable development and investment, and the cultural fabric of our community. NBRR is building the bridges of opportunity and innovation through frontier technologies such as industrial robotics. NBRR’s focus on digital manufacturing capabilities helps draw new business to our city, while educating a tech-capable workforce that can support those businesses.” - Derek Santos, executive director, NBEDC
As an organization striving to incorporate equity across our work, grantees and the people they serve are at the heart of what we do. This year saw the continuation of our core equity practices, including co-authored grant recommendations, general operating support, and multiple options for reporting. This year, we’ve also introduced responsive grants, which were rapidly deployed to address especially timely and pertinent issues that affect our grantee communities. We’re also a part of funder collaborations across all of our interest areas, recognizing that we can go further together.
The Situation
The New York City Internet Master Plan was designed to close gaps in broadband service and increase internet access in neighborhoods across the five boroughs. When Mayor Eric Adams decided to pause the rollout of this plan, Siegel stepped in to deliver $50,000 in responsive grants to local organizations and institutions working hard to close the digital divide, and to continue the critical work of extending the reach of high-speed, reliable internet access in all parts of New York City.

The Need
High speed internet access is a basic part of our modern multidimensional infrastructure, and is as fundamental to effective participation in modern life as any other traditional utility. It’s crucial to providing education services, access to vital community health and disaster preparedness resources, and makes the contemporary workplace navigable for more people. The digital divide is highly intersectional with a range of other issues that primarily affect communities that are already under-resourced, and requires a substantially more strategic response than our leaders are providing.

Our Response
The Adams administration’s decision to cancel the roll out of the Internet Master Plan deprived New Yorkers with the greatest need of a permanent solution for internet access at a critical juncture. Siegel’s rapid response community grants served a dual purpose: to help close New York City’s widening digital divide, and to increase pressure on leaders and policymakers to take lasting, meaningful action. Our contributions to organizations and libraries in communities across the five boroughs will help more New Yorkers engage in a world that relies heavily on internet-enabled programs and services - but until government leaders decide to take meaningful action, substantial barriers to real impact will remain.

“...with people needing internet access to attend school, go to work, be seen by a doctor via telehealth and even sign up for vaccines needed to curb the pandemic’s spread...the internet [has become] much more than a space for social communication and entertainment. It is a lifeline for millions of New Yorkers.”
- New York Nonprofit Media
Funder Collaboratives

As we continue to grapple with a pandemic and an economic recession, we believe collective investment is needed now more than ever. We do not operate in a vacuum; all of our work happens inside ecosystems and sectors with a multitude of stakeholders and incentives. As a member of these systems, we aspire to be productive collaborators both within and across sectors in order to advance the goals that we and our partners collectively share. Our focus on collaboration and field-building has led us to actively participate in a number of efforts meant to shape the future of philanthropy.

1. The Public Interest Technology University Network is a partnership of 48 colleges and universities dedicated to building the field of public interest technology through curriculum development, faculty research opportunities, and experiential learning programs, in order to inspire a new generation of civic-minded technologists and policy leaders. PIT-UN’s focus on the next generation of changemakers seeks to ensure that products and policies are oriented for public good.

2. The Public Interest Technology Infrastructure Fund is a funder initiative committed to bolstering capacity of the field to develop and deploy technology as a force for public good. Since its inception in 2021, the Fund has invested over $14 million in initiatives that shift mindsets, address inequality in the tech industry, build government capacity to better use and regulate tech, support pathways and advancement of diverse and interdisciplinary tech talent, mobilize resources, and much more.

3. The New York City Workforce Funders Collaborative promotes robust, coherent, and effective workforce development systems that enable all New Yorkers to engage in high quality work. Over its 20-year history, it has been a leader in addressing systems-level issues, building an evidence-base for increased public workforce investment, testing new approaches, and sustaining large-scale initiatives - all in partnership with key intermediaries and city government agencies.

4. The Families and Workers Fund is a collaborative partnership of more than twenty donors focused on building a future in which everyone has economic security, opportunity, and mobility – especially those who have been most locked out of the country’s prosperity. The fund seeks to leverage billions in new federal and employer investments for career advancement towards economic security, and to repair and reimagine the public benefits system so that it better enables families to stay aloft and recover from crises.

5. Robin Hood Learning + Tech Fund is a $40 million dollar initiative to unlock the potential of technology to transform learning and advance achievement for low-income students across New York City. Robin Hood, Overdeck Family Foundation, and Siegel Family Endowment established the Fund to shift teaching and learning so all students are prepared to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

6. Future of Learning and School Design Funder Group is a generative space for funders to push one another to consider the role philanthropy can and should play in rethinking school design in the wake of the pandemic and rising racial justice movements. Funder members support and encourage one another to incorporate what we’ve learned, confront the scale of the challenge, and more equitably deliver on our aspirations.

7. The Feedback Incentives Learning Group is a group of funders and philanthropy support organizations dedicated to exploring ways to support nonprofits and motivate foundations to listen to and act on feedback from those at the heart of their work. At the heart of the learning group is the hypothesis that when stronger rewards for organizations that listen well are in place, thousands more nonprofits and funders will improve how they listen and respond to the people they serve.
At Siegel, we recognize that the development and deployment of technology is shaped by public policy, and this year we have made a significant commitment to organizations that are thinking about the impact of technology on society and how public policy can better shape our future. In line with our research approach, we are funding organizations that will not only create knowledge around tech policy, but also those that translate research for decision makers and apply novel insights to develop policy options. By bringing together networks of researchers and policymakers, we hope to create the conditions for more informed policies. To further this work, we have created a cohort of 14 Siegel Research Fellows – consisting of early-career researchers from these institutions and others – to make those connections more concrete.
Summary
Aspen Digital is a program of the Aspen Institute that masterfully harnesses the power of convening to create human solutions to digital challenges and drive positive change. Aspen Digital empowers decisionmakers, civic organizations, companies and the public to spur policy-making and systems change across global issues of cybersecurity, the information ecosystem, emerging technology, the industry talent pipeline, tech and communications policy, and innovation.

