NYU

CAPSTONE

2025–26



NYU | WAGNER

CAPSTONE

PROJECT SUMMARIES

2025–2026

LEARNING IN ACTION

PUBLIC SERVICE IS THE

HIGHEST GOOD,

AND WHEN DONE

HONORABLY AND WELL,

THE MOST REWARDING.

ROBERT F. WAGNER,
MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY
1953-1965

ABOUT CAPSTONE

Capstone, in architecture, is the crowning piece of an arch, the center stone that holds the arch together, giving it shape and strength. Similarly, NYU Wagner's Capstone Program provides students with the centerpiece of their graduate education where they turn their classroom learning into practice. Capstone teams spend an academic year addressing challenges and identifying opportunities for clients, or conducting research on a pressing social question—in a complex and real-world environment. Students must quickly become familiar with an issue or content area; demonstrate process skills such as project management and teamwork; and effectively gather, analyze, and present data.

The summaries in this booklet represent the 69 Capstone projects from the 2025-2026 academic year, conducted by 278 Wagner graduate students.

The Capstone Program was originally funded with a generous grant from the Ford Foundation in 1995 and subsequently received financial support from FJC: A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds. Since the program's inception, more than 6,800 students have completed over 1,500 projects for more than 1,000 organizations.

BECOME A CAPSTONE CLIENT

Organizations—from the public, nonprofit, or private sector—interested in being a Capstone client should visit **wagner.nyu.edu/capstone/clients** for more information.

ABOUT NYU WAGNER

NYU Wagner's mission is to empower public service leaders to create and to implement innovative policies with sustainable impacts on the public good. Our faculty, through their research, teaching, and public service, transform approaches to resolving complex public interest problems that defy easy solutions. Our students develop interdisciplinary analytical and managerial knowledge and skills as part of an active and inclusive community dedicated to serving the public interest efficiently and equitably.

Since 1938, NYU Wagner has been educating the world's future public service leaders. We offer a Master of Public Administration in Public & Nonprofit Management & Policy, Master of Public Administration in Health Policy & Management, Master of Urban Planning, Master of Health Administration, Master of Science in Public Policy, Master of Science in Health Law and Strategy, Executive Master of Public Administration, and PhD in Public Administration.

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ASSOCIATION FOR FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS

RECRUITING, ENGAGING, AND RETAINING EARLY-CAREER MEMBERS AT AFP

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The Association for Financial Professionals (AFP) is a leading membership organization that provides tools and resources to support the career development of finance professionals worldwide. This work is significant because AFP defines credentialing standards and creates pathways for career advancement within the profession. The Capstone team evaluated strategies to better engage early-career professionals through a three-stage framework: communicating mission and vision, joining the organization, and staying in the organization. The team analyzed the onboarding and membership experience, conducted cross-organizational benchmarking, facilitated a focus group with financial professionals, interviewed organizational staff, and reviewed literature focused on early-career professionals' engagement in a membership association setting. Final recommendations focus on strengthening mission alignment, enhancing inclusion and belonging, and improving tools and strategies for member engagement.

DRAMA CLUB

SETTING THE STAGE FOR DRAMA CLUB'S NEXT ACT

FACULTY:
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Drama Club (DC) is a New York City nonprofit offering improvisational theater programming to court-involved youth in detention centers and community settings, fostering confidence, emotional resilience, empathy, collaboration, and self-expression. Amid a leadership transition after 12 years of founder-led operations, the Capstone team conducted an organizational assessment to prepare DC for a new Executive Director and improve impact measurement. Through stakeholder interviews, staff surveys, and comparative analyses of trauma-informed and correctional arts programs, the team identified gaps in data collection, organizational structure, training, and internal communication. Recommendations provide a roadmap to strengthen core operations, institutionalize performance management, and support sustainable growth and resilient leadership transition.

THE ACTION LAB

RIDGEWOOD RISING: COMMUNITY ARTS & CIVIC HUB ENGAGEMENT

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Meggy Mei

The Action Lab is a social justice strategy center that convenes organizers, artists, and community leaders to advance civic engagement and cultural work. As it prepares to launch a new community center in Ridgewood, Queens, ensuring the space is responsive to local needs is critical to its long-term impact. Our Capstone team was engaged to assess community needs, identify gaps in programming, and develop a strategic roadmap for the center's launch and operations. We conducted a literature review, environmental scan, stakeholder mapping, and in-person outreach with residents and small businesses to inform our analysis. We found strong demand for a centralized, accessible community space, particularly for youth and seniors, as well as a need for culturally responsive, multilingual programming and clear operational systems. We will deliver a final report including a stakeholder map, programming strategies, and operational recommendations to support the creation of a sustainable, community-centered hub.

WELLNESS IN THE SCHOOLS

ENHANCING NYC CULINARY PROGRAMS: MENUS & TRAINING

FACULTY:
Sonia Balaram

TEAM:
Ngoc Nguyen
Kruti Rawal
Joa Rojas

The Capstone team partnered with Wellness in the Schools (WITS) to evaluate and strengthen the Chefs in the Schools (CiTS) program, which promotes scratch cooking and healthy eating in public schools. Access to culturally responsive school meals is critical for student health and engagement. The team conducted a mixed-methods assessment, interviewing chefs and school food managers about kitchen integration, collaboration, and menu adaptation, and reviewed surveys and peer organization practices to identify monitoring and evaluation strategies. Recommendations include strengthening chef-school partnerships, aligning evaluation practices with funding opportunities, and improving data collection to support WITS's long-term sustainability, scalability, and impact in promoting healthy, culturally relevant school meals.

PROJECT SUMMARIES

FINANCE

ARTS FOR LEARNING CONNECTICUT

EVALUATING CORPORATE MARKET EXPANSION FOR ARTS-BASED LEARNING

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Mark Young

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Yixuan Xia

Arts for Learning Connecticut (AFLCT), a nonprofit focused on arts-based experiential education, is exploring expansion into the corporate market. AFLCT engaged the Capstone team to assess the feasibility of this move. To evaluate market interest and adoption conditions, the study combines industry research, company-level analysis, and stakeholder feedback. Findings show that interest varies across companies and is driven more by internal factors—such as openness to arts-based learning, employee engagement priorities, and existing training structures—than by industry. Based on these insights, the team developed target corporate profiles and proposed customized pilot workshops to test delivery, positioning, and pricing. Overall, findings suggest arts-based training is a viable entry point, though further expansion will require targeted positioning and pilot-based validation.

BROADWAY ADVOCACY COALITION

STAGE TO SUPPORT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FUNDRAISING THROUGH DONOR PROFILE AT BAC

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TEAM:
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Junyue Du
Longyu Zhang
Qimai Zhang
Tianyu Zhang

Broadway Advocacy Coalition (BAC) is an arts-based advocacy organization that unites artists and directly impacted advocates to advance justice and systemic change. As BAC continues to expand its programming and impact, strengthening financial sustainability and fundraising effectiveness is critical to supporting its long-term mission. The team conducted an in-depth analysis of multi-year donor data, complemented by internal interviews and benchmarking. Key analyses include retention, annual new donor acquisition, major donor concentration, and gap analysis against strategic targets. It applied donor segmentation and lifecycle modeling to better understand donor attrition patterns and re-engagement opportunities. The recommendations focus on strengthening the link between audience engagement and donor conversion, and building a more structured fundraising system through donor segmentation, a recurring donor strategy, and major donor development. These strategies enable BAC to prioritize high-value and engaged donors, improve retention and recurring giving, and strengthen long-term financial sustainability.

GUIDEHOUSE CONSULTING

U.S. SMALL MANUFACTURING UNDER THE MADE IN AMERICA INITIATIVE

FACULTY:
Chris Good

TEAM:
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Jiaxing Li
Peixin Lin
Yulin Mao

Guidehouse, in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), supports the Made in America Manufacturing Initiative, which aims to strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium-sized manufacturers. These firms play a critical role in domestic production, regional employment, and supply chain resilience, but face structural barriers that limit their ability to scale and modernize. The Capstone team analyzed key challenges, including workforce gaps, limited access to capital, and supply chain constraints, using market research, industry data analysis, and policy review. Based on this work, the team developed recommendations focused on workforce development, improved capital access mechanisms, and stronger ecosystem coordination to support sustainable growth.

