INSIGHTS REPORT 2020

NATION SWELL | BUILD IT BACK BETTER

DATA FOR GOOD

CULTURE OF CONNECTION, BRIDGING AND BELONGING

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND FUTURE OF WORK

CLIMATE JUSTICE

EDUCATION

WELCOME

1

FRIENDS

Welcome to 'Build It Back Better', a NationSwell initiative designed to surface and advance solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges, to help build a more equitable, inclusive and resilient world for all. This report synthesizes the key insights and impact arising from the Data for Good track within 'Build It Back Better', and we hope you will use it to inform your strategy, collaborations and solution-building going forward.

At NationSwell, our mission is to strengthen society and the planet by helping purpose-driven leaders and organizations take their impact to the next level. We do that by creating the conditions for impact to thrive:

· Creating forums where change-makers can access cross-sector expertise and inspiration to shape strategy and build confidence in solutions;
· Making connections that catalyze meaningful partnerships to accelerate and scale their work;
· Engaging stakeholders through experiences and content designed to drive awareness and action; and
· Providing proximity to resources that empowers innovators to find mission-aligned funders and investors for impact solutions.

'Build It Back Better' represents the culmination of many months of work from across our mission-driven team of strategists, creators, producers and community-builders, and would not have been possible without the inspiring partnership of The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation and AARP.

AARP focuses on eradicating bias against, and creating opportunities for, people over 50, including through the ways we collect and use data for AI and machine learning. The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation is committed to bridging the frontiers of artificial intelligence, data science and social impact, and core to that mission is diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Vilas Dhar — Executive Director of the Foundation — is a passionate advocate for action and humanity around data for good: "My vision of our brighter future is one in which technology amplifies the very best of humanity, our creativity, ingenuity, curiosity, our kindness and our generosity."

Thank you to Vilas, Patrick, Deborah and the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation team; to Jean, Kamili, Lisa, Dorothy and Aiyshen and the AARP and AARP Foundation teams; and to all those who participated with ideas and energy to make this track possible.

With gratitude,

Greg Behrman
NationSwell Founder & CEO

WHAT IS 'BUILD IT BACK BETTER'?

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WHAT IS 'BUILD IT BACK BETTER'?

As the human and economic impact of COVID-19, racial injustice and economic turbulence continue to be felt across the country, strong and informed leadership, and solution-building across sector boundaries, has never been more essential.

We created 'Build It Back Better' to give leaders and organizations — across business, philanthropy, investing, nonprofits, public office and entrepreneurship — the expert, action-focused forums they need to workshop solutions, share resources, spark new connections, raise their profile and form cross-sector coalitions for meaningful change.

In 2020, we facilitated six tracks for inspiration and collaboration around some of the world's most pressing challenges: Climate Justice, Culture of Connection, Bridging & Belonging, Data for Good, Economic Opportunity, Education, and the Future of Work.

Within each track, we worked with our partners to co-design, plan, curate, facilitate and produce a series of expert working sessions and high profile live events. Plus, we created bespoke thought leadership and social content to amplify the solutions and leaders involved, and have synthesized Insights Reports — including this one — for each track that capture the insights and imperatives to drive action.

Next spring, we will launch our next round of expert tracks focused on fostering cross sector 'collaboratives' around solutions to issues including sustainability, health equity, justice reform and more.

How we shape the future of data and AI for social good is among the most important conversations of our age. We were thrilled to partner with NationSwell to engage with technologists, entrepreneurs, and social change leaders to explore how we can use these tools to build it back better. There is much work ahead, and I'm inspired by our collective optimism, innovation and commitment to a brighter future.

Vilas Dhar, President, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

DATA FOR GOOD:
THE CONTEXT

3

HOW MIGHT DATA AND AI DRIVE INNOVATION AND POSITIVE CHANGE?

Data has fast become one of the most powerful and lucrative assets any organization can own, and AI is predicted to contribute around $15 trillion to global GDP by 2030. But our use and reliance on data to inform myriad parts of our lives — what appliance to buy on Black Friday, which doctor to go to, what words to use in our advertising, which stocks to invest in — has fast outpaced our understanding of the ethical and social impact of the web of decisions that sit beneath what we see on our phone screen.