Our Partnership
Our partnership is born out of our shared approach to multidimensional infrastructure. This year, Aspen Digital convened top decision-makers around key infrastructure issues, conducted landscape research, facilitated coordinated action among stakeholders, and published reports and action guides for the field. These activities have not only served to surface the signals out of much noise, but to also further the broader work of creating cross-sector communities of practice and cross-silo collaboration within the vast field of infrastructure.

The Path Ahead
The future of our work will turn to nascent technologies, as we’ve provided seed funding for Aspen Digital’s Emerging Technologies Program, which will include a Siegel Research Fellow. In the year ahead, Aspen will launch a series of webinars, primers, and “deeper dives” designed to equip key stakeholders with the conceptual knowledge to engage in broader dialogue about the development and deployment of cutting-edge technologies. All people should have the ability to participate meaningfully in the debates and design of policies around emerging technologies. It is our shared aspiration that the Emerging Technologies Program will help establish and expand this more healthy, informed and solutions-oriented discourse.

“At Aspen Digital we strive to be the bridge among key stakeholders on issues of tech and media, and how they affect communities, societies, and democracy. As new technologies come online, it’s especially important that policymakers in both the private and public sector are informed on the benefits and risks and equipped with the knowledge to solve for both.”

Vivian Schiller, Executive Director, Aspen Digital
Summary
Data & Society is a nonprofit research organization that studies the social implications of data-centric technologies and automation, with a particular focus on race and equity. Blending academic rigor with creative outreach since 2014, Data & Society has been a leader in thoughtfully producing original research and programming on topics ranging from AI and automation, to the impact of technology on labor and health, to building trust and safety online.

Our Partnership
Data & Society stands out in its ability to reach far beyond the metaphorical walls of its research center to bring together diverse and divergent voices, build coalitions, elevate untold stories and unexplored issues, and explore tactics to advance public understanding of key technology topics. Through regular publications, podcasts, and events, Data & Society has cultivated more inclusive and nuanced conversations within academia, government, and industry. Our work this year includes support for three faculty fellows focused specifically on intersections of race and technology, as well as a postdoctoral Siegel Research Fellow - all of whom play an important role in their impressive research network.

The Path Ahead
Following the building of their policy engagement team in 2021, Data & Society has been applying its growing body of research to inform emerging technology policy with an equity lens. Their newly released three year strategy includes heightened focus on algorithmic accountability, power and control in public sector data, and reframing society’s very relationship to technology - all alongside their enduring commitment to equity. We are also supporting a Siegel Research Fellow within the “AI on the Ground” Initiative whose research lies at the intersection of data infrastructures, global development, and public policy.
Summary
NYU’s Center for Social Media and Politics (CSMaP) works to understand politics, inform public policy, and strengthen democracy in the digital age. It is one of the leading academic research institutes studying how the ever-shifting online environment of social media and other digital technologies impacts politics, policy, and democracy.

Our Partnership
When we supported the Center’s initial launch in 2019, we could not have anticipated the urgency of the need to combat the escalating misinformation that emerged during the pandemic and other cascading crises. Yet, CSMaP’s research into social media and disinformation stood ready to respond to the challenge, unpacking complex trends in online and social behavior, publish- ing timely and straightforward articles, and gathering experts from all over the world to make sense of the growing amount of data. It continues to expand our knowledge about what it takes to build a healthy information ecosystem, and what effect certain interventions—such as fact checking approaches—might have to steer us on the right path.

The Path Ahead
With years of high-impact research under its belt, CSMaP now turns to building up its strategic communications muscle, in particular prioritizing engagement with the DC think tanks and policymakers working to shape the future of technology policy. This work is powered by their deep bench of computational social scientists, including a Siegel Research Fellow who is exploring substantive issues on political communication and political behavior. Finally, CSMaP will be working closely with members of our team to host the inaugural convening of Siegel Research Fellows in the new year.

“To solve the urgent democratic challenges introduced by our online environment, we must first have a deep and nuanced understanding of their impacts.”

– Jonathan Nagler & Joshua A. Tucker, Co-Directors, NYU’s Center for Social Media and Politics
Our 2022 Grantee Partners
About Siegel Family Endowment

We are a foundation focused on understanding and shaping the impact of technology on society.

Siegel Family Endowment employs an inquiry-driven approach to grant making that is informed by the scientific method and predicated on the belief that philanthropy is uniquely positioned to address some of the most pressing and complex issues facing society today. Our grant making strategy positions us to be society’s risk capital. We support high quality work that will help us derive insights to timely questions and has high potential for future scale. Our focus is on organizations doing work at the intersection of learning, workforce, and infrastructure. We aim to help build a world in which all people have the tools, skills, and context necessary to engage meaningfully in a rapidly changing society. Siegel Family Endowment was founded in 2011 by David M. Siegel, co-founder and co-chairman of financial sciences company Two Sigma.