INCLUSIV

PRICING AND REVENUE STRATEGY FOR INCLUSIV'S FIDAP PLATFORM

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Inclusiv supports community development credit unions and promotes financial inclusion nationwide, and its Financial Inclusion Data Analytics Platform (FIDAP) enables credit unions to measure impact, generate compliance reports, and analyze member data. As the platform expands, identifying a sustainable revenue strategy while maintaining accessibility is critical. The Capstone team evaluated FIDAP's value proposition, competitive landscape, and pricing potential through market research, user segmentation analysis, and financial modeling to assess willingness to pay and adoption scenarios. Final recommendations include a tiered pricing framework and strategic guidance to support long-term financial sustainability and broader platform adoption.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY STABILIZATION TRUST

VACANT TO VIBRANT: A FRAMEWORK FOR AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

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The National Community Stabilization Trust focuses on rehabilitating vacant and distressed properties to expand affordable homeownership opportunities, which are essential for neighborhood stability, wealth-building, and advancing racial equity. The Capstone team was tasked with developing a sample Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) for the proposed Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (NHIA) for use by state Housing Finance Agencies. To do so, the team analyzed existing Low-Income Housing Tax Credit programs, reviewed state-level housing initiatives, and conducted a New York State housing needs assessment. The final framework provides practical recommendations to support effective, scalable implementation of the NHIA.

REBUILD BY DESIGN

REIMAGINING CLIMATE FINANCE: TARGETED PATHWAYS FOR RESILIENCE

FACULTY:
Mark Young

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Qinan Zhang

New York State faces increasing climate risks while lacking stable, dedicated funding for long-term resilience investments, a challenge compounded by uncertainty in federal support. Commissioned by Rebuild by Design, this project explored how the state can generate sustainable climate funding without relying on broad-based tax increases. The analysis focused on sectors with the highest environmental impact, including luxury transportation and energy-intensive industries, using sector screening and revenue modeling to identify funding mechanisms aligned with emissions intensity and economic activity. The findings demonstrate that targeted approaches can generate meaningful revenue while maintaining equity and political feasibility, offering a practical framework for closing the state's climate funding gap.

RESTORE NYC

DESIGNING A DYNAMIC BUDGETING & SCENARIO PLANNING TOOL

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Victoria Frost Boyd
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Vivien Diao
Xiaohan Zhang

Restore NYC is a nonprofit providing survivor-centered, trauma-informed services for survivors of human trafficking, including safe housing, economic empowerment, and case management. As the organization has grown and funding streams have become more complex, it has identified a need to strengthen its financial planning tools and processes. The Capstone team was tasked with designing a more agile, integrated forecasting tool to support multi-scenario planning in a dynamic funding environment. The team analyzed Restore's existing budgeting system, mapped data flows, researched nonprofit financial modeling best practices, and developed a streamlined Excel-based model with structured input, calculation, and output layers. Designed with practical constraints in mind—including coordination across Google Sheets and Excel and limited NetSuite capabilities—the model centralizes inputs, automates key calculations, incorporates scenario planning, and includes built-in error checks. These enhancements enable faster, more accurate reforecasting, reduce manual errors, and support modeling multiple financial scenarios for better decision-making.

START EARLY

A MULTI-YEAR STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD REVENUE

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Start Early is a nonprofit advancing early childhood education (ECE) through policy, advocacy, and program support, with a focus on expanding access to high-quality early learning for children and families in Chicago. Stable local funding for ECE is increasingly critical as temporary federal relief expires and the city faces a structural budget deficit, creating a growing long-term funding gap. The Capstone team was asked to identify and evaluate feasible local revenue strategies to provide sustainable ECE funding within Chicago's fiscal and political constraints. The team conducted a policy and budget scan, developed a citywide revenue inventory, mapped key stakeholders and power dynamics, and analyzed comparable cases, including Bring Chicago Home, Seattle's housing levy, Philadelphia's soda tax, and Boston's PILOT program.

URBAN RESOURCE INSTITUTE

IMPROVING POST-AWARD GRANT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

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Mark Young

TEAM:

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Zhixuan Wu
Yixue Xia
Jinyi Yan

Urban Resource Institute (URI) is a New York City nonprofit providing shelter, housing, legal services, counseling, and other support to survivors of domestic violence, homelessness, and other trauma. As URI has expanded, its post-award grant management processes have remained fragmented across departments, limiting consistency in documentation, coordination, and compliance. URI engaged the Capstone team to assess current practices and develop a more standardized, sustainable approach to post-award grant management. The team reviewed internal documents and workflows, interviewed staff across departments, and researched peer nonprofit practices. Based on these findings, the team developed recommendations to improve coordination, clarify workflow ownership, and create more consistent systems. Final deliverables include a Grants Management Process Manual, workflow diagrams, templates, and a report with recommendations.

VERMONT MUNICIPAL BOND BANK

VERMONT BOND BANK INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

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The Vermont Bond Bank (VTBB) provides long-term financing to Vermont municipalities and other governmental units, supporting critical infrastructure and public projects across a largely rural state where local financing capacity shapes investment outcomes. The Capstone team analyzed VTBB's historical lending data, FY2022 U.S. Census capital outlay data, and FY2022–FY2024 materials from comparable bond banks to assess how infrastructure investment has been distributed across project types, time periods, and borrower groups, and to benchmark Vermont against national peers. Initial findings suggest VTBB lending has been concentrated in water and facilities, while the state falls below the national median in areas such as education and utilities. The final recommendations provide a strategy to enhance VTBB's future financing approach, strengthen equity across sectors, and better align lending with Vermont's long-term infrastructure priorities.

PROJECT SUMMARIES

POLICY

CITYMEALS ON WHEELS

BEYOND THE WEEKENDS: CHARTING CMOW'S NEXT CHAPTER

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Citymeals on Wheels (CMOW) is a New York City nonprofit with a 40-year history of providing weekend and holiday meals to homebound older adults, supplementing weekday meals delivered by other community organizations. Recently, CMOW developed pilot meal packages to address hunger more systematically. As the city considers taking over weekend meal delivery and CMOW's municipal contract nears its end, the organization engaged the Capstone team to explore nonprofit operating models and pathways to expand impact while remaining mission-aligned. The team analyzed diverse operational models and benchmarked organizations that had made similar transitions, producing strategic, nuanced recommendations to enhance CMOW's reach, preserve its unique role, and strengthen its position as a leader in eliminating hunger among older New Yorkers.

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE ACCESS IN NEW YORK CITY

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The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) advances equity and inclusion for immigrant communities and multilingual New Yorkers through policy leadership, advocacy, and cross-agency collaboration. With federal priorities shifting and funding declining, MOIA's role is increasingly critical in ensuring equitable access to education, civic participation, and economic opportunity. The Capstone team examined structural tensions between English Language Learning (ELL) and Language Access (LA) initiatives, which are often designed and delivered separately, resulting in fragmented systems that hinder integrated pathways from immediate language support to long-term learning. Using historical review, policy analysis, and stakeholder interviews, the team highlighted the interdependence of ELL and LA and developed a final report that includes actionable policy recommendations and a narrative change toolkit to foster a more holistic and coordinated approach to language equity across city agencies.

INSTITUTE FOR CHILD SUCCESS

FUNDING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION NATIONWIDE

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TEAM:

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Zhimin Xia
Steven Zheng

Founded in 2010, the Institute for Child Success (ICS) is a research and applied policy nonprofit organization, focused on the success of all young children through advancing research, human, and equity-based public policies. ICS seeks to address how communities can design and implement equitable, sustainable, and politically viable state and local funding mechanisms to address the persistent funding gap for early childhood care and education (ECCE). ICS collaborated with a team to develop a comparative policy brief on state and local funding mechanisms for ECCE, synthesizing evidence-based insights and practical considerations for policymakers and advocates. The team conducted robust research on nationwide child care tax and fiscal policies and conducted stakeholder interviews to inform and support audiences interested in early childhood education policy. Using findings from research and stakeholder engagement, the team produced a policy brief outlining state and local fiscal mechanisms for communities looking to fund ECCE, along with an advocacy guide that shares best practices and key considerations.