For too long, the majority of people — or governing bodies and influential brands — have not stopped to interrogate: Why did we collect that data? Who made that call? How is the data managed? Who is interpreting the data? What data did they not collect? What assumptions did the person creating the algorithm make? What has changed since then? Who is left out of this chain of influence and innovation?

Anne Mei Chang, author and technology expert, said "Data isn't good or bad, it just magnifies human capacity and flaws." In the last half decade, we have seen the large scale damage that a lack of moral stewardship and human-centered decision making can have when handling data-driven platforms — increasing suicide rates, undermining democracy, allowing opinion to pass as news, and more. It is clear that a new era of ethical and empowered use of data and AI is needed, and there is no time to waste.

With this context, the goal of the Data for Good track was to identify and explore the big ideas and the most meaningful measures that the public, private and philanthropic sectors can take to build capacity, understanding and shared commitment to using data and AI as a tool not just to drive innovation and shareholder value, but to build the society we aspire to; a society that is driven by love and defined by justice and equity for all.

EVENTS

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NationSwell produced and hosted six events in the Data for Good track.

A NEW DIGITAL AGE: DATA AT THE FOREFRONT OF INCLUSION, EQUITY AND JUSTICE

Sept. 24, 2020
Opening public event

Speakers

ANN MEI CHANG
Author, 'Lean Impact'

KAY FIRTH-BUTTERFIELD
Head of AI and Machine Learning,
World Economic Forum

MARTHA HERNANDEZ
CEO & Founder, madeBOS

Moderator

JEFF HOWE
Academic and Wired journalist

Event Decription

To kick off the Data for Good track we held a conversation between experts to discuss the role of data as we look to a better world.

THE ROLE OF DATA IN BUILDING A BETTER WORLD #1

Oct. 1, 2020
Working Group session

Introduced by

PATRICK MCGOVERN III

Trustee, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

Featuring solutions from

KUNAL MERCHANT

Co-Founder of CalOZ

COLLEEN CREIGHTON

CEO of American Association of Suicidology

Participants

CHELSEA COLLIER
Founder, Digi.City

COLLEEN CREIGHTON
CEO, The American Association of Suicidology

CHARLOTTE DOBBS
Chief of Staff, Patrick J McGovern Foundation

MATT GREENFIELD
Managing Partner, Rethink Education

PAULA MAOUYO
VP, Data Strategy, TwoSigma

TERRY MAZANY
Former President & CEO, The Chicago Community Trust

PATRICK MCGOVERN
Trustee, The Patrick McGovern Foundation

KUNAL MERCHANT
Managing Director, Lotus Advisory

DEBORAH O'NEIL
Director of Communications, Patrick McGovern Foundation

JAKE PETERS
CEO + Cofounder, PayPerks

PRASAD RAM
Founder/CEO, Gooru

CLOVIS THORN
Director of Development, Grand Street Settlement

ARTI VARANASI
President & CEO, Advancing Synergy LLC

Event Description

The digital age offers us the opportunity to reimagine the greatest challenges of our times with new agendas, frameworks and approaches. We hosted a working group in our 3-part series with the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, where we explored these new approaches and assessed the role of data in building a better world. The working group unpacked the most compelling and innovative solutions for using data to advance inclusion, equity and justice.

THE ROLE OF DATA IN BUILDING A BETTER WORLD #2

Oct. 6, 2020
Working Group session

Introduced by

PATRICK MCGOVERN III

Trustee, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

Featuring solutions from

RALPH CLARK

President & CEO of ShotSpotter

ALLIE BURNS

CEO of Village Capital

Event Description

Working Group number two in our three-part series where we explored these new approaches and assessed the role of data in building a better world.

Participants

AMON ANDERSON
Director, Acumen America

ALLIE BURNS
CEO, Village Capital

RALPH CLARK
President & CEO, ShotSpotter

MICHAEL DIX
CEO & Founder, Intentional Futures

CHARLOTTE DOBBS
Chief of Staff, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

WHITNEY HUNTER-THOMPSON
Board Chair, Atlas Corps

CHARLES KING
CEO, Kansas City Teacher Equivalency

AILUN KU
CEO Opportunity Network

TERRY MAZANY
SVP for Philanthropy, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

SHAWN OLDS
CEO, BoodleAI

DEBORAH O'NEIL
Director of Communications, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

JULIA RAFAL-BAER
COO, Chiefs for Change

ARTI PATEL VARANASI
President & CEO, Advancing Synergy

THE ROLE OF DATA IN BUILDING A BETTER WORLD #3

Oct. 14, 2020
Working Group session

Introduced by

PATRICK MCGOVERN III

Trustee, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

Featuring solutions from

MEHDI JAMEI

Lead Data Scientist at System

SHEILA DAVIS

CEO of Partners In Health

Event Description

Working Group number three in our three-part series where we explored these new approaches and assessed the role of data in building a better world.