MASS DESIGN GROUP - MATERIAL FUTURES

THE IMPACT AND SCALING OF BIO-BASED BUILDING MATERIALS

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Lauren Gilonske
Jacob Olander
Courtney Yu

The construction sector accounts for 37% of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet solutions targeting embodied carbon in building materials have lagged behind other climate interventions. MASS Design Group's Abundant Futures Design Lab partnered with NYU Wagner to advance the Material Futures initiative, a project exploring how the Northeast's building industry can transition toward regenerative, locally sourced, bio-based materials. Focusing on Boston and Poughkeepsie as case study cities, the team conducted policy analysis, stakeholder research, and systems mapping to assess the current landscape of bio-based material adoption across the region. They examined barriers to scaling adoption, including supply chain gaps, regulatory constraints, financing challenges, and market readiness, while identifying opportunities for policy intervention and community-centered design. The final deliverable provides MASS Design Group with a proposed path to scale.

TOWN+GOWN - CONSTRUCTION USES OF POST-CONSUMER PLASTICS

REDUCE, REUSE, REPURPOSE: INTEGRATING RECYCLED PLASTICS INTO NYC'S ROADWAYS

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New York City generates millions of tons of municipal solid waste annually, and plastics represent one of the most difficult material streams to redirect away from disposal due to their high production volumes, limited recyclability at scale, and narrow range of viable end uses. In response, the city has enacted several mandates that propose a circular economy as part of the solution, including the draft 2026-2036 DSNY Solid Waste Management Plan. Building on these commitments, this capstone project evaluated the feasibility of incorporating post-consumer recycled plastics into the city's roadway infrastructure and developed an implementation plan in collaboration with the Department of Sanitation and the Department of Transportation, and through the Department of Design and Construction's Town+Gown program. The team's methodology combined scientific, technical, and policy research with site visits and stakeholder interviews with subject matter experts. Final recommendations address four areas: expanded pilot programs, revisions to NYC asphalt specifications, strategies to increase plastic feedstock quality and quantity, and incentives to encourage private sector participation.

THE STRAFFORD REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

POWERING AN EQUITABLE ENERGY TRANSITION: TRANSMISSION, AFFORDABILITY, AND UPSTREAM GOVERNANCE IN CALIFORNIA

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The Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) addresses critical infrastructure and community needs in Strafford County, New Hampshire, including accessible, affordable child care, which is vital to workforce participation and regional economic stability. The Capstone team conducted a comprehensive assessment of municipal compliance with New Hampshire's child care legislation (HB 1567, 2024), identified zoning and regulatory barriers affecting family child care providers, and developed a model zoning ordinance for municipalities. Additionally, the team analyzed child care supply and demand across 18 municipalities, focusing on ages 0–5 and licensed providers, and surveyed community partners to assess awareness of state financing resources. The resulting recommendations included a centralized digital resource to improve access to funding, as well as strategies to enhance child care capacity, align policy and practice, and support long-term regional sustainability.

THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST WESTCHESTER

WESTCHESTER INDEX EXPANSION

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Ziang Wang

The New York Community Trust –Westchester presents local data through an equity lens, featuring 62 indicators across six core areas and narrative data stories highlighting systemic issues and trends. The Capstone team was tasked with expanding the Index by developing justice indicators to address a critical gap in accessible data on youth interactions with criminal justice systems in Westchester County. Deliverables included a literature review of community indicator models, a structured dataset with three justice indicators, a data story, and a final report with findings and recommendations. The team analyzed New York State Unified Court System data specific to Westchester and developed three indicators for the Index: overall arrest trends by municipality, arrest trends for emerging adults (ages 18–24), and felony arrests for youth (under the age of 18) Findings were presented through data visualizations and accompanied by a data story designed for integration into the Index. The final report shares key findings, documents the team's process, recommends strategies to strengthen the Index, and addresses data

URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

STRENGTHENING RE-ENTRY THROUGH HOUSING: AN OPERATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

FACULTY:
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Mahbuba Hossain
Sophia Hughes
Allie Kittrell

The Urban League of Greater Philadelphia (ULGP) engaged the Capstone team to develop an operational blueprint for a new transitional housing facility serving 9–18 justice-involved men annually for up to 12 months. The goal was to design an evidence-based program to strengthen long-term reintegration outcomes. The team conducted a literature review, interviewed 14 reentry and supportive housing providers, and analyzed quantitative data on recidivism trends and effective program structures. This mixed-methods assessment identified best practices across housing access, resident autonomy, integrated wraparound services, funding diversification, and data transparency. Deliverables include a comprehensive operational model and policy framework outlining recommendations across five domains, positioning ULGP to launch a trauma-informed, evidence-based transitional housing program that improves resident stability, reduces recidivism, and expands reentry capacity in Philadelphia.

WOMEN'S WORLD BANKING

NFIS AND WOMEN'S FINANCIAL INCLUSION: GLOBAL LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Grace Davis
Emmett Halloran
Alexandra Stubblefield

Women's World Banking (WWB) is a global nonprofit that works with financial institutions and policymakers to expand access to financial services for women. WWB's policy and advocacy work helps shape the regulatory environments that determine whether and how women can participate in formal financial systems. As governments increasingly adopt National Financial Inclusion Strategies (NFIS), it remains unclear which approaches most effectively advance women's financial inclusion. The Capstone team was engaged to conduct a comprehensive global literature review, market-level data analysis, and a deep dive into strategies promoting digital payment usage across eight countries to assess the comparative effectiveness of these policy approaches. Using a mixed-methods framework combining quantitative analysis of Findex data with qualitative and comparative policy review, the team found that while the implementation of NFIS and standalone policies has successfully expanded financial access, persistent gaps in usage, gender-disaggregated data, and sociocultural barriers remain the central obstacles to meaningful women's financial inclusion and integration into economic systems. The team identified a set of best practices and policy recommendations for countries to implement to support women's financial inclusion by encouraging the use of

COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

MAPPING GLOBAL POLICY IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE SMALL ARMS

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Bianca Rosales
David Salinas
Reanne Wong

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families' (CACF) Community Development Fund (CDF) and Equity subcontracts provide equity-focused state funding to AAPI communities in New York State. Through analyzing provided reports and work scopes from CACF and conducting stakeholder interviews, the Capstone team created interactive datasets that include maps visualizing grantee locations, funding amounts, program types and topics, regional percentage allocations, and local legislative information. Complementary storytelling materials trace the evolution of the CDF over time, highlighting key shifts across funding cycles, particularly the intentional expansion from city-centered allocations to a broader geographic reach, through narrative synthesis and visual breakdowns of year-over-year trends, program typologies, and the communities served. The project also includes recommendations for grantee data collection practices. The team's analysis matched quantitative and qualitative data to gauge community impact, organizational strengthening, and grantee-defined understandings of impact and safety, thereby strengthening transparency, advocacy capacity, and the articulation of CACF's equitable and transformative grantmaking.

EQUITY ADVOCATES - UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES

ADVANCING THE NY SNAP4ALL CAMPAIGN: STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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TEAM:

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Odessa Elmore
Ian Holmes
Robyn James

Equity Advocates (EA) and United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) lead a coalition of community leaders, activists, and interest groups to advocate for expanding SNAP access in New York State to include income-eligible immigrants. To strengthen their understanding of the coalition's capacity and capabilities, the Capstone team designed and conducted a member representation survey that collected updated information on coalition members' commitment, advocacy capacity, existing relationships with key stakeholders, and experience within key sectors such as food insecurity and immigrants' rights. The Capstone team developed recommendations for how the coalition can increase its strategic power to help pass SNAP4All legislation statewide, based on an analysis of two sets of survey data and online research.

FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION AND JOB QUALITY IN NEW YORK STATE

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Michael Frank
Luis Garcia
Jasia Kubik

The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) dismantles structural and systemic barriers that impede economic security and well-being, and strengthens the capacity of human service and faith organizations so New Yorkers with lower incomes can thrive. FPWA engaged the Capstone team to understand occupational segregation and job quality among janitors, childcare workers, and home care workers in New York State, as well as how factors such as immigration status, disability accommodations, workplace conditions, and social networks shape pathways and experiences at work. The Capstone team conducted qualitative interviews with workers across all three sectors and analyzed themes related to access, stability, workplace challenges, and perceptions of dignity and value. Research highlights both shared barriers and important differences across sectors, while also pointing to the resilience and expertise workers bring to their roles. Final report and recommendations identify key findings across sectors and inform future advocacy, research, and policy strategies to improve job quality for essential low-wage workers.