Participants

RACHEL AICHER
Director of Advocacy & Partnerships, International Legal Foundation

MARIANNE BERKOVICH
Senior Manager, Teladoc Health

JEAN-CLAUDE BRIZARD
Senior Advisor, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

JENNIFER BUTLER
Director of State & Local Government Relations, Zillow

BONNIE CHIU
Social Entrepreneur including Lensational, Humanity Data Systems

ERIC CLEMENT
Managing Director, NYC Economic Development Corp

SHEILA DAVIS
CEO, Partners in Health

CHARLOTTE DOBBS
Chief of Staff, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

LATOYA GAYLE
Social entrepreneur in residence at Boston Schools Fund

MEHDI JAMEI
Lead Data Scientist at System

MADELINE KERNER
CEO, Matriculate

MATT LAESSIG
COO & Co-founder, data.world

PATRICK MCGOVERN III
Foundation Trustee, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

DEBORAH O'NEIL
Director of Communications, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

JASON PALMER
General Partner, New Markets Venture Partners

ALEXANDER PAXTON
Head of Data Insights, Data Elevates

HOWARD PYLE
SVP Global Experience & Design, MetLife

PRASAD RAM
Co-founder & CEO, Gooru

GRACE RODRIGUEZ
CEO, Impact Hub Houston

ADDRESSING BIAS BIAS IN DATA

Oct. 20, 2020
Working Group session

DOROTHY SIEMON

Senior Vice President, AARP

Featuring solutions from

NATALIE DIX

Founder of Campfire Analytics

MICHAEL OWEN

Principal at MediaCombo

Event Description

In partnership with AARP, we hosted a working group on how we might leverage AI for good to tackle the innate biases that are present in machine learning technologies. The working group surfaced ideas on what innovative solutions exist to identify the main sources of data bias and make these tools more inclusive and representative of all communities.

Participants

JULIA ALEXANDER
Chief Product Officer, ExecOnline

BRANDON ANDERSON
Founder, Raheem

CHRISTINA CHIN
Senior Program Strategy Manager, Pivotal Ventures

JESS DALY
Director of Global Health, Medtronic Foundation

NATALIE DIX
Founder, Campfire Analytics

CHRISTINA FITZPATRICK
Policy Development & Integration Director, AARP

SAM FUCHS
Program Associate, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

IAN HARTMAN-O'CONNELL
Policy Integration Director, AARP

MELISSA MOOREHEAD
Policy Strategist, Michigan Public Health Institute

MICHAEL OWEN
Principal, MediaCombo

AIYSHEN PADILLA
VP Corporate Partnerships & Strategic Alliances, AARP

DOROTHY SIEMON
SVP, AARP

JENN WOLFF
Leadership Program Coordinator, BACKBONES

ELISSA YANCEY
Co-founder, A Picture's Worth

A VISION FOR AI AND DATA SCIENCE GUIDED BY A LOVE FOR HUMANITY

Oct. 26, 2020
Closing public event

Speakers

VILAS DHAR
President, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

GREG BEHRMAN
CEO & Founder, NationSwell

Event Decription

In an increasingly digital-enabled world, data science and artificial intelligence hold tremendous potential to shape a thriving, equitable, and sustainable future for all. We will need new actors and institutions in tech, a shared vocabulary and most importantly, a commitment to serving humanity. To close out the track, we hosted a fireside conversation between Foundation President Vilas Dhar and NationSwell CEO Greg Behrman on a new ethos for AI and data science centered around a love for humanity.

INSIGHTS & RESOURCES

5

'Aha moments' that can shape your thinking, and powerful evergreen ideas to take forward into how you approach your work

1

"DATA ISN'T GOOD OR BAD. IT JUST MAGNIFIES HUMAN CAPACITY AND FLAWS."

- Ann Mei Chang

Attitudinal and unconscious problems exist in the management and collection of data making it essential to have a diversity of experience represented in the design process.