FRONT PORCH

UNDERSERVED AND OVERLOOKED: EQUITY GAPS AND THE CASE FOR AGE-RESPONSIVE SOLUTIONS TO OLDER ADULT HOMELESSNESS

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Anna Nuler
Jaime Perez
Christian Terry-Taylor

Front Porch and the UC Berkeley Center for Advanced Study of Aging Services partnered with the Capstone team to examine systems that could improve outcomes for aging populations and to analyze existing data to identify housing interventions that successfully keep older adults housed. The number of unhoused older adults is increasing across the U.S. due to unaffordable housing options, the challenges of living on a fixed income, and a lack of social support from families and communities. Focusing on six counties in California - Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Alameda, San Jose, and Marin - the team conducted seven interviews with care providers and completed a landscape and data analysis of older adult homelessness from 2020 to the present. This project manifested as an advocacy toolkit for providers, policymakers, and researchers, with key data points, major qualitative findings, and recommendations. The team recommended policy solutions, including enhanced ongoing financial support and social safety nets, emphasizing individualized approaches through social work triage to address the unique needs of older adults.

UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

BUILDING GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY POWER FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

FACULTY:
Elizabeth Angeles

TEAM:

JJ Briscoe
Liliana Flanigan
Delal Ghebremed-hin

The United Nations Foundation (UNF) leads two signature global health campaigns: Shot@Life, which champions vaccine access for children worldwide, and United to Beat Malaria, focused on prevention and treatment. Despite historically broad bipartisan support, global health programs face new challenges as U.S. political dynamics shift and public sentiment toward international engagement becomes more fragmented. The Capstone team analyzed public sentiment trends to inform UNF's messaging framework and strengthen its advocate base, conducting a literature review, assessing Congressional targets, performing a SWOT analysis of UNF's annual advocacy summit, and interviewing campaign advocates and partners. Final recommendations focused on refining coalition relationships, strengthening in-district advocacy, and increasing the effectiveness of bipartisan engagement.

HER JUSTICE

REPORT FROM COURT: EXPANDING FAMILY COURT TRANSPARENCY

FACULTY:
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TEAM:
Katherine McMahon
Emily Pérez
Matthew Sooknanan
Katelyn Villatoro

Her Justice is a nonprofit organization providing legal aid to women living in poverty, assisting them with family law matters. We worked to identify target states for the potential expansion of their Report From Court initiative to improve access to justice and court transparency. Her Justice focuses on custody proceedings, child support establishment and enforcement, and fines and fees for violating court-mandated family plans, while excluding matters of domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect. We employed a mixed-methods qualitative research methodology to identify other states' best practices and assess whether policies, court structures, and public opinion are similar to those in New York. We conducted interviews with legal aid organizations in target jurisdictions to better understand their operational processes, case loads, and experiences navigating family court. Lastly, we observed live custody proceedings in New York City Family Court, gaining valuable insight into courtroom procedures, litigant experiences, and barriers within the court system. After extensive policy research in various states, we recommend Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, Michigan, California, and Washington as target jurisdictions of expansion.

BLACKSPACE URBANIST COLLECTIVE

EXPLORING COMMUNITY-LED HYBRID FUNDING MODELS FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

FACULTY:
Analiza Wolf

TEAM:

Shanzae Bangash
Jenny Ha
Spencer Kong

BlackSpace Urbanist Collective, a Brooklyn-based national organization advancing Black-led urbanism through design, planning, and creative practices, partnered with the Capstone team to explore sustainable funding models as traditional resources became less reliable and the organization approached the end of its three-year plan. The team assessed the feasibility of hybrid financing structures, governance models, and engagement strategies for an Alumni Fund through literature reviews, landscape analyses, interviews with other organizations, and participatory activities with BlackSpace's community. Analysis of financial, operational, and governance structures highlighted strong interest in impact-driven investment models prioritizing neighborhood-level projects, long-term outcomes, and shared governance. Recommendations support a phased approach aligned with BlackSpace's capacity, providing operational and leadership guidance to ensure long-term sustainability and mission alignment.

BRIGHTLINE DEFENSE

POWERING AN EQUITABLE ENERGY TRANSITION: TRANSMISSION, AFFORDABILITY, AND UPSTREAM GOVERNANCE IN CALIFORNIA

FACULTY:
Mo Coffey

TEAM:

Harlowe Brumett-Dunn
Julia Delgado
Lexxi Ferrer
Savannah Richardson

Brightline Defense, a San Francisco-based nonprofit, advances environmental justice and clean energy policy to ensure that low-income and frontline communities benefit from California's energy transition. As electrification accelerates, transmission expansion is critical to meeting climate goals, but affordability, community impact, and equity risks must be addressed. The Capstone team analyzed national transmission buildout efforts through literature reviews, landscape analyses, and multi-state case studies, examining policy, financing, technological, and governance conditions, and identifying strategic entry points for advocacy. Findings highlighted challenges, including demand uncertainty from industrial loads, fragmented financing, stalled grid-enhancing technologies, and the risk of deepening inequities. The team developed six-phase recommendations that form an advocacy strategy to influence planning, financing, and regulation while protecting frontline communities and promoting affordable transmission.

CITY OF ATLANTA MAYOR'S OFFICE OF POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN ATLANTA: A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT

FACULTY:
Mo Coffey

TEAM:

Simone A. Francis
Komal Kamdar
Aisha Waggeh
Elijah A. Turner

The City of Atlanta's Mayor's Office of Policy and Partnerships leads efforts to address historical inequities through the Neighborhood Reinvestment Initiative and sought Capstone support to design sustainable youth development financing models. The team identified barriers, including operational fragmentation, internal capacity gaps, and the lack of a unified metrics framework, that impede systematic progress. Using literature reviews, landscape analyses, and metric assessments, the team developed baseline requirements for standardized operating procedures and centralized data governance. The resulting five-phase strategic framework guides Atlanta from a fragmented, program-based model toward a systematic, equity-centered youth development ecosystem, aligning multi-sector stakeholders around shared outcomes and transforming life opportunities for city youth.

LIVING CITIES

MAPPING SMALL BUSINESS CAPITAL FLOWS IN NEW YORK CITY

FACULTY:
Analiza Wolf

TEAM:
Jaz Griffin

Living Cities' Center for Wealth Equity works to close racial wealth gaps by connecting public, private, and philanthropic capital. The Capstone team examined how capital flows through New York City's small business ecosystem, revealing a disconnect between national funder design and neighborhood-level realities. Through interviews with lenders, intermediaries, and technical assistance providers, and through ecosystem mapping, the team identified recurring patterns in which frontline organizations constantly adjust capital to make it usable, yet these insights rarely inform funder strategies. To address this, the team developed the Insight Exchange Model and playbook, providing a structured method for capturing and integrating local knowledge into capital design, thereby improving alignment, usability, and outcomes.

LOWER EAST SIDE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

BUILDING A SHARED DATA INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WORKFORCE IMPACT

FACULTY:
Mo Coffey

TEAM:
Ariana Diaz
Fabiola Hernandez Lopez
Liola Moody
Lara Mullen

The Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN) is a coalition of workforce development organizations serving predominantly low-income, immigrant communities in New York City. Despite over two decades of coordination, LESEN lacks a network-level data infrastructure to measure collective impact. The Capstone team conducted surveys, interviews, organizational data analysis, literature review, and a landscape study to design a shared data and impact measurement framework. Findings informed recommendations to operationalize LESEN's intermediary role, implement centralized data management, co-design a shared measurement system, and establish structures for collaborative reporting, creating a sustainable foundation to track network-level outcomes and drive systems change across NYC's workforce ecosystem.

RIGHT TO THE CITY

FINANCING THE COMMONS: CAPITAL PATHWAYS FOR COMMUNITY-OWNED REAL

FACULTY:
Mo Coffey

TEAM:

Grace Chai
Caroline Miller
Jennifer Pigach

Right to the City (RTTC) is a national alliance of community-based organizations advancing housing affordability and community ownership. To support the Integrated Capital Loan Fund (ICLF), which provides non-extractive capital for projects that move land and housing into permanent community control, RTTC engaged the Capstone team to assess the funder landscape and identify strategies to attract low-cost, movement-aligned investment. Using literature review, landscape analysis, funder interviews, and research on financial instruments, the team developed four recommendations: strengthen the fund's narrative and diligence readiness, evaluate alternative structures, build technical assistance capacity, and dedicate future capital raises to a select region, positioning the ICLF to expand community-controlled real estate sustainably.

THE BRIGID ALLIANCE

EMPLOYER-SPONSORED REPRODUCTIVE TRAVEL SUPPORT MODEL

FACULTY:
Analiza Wolf

TEAM:

Icy Li
Victoria Li
Haina Sang
Dingchen Xue

The Brigid Alliance (BA) is a U.S.-based nonprofit providing travel, logistical, and financial support for individuals seeking abortion services, especially those facing geographic or legal barriers. Growing state-level restrictions have intensified demand, creating challenges for employers and service provision. The Capstone team assessed the viability of an employer-based fee-for-service model, analyzing policy, market segmentation by organizational size, service design, and financial scenarios across states. The team's recommendations propose a membership fee model based on organizational capacity, externalizing risk while maintaining confidentiality, strengthening the BA's financial sustainability, and extending access to critical reproductive services nationwide.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

FACULTY:
John Gershman

TEAM:
Shuo Lei

The United States special education system evolved from an exclusionary model into a rights-based framework. Focusing on New York State, this project examined how early intervention and inclusive models expanded educational opportunities. This issue was critical because, despite legal protections, persistent gaps in funding, staffing, and implementation constrained educational equity. The project assessed whether legal protections alone ensured effective special education. The team employed policy analysis, classroom observations in a Queens elementary school, and a review of legal frameworks and educational data. The research concluded that structural deficiencies continued to compromise instructional quality and students' long-term development. The final thesis offered policy recommendations to improve the future of special education, emphasizing that legal mandates must be supported by adequate resources to achieve true equity.

SI3 SOCIAL STARTUP
STUDENT LOAN LITERACY PROJECT (SLLP)

STUDENT LOAN DEBT FOR NONPROFIT AND PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

FACULTY:
Andrea Armeni

TEAM:

Stephanie Intal
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Semina Kosti-Stavri
Arina Qian

Public service careers should not come with a financial penalty. Yet for the millions of Americans who choose government and nonprofit work, federal student loan debt, accruing interest faster than modest public sector salaries can repay it, too often forces an impossible choice between mission and financial stability. SLLP is a student-led research initiative developing a refinancing model that meets public sector borrowers where they are: offering lower rates and income-calibrated repayment structures designed for the earnings trajectories of early-career public servants. SLLP acquires and refinances federal student loan debt held by public sector and nonprofit workers, replacing standard federal rates of 7%–9% with rates tied to inflation plus 1%, and offering income-driven repayment structures calibrated to public sector earnings. The result is a loan product that shrinks monthly payments from day one and enables borrowers to actually reduce their principal, something standard income-driven repayment plans often fail to do.

NYC EDUCATION INITIATIVE

IMPROVING MATH OUTCOMES FOR NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS: LESSONS FROM MASSACHUSETTS

FACULTY:
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Carlos Quirola

TEAM:
Yiqian Feng
Shuyu Niu
Jiani Qiu
Wanqi Tang

NYC Solves, launched in 2024-2025, is a public school initiative aimed at improving math instruction by implementing standardized, high-quality math curricula. As the initiative is still in its early stages, actions at this moment are critical. As a national leader in education, Massachusetts offers valuable lessons for NYC Solves' math reform. For this study, we applied a district-level panel framework with fixed effects and a multi-phase, pre-post design to examine Massachusetts' math reforms. The results indicate that socioeconomic status is the main predictor of math achievement so for NYC Solves, adequate teacher and curricular support are essential to maximize impact.

HOUSING & EVICTIONS

IMPACT OF THE GOOD CAUSE EVICTION LAW ON EVICTION FILINGS IN NYC

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Carlos Quirola

TEAM:

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Monika Panwar
Ryan Rosenberg
Xuandi Zhang

The enactment of New York State's Good Cause Eviction Law in April 2024 established a pivotal regulatory framework requiring landlords to demonstrate "good cause" for evictions and capped annual rent increases at 5% plus the Consumer Price Index. This study evaluates the legislation's initial impact on New York City's housing stability using a quasi-experimental design, specifically employing Difference-in-Differences and Interrupted Time Series (ITS) analyses to compare eviction filing trends between covered and exempt properties. Results are presented conservatively due to data limitations that only capture formal court filings, potentially missing "informal displacement" occurring through private lease non-renewals. To maximize policy efficacy, this research recommends strengthening enforcement through hyper-local awareness campaigns in high-risk neighborhoods, establishing a centralized public database to clarify building coverage status, and implementing a mandatory registry for lease non-renewals to track displacement occurring outside of the judicial system.

CONGESTION PRICING

CONGESTION PRICING AND EMS TRAVEL TIME: EVIDENCE FROM NYC FOR SEATTLE

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TEAM:

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Ziqi Ling
Jiayu Tan
Haochuan Yu

This research provides Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson and Seattle Department of Transportation Acting Director Angela Brady with an assessment of how congestion pricing affects emergency medical services in a city. The team used EMS dispatch data to create a control group via propensity score matching and then applied the Difference-in-Differences methodology to estimate the policy's impact in New York City. The study analyzes the time required for responders to reach incident locations, from dispatch to arrival. The initial results demonstrate that congestion pricing reduces EMS response times, potentially enhancing the effectiveness of emergency response in high-density urban environments. The analysis supports our recommendation that Seattle should test congestion pricing through a pilot program, which would enhance emergency medical services response times.

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN FOR LONG ISLAND CITY (EBM) PRACTICES

FACULTY:
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TEAM:
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Robin Kim
Johanna Lawton
Dakota London
Nico Mitroff

New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) is the agency responsible for coordinating citywide emergency planning and response, including the development of NYC's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), which lists different events (emergencies, disasters, or hazards) that could harm the city and explains what City agencies are doing to reduce their impact. The Capstone team worked with NYCEM to develop a neighborhood-specific HMP for Long Island City (LIC), Queens, identifying recommendations to mitigate future hazards. This work is critical because emergency preparedness and mitigation efforts within LIC are highly fragmented, leaving the neighborhood unnecessarily vulnerable to both natural and non-natural disasters. The Capstone team combined desktop research on best practices for hazard mitigation with stakeholder interviews and community input from residents, business owners, and neighborhood organizations on LIC's existing assets, needs, and opportunities. The team utilized these insights, coupled with a geospatial hazard analysis, to identify priority hazards and to develop HMP recommendations and local planning tools, including an asset map and a process guide. The final recommendations focused on communication and education, land use, infrastructure investment, and stakeholder coordination.

MASS DESIGN GROUP - SUSTAINABILITY

CIRCULAR POUGHKEEPSIE: CREATING SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE SYSTEMS IN A FRINGE CITY

FACULTY:
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TEAM:
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Yuqian Gao
Cindy Nguyen
Joseph Taecker-Wyss

MASS Design Group is a nonprofit design collective advancing justice and environmental sustainability through the built environment, with its Abundant Futures Design Lab focused on regenerative design that aligns ecological limits with community well-being. In partnership with the Lab, this Capstone project focused on Poughkeepsie, NY—a small, post-industrial fringe city facing disinvestment and climate vulnerability—to examine how essential resources—energy, water, food, materials, and waste — flow through the region. This work is critical because smaller cities often lack data-driven, place-based strategies to transition from linear, extractive systems to circular, regenerative models. The Capstone team was tasked with developing circular regional metabolism strategies by quantifying resource flows, identifying stakeholders, and assessing system challenges and opportunities. The team conducted literature reviews, analyzed datasets, engaged stakeholders, and created GIS-based visualizations. Final deliverables included clear, public-facing strategy recommendations that provide a replicable framework to guide resilient and equitable development in Poughkeepsie and similar Fringe Cities.