2

WE MUST "DECONSTRUCT TO RECONSTRUCT" TO DECOLONIZE DATA

The data economy most often perpetuates existing inequalities including along racial and gender lines. We can't afford to just accept the data we have on issues; we have to interrogate how it was collected, managed and analyzed, who owns those actions and how the data is used, in order to understand the inequities that lie beneath the analytics.

3

WE NEED TO RESET TO OPTIMISM: FIND WAYS TO BUILD TRUST IN DATA AND AI WITHOUT BEING NAIVE

The media often weaves a negative story, focusing on people and organizations that have used their power over people's data for personal or commercial gain, or to inflict hurt on others. But we also need to celebrate the positive story of technology and data, like the invisible wins (e.g. how AI is being used in electricity to improve efficiency of the grid).

4

IF IT'S NOT WRITTEN DOWN, IT CAN'T BE ANALYZED

We need to make sure that a nuanced, human-centered set of data is collected, digitized and factored into analysis, including qualitative data (e.g. how people feel, their perceptions) and harder to reach data (e.g. social determinants of health becoming part of electronic health records).

5

IF IT'S A SYSTEMS PROBLEM, SOLVE IT AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL. DON'T BLAME THE INDIVIDUAL.

Government and policy is a linchpin for providing the infrastructure, funding and incentives that can ensure certain data is collected, and to regulate and permit innovation in data usage (e.g. Family First Protection Act requiring care workers to enquire about food insecurity).

6

"WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE DATA WE DON'T HAVE AND HAVE NOT BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO."

- Ann Mei Chang

There is bias, structural racism and human cost built into the decisions on what data is collected and what is not (e.g. school detentions and suspension data is readily available, but visits to the nurse or school meal data is not).

7

DATA IS NOT KNOWLEDGE

You can be DRIP (Data Rich Information Poor) and we need to close the loop between what we collect and what we learn.

8

HOW YOU USE DATA IS AS IMPORTANT AS COLLECTING IT

E.g. One Miami police force identified a gun violence hotspot in a disused gym (using Shotspotter data) and decided to effectively reduced gun violence by organizing regular basketball games at that location.

9

DON'T FORGET THE IMPORTANCE OF HOW DATA IS PRESENTED

UX and UI are hugely important in connecting data to people, and we should focus on how UX can help address inequities, or would perpetuate them if left untouched.

10

OUTCOMES ARE INFLUENCED BY WHAT DATA WE "VALUE" MORE THAN OTHERS

For example, medical schools are ranked by U.S. News and World Report on criteria such as NIH funding; but shouldn't they also be ranked on social mission — such as rates graduates are working with underserved populations at graduation and 5 years out, number of diverse admitted students/graduates?

RESOURCES

Websites, books, news articles and organizations that offer vital context, detail and solutions on this issue

ORGANIZATIONS & INITIATIVES

- 360 Giving
- AI4All
- Arena
- BrightHive
- Boodle.ai
- Burning Glass
- CalOz

- Center for Humane Technology
- Center for Policing Equity
- CoCensus
- Code For America
- Commit Partnership
- Data 2 the People
- Data Elevates
- Data Justice Lab
- DataKind
- Data.org Inclusive Growth Challenge

- Education Design Lab
- Gooru
- Hurry Home
- Inrupt
- Listen4Good
- Open Data Day
- Opportunity Insights
- Policy Platform for Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Network, WEF
- Power of 2

- Public Welfare Foundation
- Quartolio
- Safe & Peaceful Communities Fund
- ShotSpotter
- System
- Topl
- Warriors Connect
- Youth Guidance

TOOLS

- The Linux Foundation Data Values and Principles plus Courseware (inspired by the Agile manifesto for software development)

- Chicago Beyond's Research Equity Guidebook
- U.S. Govt Digital Services Playbook
- Google Data Studio
- UK Govt Indices of Deprivation
- Code For America's Clear My Record

- Big Easy Budget Game
- Houston COVID map
- Participatory Budgeting
- Crisis Text Line
- Creative Reaction Lab's Field Guide
- Consortium on School Research

- COVID Racial Data Tracker

RESOURCES

Websites, books, news articles and organizations that offer vital context, detail and solutions on this issue
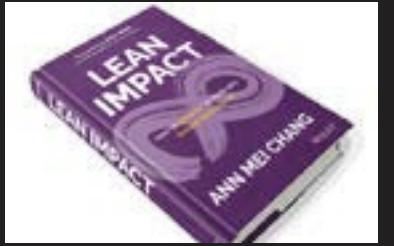
Lean Impact by Ann Mei Chang

Mastercard CEO interview on Technology's Role in Recovery on CSIS Philadelphia's Smart City Director on using data to build resiliency: "Working with State of Place, a data analytics company that's measuring Philadelphia's urban layout, Yates said the city is trying to ensure agencies use the data to update residents on how, when and where they're doing their job."