NYC OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

ANALYZING CLIMATE RISK INTEGRATION IN TRANSPORATION ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANNING

FACULTY:
Sarah Kaufman

TEAM:
Ruby Foxall
Joey Smith
Gabriel Negron Torres
Brant Wesley

The Office of the New York City Comptroller is responsible for overseeing the City's financial health, auditing agency performance, and advancing policies that promote fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability. The office plays a critical role in ensuring that public investments are both effective and aligned with broader economic and environmental goals. This work is especially important as New York City faces growing infrastructure needs alongside increasing climate risks and fiscal constraints. The Capstone team was tasked with evaluating how climate risk can be more effectively integrated into long-term infrastructure planning and maintenance practices. To do this, the team conducted a comparative analysis of transportation asset management practices across states, supplemented by a review of relevant literature and expert interviews. The project resulted in a set of recommendations to strengthen climate-informed planning, improve transparency, and support more resilient infrastructure investment decisions.

NYC DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING - URBAN DESIGN

ADVANCING AFFORDABLE HOUSING DESIGN IN NEW YORK CITY

FACULTY:
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TEAM:

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Gibson Chu
Max Gordy
Angie Rendon
Lucero Sanchez

The New York City Department of City Planning's Urban Design Office provides guidance on buildings and neighborhood plans, conducts design research, develops public engagement tools, and shapes zoning regulations to ensure that new buildings and public spaces contribute positively to their surroundings and the city as a whole. With the recent policy focus on producing more housing in New York City to combat the affordable housing crisis, it is also important to ensure the design quality of new housing construction and to incorporate community input into design choices that will continue to impact the city for decades, if not centuries to come. The project team sought to understand the driving factors behind high- and low-quality design in New York City's new affordable housing, demonstrate the importance of design to the success of these projects, and identify policy levers to better align affordable housing design with community needs without adding time or cost to the development process. The team conducted a series of interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, developers, and architects, and surveyed community members to identify their needs. Based on data from the engagement process and a review of existing literature, the team developed a final report that includes recommendations for policy changes and a toolkit for future community advocacy and engagement.

MTA ACCESS-A-RIDE PARATRANSIT

LOOKING GLOBALLY TO IMPROVE PARATRANSIT LOCALLY

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TEAM:

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Ben Kuhn
Jared Zullig
Adomma Kumi

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) Access-A-Ride (AAR) system, the world's largest paratransit network, provides over 10 million trips annually to New Yorkers with disabilities. Facing rising ridership, pressures to expand its on-demand pilot, and limited federal funding, MTA engaged the Capstone team to benchmark global paratransit systems, develop case studies, and provide actionable recommendations. Using a literature review, policy analysis, and 25 expert interviews, the team identified key insights, including the U.S. mandate for door-to-door service, opportunities from emerging technologies such as AI, and strategies to optimize operations and encourage conventional transit use. The final recommendations offer a roadmap to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and long-term sustainability for AAR riders.

NYC DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING - REZONING

A FRAMEWORK FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN POST-REZONING EVALUATIONS

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TEAM:
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Kenny Rodriguez
Eva Vesmanova

The New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) is the government agency responsible for guiding the city's land use and zoning policies. As part of its work, DCP advances neighborhood plans to support long-term visions in housing production, economic opportunity, resiliency, and capital investment, ultimately shaping the development of New York City. The Capstone team developed a framework to evaluate these neighborhood plans, also known as rezonings, to better understand their impacts on housing supply and affordability, socioeconomic conditions, transportation, economic activity, and neighborhood character. The Capstone team then used this framework to evaluate the 2017 East Harlem Rezoning, interviewing key stakeholders and analyzing existing data to demonstrate how it could be implemented. The evaluation framework draws on previous studies in urban and land-use planning, as well as on best practices from other U.S. cities. The Capstone team recommends that DCP evaluate neighborhood plans 10 years after approval to understand the impact of land-use decisions and publicize the findings to prioritize government transparency.

NEW YORK CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

ELECTRIFYING NEW YORK CITY'S SMALL PARKING LOTS

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TEAM:
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Cynthia Kong
Mariana Luna-Martinez
Michael Mardirossian

The NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) is a mayoral agency focused on protecting New Yorkers from the threats of climate change by creating and advancing policies to enhance the City's safety. MOCEJ's current work includes the reduction of transport related greenhouse gas emissions and expansion of equitable access to sustainable infrastructure, such as electric vehicle (EV) chargers. The Capstone team was tasked with identifying parking lots not subject to Local Law 55, which requires the installation of EV chargers in parking lots with 10 or more spaces. These small parking lots were categorized into several typologies to recommend specific typologies for installing EV chargers. The team identified operational and equitable gaps in this implementation and developed a toolkit to guide businesses and institutions in charging deployment. To achieve this, the team executed an existing conditions analysis and combined data analysis and feasibility studies to identify optimal parking typologies. The final deliverables include a report for MOCEJ and the aforementioned policy toolkit. Ultimately, gas stations were recommended as the most suitable typology for policymakers to incentivize charger installation.

UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ADDRESSING THE LOW-INCOME HOUSING NEED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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TEAM:
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Nicole Virgo-Carter
Athena Yan

The United Planning Organization (UPO) is a community action & advocacy organization that assists low-income residents of Washington, D.C., in achieving economic security. One of their key programs focuses on advocacy for low-income (<50% AMI) households due to a housing shortage and massive rent increases that exacerbate cost burdens. The Capstone team was tasked with determining how housing supply, policies, and programs should be adjusted to meet the housing needs of all low-income residents in the District. The team calculated and evaluated the existing need for low-income housing in D.C. across various AMI bands, and conducted extensive research on the operations, policies, and programs that fund, administer, and oversee housing construction and voucher subsidies. The team also gathered insights from interviews with government agency officials, city council members, real estate developers, and nonprofits. Our final recommendations focused on four areas: addressing the undersupply of vouchers for extremely low-income households; streamlining the operations and administration of programs; funding solutions to supply low-income vouchers; and resolving institutional friction between agencies.

WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

BELOW GRADE, ABOVE BOARD: THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF FLOODPROOFING RETROFITS FOR BASEMENT ADU LEGALIZATION

FACULTY:
Michael Keane

TEAM:
Lia Clark
Owen Elton
Larasati Gumilang Kencanawardhani
Annie Larkin

The Waterfront Alliance supports initiatives to create resilient coastal communities in New York City and to prepare residents for rising sea levels and increased flooding. They primarily serve the vulnerable communities through education, collaboration, and advocacy. The client asked us to quantify the financial feasibility of building-level flood-mitigating adaptations for potential basement ADUs in areas with both a significant presence of illegal basement units and a high risk of pluvial, coastal, and/or groundwater flooding. We developed a cost-benefit model using FEMA and Census data to analyze the financial viability of different floodproofing intervention measures that can protect units from long-term flood damage and distress. While the benefits of these intervention measures are clear, a gap remains between homeowner financial capabilities and the funds needed to convert basements into flood-safe units. Government support is needed to bridge that gap and safely bring thousands of new units into the New York City housing market.

GENDER EQUALITY NETWORK FOR SMALL ARMS CONTROL

MAPPING GLOBAL POLICY IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE SMALL ARMS CONTROL

FACULTY:
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TEAM:
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Elan Nelson
Florencia Rebolledo

The Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) promotes gender-sensitive approaches to small arms and light weapons (SALW) control measures. The network is hosted and managed by the Center on International Cooperation at NYU. By advancing policies that increase women's representation and participation in SALW control decision-making spaces, GENSAC creates sustainable pathways for reducing gender-based violence. The Capstone team was tasked with drafting a report outlining how the landscape has changed since a 2021 GENSAC write-up on international policy instruments and tools for gender-responsive SALW control. The review of policy instruments and relevant information was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, including informational interviews and a content analysis of primary and secondary sources. Preliminary findings suggest a strong need for gender-disaggregated data and increased funding for gender-responsive initiatives to increase understanding and awareness, while efforts to roll back gendered language in policies undermine successes in promoting gender diversity.