7 Factors That Could Hold Countries Back & Limit AI

What we can learn from In Bloom — a failed data project that ensures we ask: is there a demand for the data?

Developing AI Standards For Children

The Social Dilemma

HBR podcast on digital ID in Estonia

SOLUTIONS

6

SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

Relevant, cutting-edge solutions — both global and local — to explore and consider supporting

COMMUNITY DRIVEN INSIGHTS TOOLS

Such as CoCensus, have the power to gather data on "the most relevant voices, not just the loudest voices" in a community, unlike a traditional Town Hall setting.

DATA LAKES

That allow people more control over their own data e.g. an Institution Learning Data Lake developed to allow a school to control access of student data on the students' behalf — so students, not the tool providers, own the data.

COMMUNITY SOLUTION BUILDING PLATFORMS

Like Blue Ridge Labs (created by Robinhood Foundation), where technology and solution builders can tap into community feedback and collaboration to ensure their solutions are designed to meet real needs.

CREATING GUIDELINES FOR EQUITABLE BEST PRACTICE ON HOW TO USE YOUR DATA

Like ShotSpotter asking police to respond first by checking on people's welfare in the area where gunshots are detected.

NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

ALCOVE VR

Alcove is a VR platform for content with a mission to bring intergenerational families together. When you can't physically be in the same room, or even on the same continent, you can use Alcove to join family members and friends of all ages in a virtual living room to create new memories.

"VR can show people what it's like to be on the receiving end of bias; it's possible to help people understand and to build from there."

— Michael Owen, Principal at MediaCombo (collaborators on Alcove VR)

To find out more visit **www.alcovevr.com**

NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

CAMPFIRE ANALYTICS

Campfire is an analytics collective specializing in digital data collection, synthesis, and activation. Their mission is to build sustainable analytics solutions for companies large and small — solutions that are flexible, scalable, and easy for your teams to maintain over time.

"Observed behavior is a better predictor than demographic data. There's a tendency to draw inferences from demographic data based on our own biases, and those feed into content personalization and customer acquisition strategies."

— Natalie Dix, Founder of Campfire Analytics

CAMPFIRE ANALYTICS

To find out more visit **www.campfireanalytics.com**

NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

PARTNERS IN HEALTH

Partners In Health believes healthcare is a cure for injustice, and so they work with governments and other partners to provide access to healthcare to the poorest communities around the world. Their theory of change — providing care, training, influence and then replication of the model — is dependent on data to understand community needs and their impact.

"In countries like Malawi and Sierra Leone we use hand held household surveys: compiling information to make sure people are connecting to care and make sure we're using the info as a predictive tool to anticipate what care is needed, such as knowing how many women are at reproductive age. Also, remember, that data doesn't dictate action — so we put feedback loops in so we can implement care in the right places quickly."

— Sheila Davis, CEO of Partners In Health

Partners In Health

To find out more visit **www.pih.org**

NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

SHOTSPOTTER

ShotSpotter developed unique precision policing technology that allows agencies to quickly detect gunshots and other incident details. They are able to effectively reduce gun crime by promoting a data-informed, community-first approach: providing communities and law enforcement with accurate, unbiased data and guidance on how to use it in the most humane way.

"Public safety outcomes are created by community engagement, so we urge agencies to knock on at least three doors after getting a ShotSpotter alert, not to get those people to snitch but to check on their welfare: 'I'm here to check if you're ok.'"

— Ralph Clark, CEO & President, ShotSpotter

ShotSpotter

To find out more visit **www.shotspotter.com**

NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

SYSTEM (IN BETA)

System is a new platform co-founded by NationSwell member Mehdi Jamei, with the mission to move our knowledge from silos to systems and allow system thinking and decision making at large scale. The platform is still in beta, and organizations with large data sets are encouraged to collaborate.