THE ACCELERATOR FOR SHIFTING GENDER NORMS THROUGH EDUCATION

A HYBRID APPROACH TO PARTICIPATORY PHILANTHROPHY

FACULTY:
Lauren Stackpoole

TEAM:
Allie Gordon
Lucy McHugh
Shuocheng Wu

The Accelerator for Shifting Gender Norms through Education supports and disseminates evidence-based models that shift gender norms during adolescence, advancing gender equality through education. As a hybrid initiative blending participatory grantmaking with a collective impact approach, the Accelerator engages a philanthropic landscape increasingly interested in models that challenge top-down decision-making. The Capstone team assessed the initiative's first-year operations through literature review, stakeholder surveys, and interviews with participants and partners to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Final deliverables included practical recommendations on governance, budgeting, processes, inclusion, and shared learning, along with an external-facing summary to communicate key insights to the broader philanthropy field.

CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

AI IN JUSTICE SYSTEMS: TREND ANALYSIS & GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

FACULTY:
Hannah Atchison

TEAM:
Cherin Lee
Elena Perez
Jixi Wang

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, housed within the Center on International Cooperation (CIC), serves as an impact hub that convenes governments, civil society, and global organizations to advance people-centered justice and close the global justice gap. The Capstone team was tasked with examining how artificial intelligence is shaping access to justice across different national contexts. The project focuses on three case studies- Brazil, Kenya, and the United Kingdom- and develops an analytical framework to assess emerging governance patterns and trends. This research draws on a literature review, over 25 interviews with diverse stakeholders, and field-based insights from the United Kingdom. Findings suggest that while AI is increasingly used to improve administrative efficiency and access pathways, its integration raises important questions around governance, accountability, and equitable access. The project identifies cross-cutting trends and institutional patterns in how AI is being adopted and governed within justice systems.

EK KADAM AUR FOUNDATION

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS: CREATING A ROADMAP TO EXPANDING EQUITABLE EDUCATION ACROSS INDIA

FACULTY:
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TEAM:
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Yi-Ting 'Tiffany' Lan
Tara Mosheli
Vicky Zhang

Ek Kadam Aur Foundation (EKA) is an Indian nonprofit focused on health and education for children and young people, with its Arunodaya program making inclusive education accessible for children with visual impairments. The Capstone team explored how to overcome barriers to scaling the program across additional states and eventually other countries. Fieldwork and comparative analysis revealed that parental misconceptions, rather than peer discrimination, presented the primary obstacle to program expansion. Based on these findings, the team developed a roadmap to demonstrate student success to hesitant parents and created a strategic scalability plan to guide EKA in expanding access while maintaining program quality and impact.

ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

DOCUMENTING TRENDS IN MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION EXPANDING EQUITABLE EDUCATION ACROSS INDIA

FACULTY:
Paul Smoke

TEAM:
Veronika Angelina
Laura Bertran
Zian Li
Zian Zheng

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), through the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment (WOFI), supports evidence-based policymaking by providing standardized, comparable data on multi-level governance and subnational finance worldwide. The Capstone team collaborated with OECD-WOFI to contribute to the 4th Edition of its global report by analyzing fiscal decentralization trends across seven Asia-Pacific countries. The project addressed gaps in data availability and comparability by collecting and harmonizing quantitative and qualitative information on subnational expenditures, revenues, and governance frameworks. Fieldwork involved synthesizing data from national and international sources, applying standardized templates, and engaging with OECD experts. The team produced country profiles and cross-country analyses highlighting regional trends, challenges, and opportunities in local public finance and investment. Findings support improved decision-making and strengthen the global evidence base for sustainable and inclusive multi-level governance.

INTELEOS FOUNDATION

IMPACT EVALUATION FOR THE INTELEOS ACCELERATOR

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TEAM:
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Erin Spellman
Leo Sun

The Inteleos Foundation's Accelerator Ambassador Program supports clinicians in implementing point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) across diverse global health settings, but inconsistent reporting and limited standardized metrics have made it difficult to assess sustained impact. The Capstone team reviewed existing reporting tools, refined quarterly and annual surveys, and developed a streamlined logic model linking program inputs to measurable outcomes, incorporating qualitative insights from Ambassador interviews to capture implementation challenges and context. Findings indicate strong training outputs but gaps in longitudinal and standardized data, and the team recommends clearer indicators, improved data consistency, and integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches to create a scalable framework for evaluating program effectiveness, supporting strategic decisions, and enhancing Inteleos's global health impact.

INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

EVALUATING GAPS IN PUBLIC SPACE IN PANAMA CITY

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TEAM:
Randi Gamble
Jenny Jamison
Cerimar Olivares

In collaboration with the municipality of Panama City, the Inter-American Development Bank launched a revitalization project in the historic neighborhood of El Chorrillo, a culturally and historically significant area of Panama. As the leading development finance institution in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Bank provides technical and financial support to countries working to reduce poverty and inequality. The Capstone team reviewed global and Latin American best practices in public space planning and identified spatial and social gaps in the project while assessing alignment with these standards. Key challenges included proposing solutions that addressed neighborhood needs without altering its identity. The team's final recommendations focused on participatory planning frameworks, inclusive infrastructure, community stewardship, and evaluation design, building on existing research and highlighting opportunities to strengthen project impact.

KIHMI FOUNDATION

A STANDARDIZED DATA-COLLECTION TOOLKIT

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TEAM:
Marie Gloria Sibomana
Kayla Guerrero
Wenwen Tao

KIHMI is a community development organization in Juan de Acosta and Algarrobo, Colombia, providing educational and psychosocial initiatives such as Telas Que Cuidan, El Jardin, and Vida Estilo K to support families affected by Huntington's Disease. These programs teach skills like pattern-making and gardening, fostering empowerment, inclusion, and community support in areas with limited psychosocial resources and significant stigma. The Capstone team was tasked with developing an impact evaluation toolkit, but found that inconsistent data collection prevented this. In response, the team conducted field interviews and observations, identified gaps and needs, and recommended a standardized data-collection toolkit, including templates, interview guides, and a youth volunteer framework, equipping KIHMI to measure and evaluate program impact in the future.

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (UNDESA)

EMPOWERING MUNICIPAL IAM FINANCING AND CAPACITY IN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS

FACULTY:
Paul Smoke

TEAM:
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The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Financing for Sustainable Development Office (FSDO) supports countries in developing innovative financing solutions to close gaps in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As global infrastructure needs grow, effective Infrastructure Asset Management (IAM) is critical to ensuring long-term service delivery, sustainability, and cost recovery. This capstone project focused on advancing UNDESA FSDO's emerging IAM work by developing practical knowledge resources. The team was tasked with producing annotated chapter outlines on key IAM topics, including financing mechanisms and strategies to foster behavioral change to successfully adopt and implement IAM. To do so, the team conducted fieldwork and stakeholder engagement with local governments in Ghana, complemented by a literature review and the development of a country analysis toolkit. The project resulted in actionable frameworks and tools to support governments in integrating IAM into infrastructure planning and financing practices.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES (UNOPS)

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY IN THE AFRICAN

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The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) delivers sustainable, locally responsive infrastructure and project management services worldwide, working alongside governments, donors, and local stakeholders. To improve service delivery outcomes by more deeply integrating beneficiary needs into its project approach, UNOPS engaged the Capstone team to develop practical guidance for embedding participatory design across its infrastructure portfolio in Africa. The team conducted a targeted literature review, interviewed UNOPS architects and project managers, and visited active infrastructure projects in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to observe how participatory design is applied in practice. The research found that participatory design is most effective not as a discrete intervention but as a continuous process embedded across all project phases — one that sustains alignment between UNOPS teams and beneficiaries from design through handover.

VIOLET ORGANIZATION FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING A U.S.-FOCUSED FUNDRAISING AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY FOR THE VIOLET ORGANIZATION CONTEXTDEVELOPMENT IN COLOMBIA

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Violet Organization is a Syria-based humanitarian nonprofit supporting communities affected by conflict, and recent political changes and shifting U.S. funding priorities have made traditional funding streams increasingly uncertain. The Capstone team developed a Resource Development Guide to strengthen U.S.-focused fundraising and advocacy, and to assess the organization's social media presence and cross-sector stakeholder landscape. Recommendations include platform-specific engagement strategies, messaging frameworks tailored for U.S. audiences, and a stakeholder engagement roadmap that identifies prospective funders, diaspora networks, and philanthropic institutions. The guide equips Violet Organization to enhance U.S. visibility, diversify support, and navigate an evolving political and funding environment while sustaining mission-driven impact.

WORLD BANK URBAN PRACTICE - EUROPE

BUILDING-UP BORDER REGIONS: EXPLORING MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE BALTICS

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The World Bank Catching-up Regions Initiative (CuRI) aims to accelerate sustainable development and economic investment in the Baltic regions bordering Russia and Belarus, which face challenges such as aging populations, depopulation, and constrained municipal budgets. The Capstone team assessed how municipal service delivery reforms in Latgale (Latvia), Utena+ (Lithuania), and South-East Estonia could support new development pathways, focusing on education program consolidation in Alūksne, Latvia, and the creation of an infrastructure and tourism functional area in Tauragė, Lithuania. Using case studies and interviews with municipal leaders, the team examined funding flows, political incentives, and policy implementation, producing a report with actionable frameworks to inform the expansion of CuRI across border regions while enhancing local service delivery capacity.

WORLD BANK URBAN PRACTICE - LATIN AMERICA

MUNICIPAL INTEGRATION WITH THE POLOS DE DESARROLLO

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The Polos de Desarrollo de Bienestar program, established by the Mexican federal government, uses targeted tax incentives to attract business development in key sectors under Plan México. Capstone research with the World Bank and federal and subnational agencies identified a lack of formal municipal involvement as a barrier to successful implementation. The team conducted literature reviews, policy analyses, case studies, and fieldwork in Mexico to identify pathways for more effective municipal engagement. Final recommendations include a governance framework, financing strategies, and KPIs to monitor program outcomes across scales, aiming to strengthen municipal integration, improve program impact, and support sustainable economic development.

PROJECT SUMMARIES

HEALTH SERVICES

ANYTIME TELECARE

OPTIMIZING ED UTILIZATION: THE IMPACT OF AFTER-HOURS NURSE TRIAGE

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Anytime Telecare is a healthcare services organization that provides after-hours nurse-led telephone triage to guide patients to appropriate levels of care. This report examines how after-hours nurse triage can reduce avoidable emergency department (ED) and urgent care utilization while improving cost efficiency and continuity of care. A substantial portion of ED visits consists of low-acuity conditions that could be managed in lower-cost settings, often driven by limited access to timely medical guidance outside regular clinic hours. Drawing on existing literature, this study highlights the effectiveness of nurse-led tele-triage in safely directing patients to appropriate care settings, thereby reducing unnecessary ED use and downstream healthcare costs. It also emphasizes the role of after-hours access models and policy support in shaping care-seeking behavior. Despite strong evidence at the system level, there remains a gap in practice-level economic evaluation. This project addresses that gap by positioning Anytime Telecare as a scalable intervention within value-based care models, demonstrating its potential to improve clinical outcomes while generating cost savings.

NYU LANGONE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

BUILDING AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT-LED COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION

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Urban Emergency Departments (EDs) are well-positioned to advance community health education, yet structural barriers—fragmented scheduling, scattered resources, and limited public awareness—have hindered consistent outreach. The Capstone team collaborated with NYU Langone's ED to identify community-prioritized education needs and design infrastructure to support reliable, scalable programming. Using a mixed-methods needs assessment informed by the PMBOK and CDC Program Evaluation frameworks, the team conducted a literature review and interviews with four community organizations, including the Queer Nightlife Community, NYU Langone Community Affairs, Brooklyn Public Library, and Brooklyn Community Board 7. Priority topics included end-of-life care, chronic disease management, and harm reduction, with deliverables comprising a centralized staff scheduling system, a repository of ready-to-use educational materials, and targeted community-facing resources to expand ED outreach beyond direct clinical care.

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE NEW YORK

EVALUATION TOOLS FOR A MEDICAL RESPITE PROGRAM

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Ronald McDonald House New York (RMH-NY), founded in 1979, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing temporary housing and wraparound services to families with children ages 0 to 26 undergoing cancer treatment. RMH-NY recently explored launching a new program offering short-term residential care for young women aged 18-26 who are currently experiencing housing insecurity and require short-term medical care. Recognizing that housing instability often leads to worse health outcomes, the Capstone team was tasked with developing tools to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of this service model. The team conducted a landscape assessment of medical respite program evaluations, developed evaluation tools, and began implementing the program evaluation with baseline staff interviews. While this specific program is not moving forward, the team developed an evaluation toolkit to support future RMH-NY initiatives targeting social determinants of health and mental and behavioral health needs. The toolkit includes an intake assessment, bi-weekly check-in surveys, a mid-point patient survey, a baseline/mid-point staff assessment, and a discharge survey.

SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA HEALTH SYSTEM

STRENGTHENING MATERNAL HEALTHCARE ACCESS IN RURAL SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR SWVHS

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Southern West Virginia Health System (SWVHS) is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) serving seven rural counties in one of the most under-resourced maternity deserts in the nation. SWVHS is committed to providing local access to quality-driven healthcare services to the communities in which it is located. Unfortunately, with barriers such as generational distrust of providers, long travel distances, a lack of OB/GYN services, and a declining population, SWVHS is looking to expand prenatal, maternity, and postnatal services and build a sustainable, community-trusted maternal health infrastructure. SWVHS enlisted the Capstone team to identify coverage gaps and develop a strategic plan of action to improve access to maternal services in the area. The team interviewed organizations in the field to assemble a portfolio of potential partnership opportunities to present to SWVHS. The details of each partnership, including the organization, background, financial information, and structure of the partnership, are included in this report.

TOWN+GOWN - MATERNAL HEALTH

STRENGTHENING THE MATERNAL CONTINUUM OF CARE IN NEW YORK CITY: STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS SHAPING ACCESS, CONTINUITY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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TEAM:
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Yisroel Goldberg

Town+Gown@DDC, a NYC-wide action research program, partnered with NYU Wagner Capstone students to analyze how community-based maternal care infrastructure can be strengthened in New York City. Successful maternal outcomes depend on full continuity across prenatal, birth, and postpartum care, yet neighborhoods facing the highest risks often lack sustainable infrastructure. Our team was asked to assess the structural conditions that determine whether maternal care sites can expand, remain operational, and be financially viable. We conducted policy, finance, and regulatory analyses; compared models across FQHC/DOHMH clinics, Article 28 facilities, and other maternal service locations. We also conducted numerous stakeholder interviews with health systems, community providers, maternal care leaders, and finance/architectural experts. The team discovered a viability trap constraining expansion: payment systems designed to reward delivery over continuity, regulatory pathways that create pre-operational risk, and capital barriers that limit provider access. Final deliverables include implementation-ready recommendations, a feasibility tool for Town+Gown to evaluate maternal care models/expansion pathways, and priority areas for further research.

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE DESIGN AND INNOVATION CONSTRAINTS IN PUERTO RICO

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The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is a federal agency within the Department of Health and Human Services that administers Medicare, including Medicare Advantage (MA), a privately delivered program that sets payment, quality, and provider network requirements shaping healthcare delivery, and is committed to improving access, quality, and cost efficiency. This project examines how MA design in Puerto Rico constrains healthcare delivery innovation and overall system performance, a critical issue given the territory's high MA dependence, persistent funding disparities, workforce shortages, and growing chronic disease burden, and what targeted adjustments could improve outcomes. The team synthesized academic research, policy papers, peer-reviewed articles, and stakeholder interview insights from Puerto Rico to address this issue. Their findings highlighted actionable recommendations for CMS, including a diagnostic financial analysis based on CMS and HRSA data, and a literature review examining the feasibility of value-based care, supplemental benefit constraints, and comparative models. These recommendations aim to diagnose CMS Puerto Rico's challenges to advance value-based healthcare for the territory.

HEALTHCARE HERO SIMULATION

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT (EMB)

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In Healthcare Hero, round one involved Capstone students competing against each other, representing two hospitals in an 800,000-resident community over six years. This simulation mattered because sustainably delivering high-quality care to the largest share of admissions requires balancing human resource capacity and economic viability amid internal constraints and external competition. The students were tasked with designing a strategy to optimize operations, maximize admissions, and ensure financial stability, applying evidence-based management practices while analyzing financial data, surgical volumes, resource utilization, and stakeholder feedback to refine workflows and performance. In round two, students worked as a team in assigned leadership roles, developing and sustaining a strategic turnaround plan over five quarters for a hospital facing operational and quality challenges.

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