"At System, one of the goals we have is to create a living dictionary of variables and universal definitions to align on what we are measuring."

— Mehdi Jamei, Lead Data Scientist

To find out more visit beta.system.com

NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

VILLAGE CAPITAL

Village Capital is a radically different type of investment firm: committed to reinventing the system of investment in order to break the monoculture in technology, by supporting and investing in a diverse range of early stage businesses that are working on solving economic inequality and human inclusion. 46% of their portfolio companies are founded by women, and they consider themselves not just investors but coaches, connectors and catalysts for change.

"Take fintech: How do we move from financial inclusion to financial health i.e. not just access, but the ability to use that account to build a better life? We are invested in startups like Hurry Home, that works with consumers who don't traditionally qualify, using data on rental history to create an alternative to credit scores so you can purchase a home."

— Allie Burns, CEO of Village Capital

Village Capital

To find out more visit **www.vilcap.com**
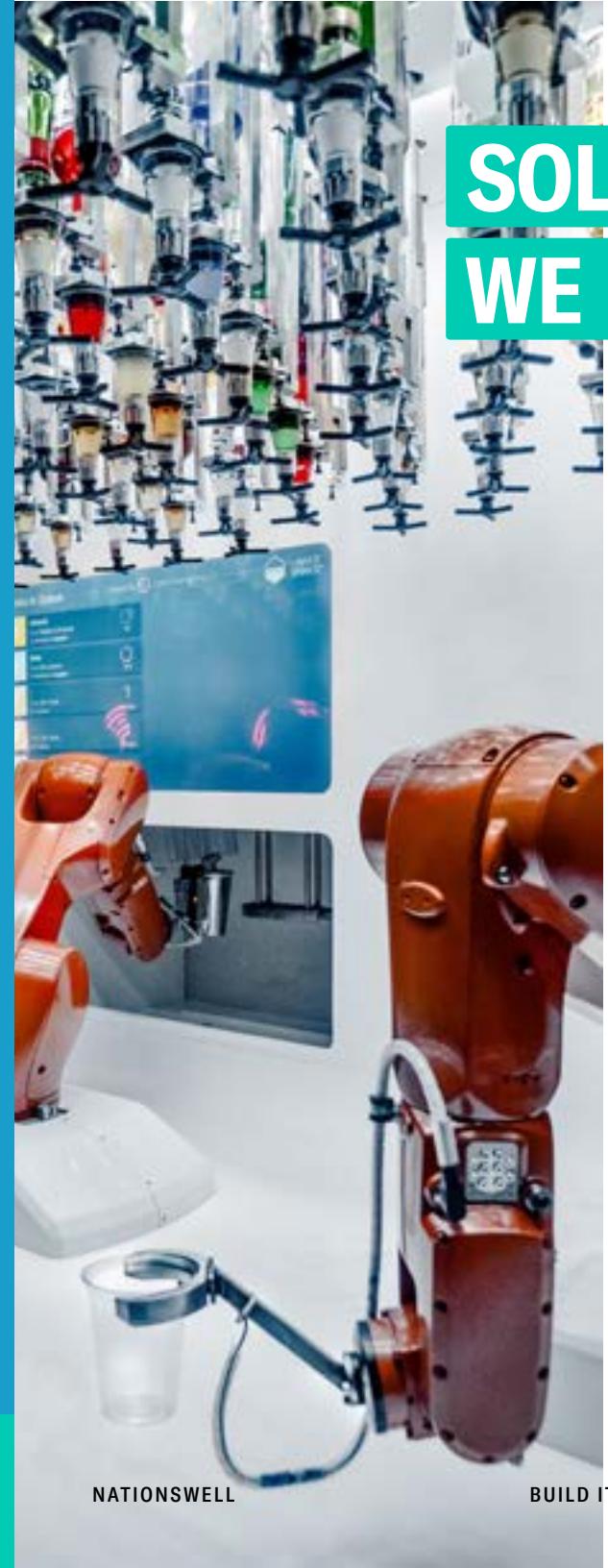
SOLUTIONS
WE NEED

Solutions that our group of experts identified that address an urgent, unmet need

## INSTITUTIONS TO STEP UP TO BE DATA STEWARDS (PARTICULARLY NONPROFITS)

"Who owns our data and what they do with it are perhaps the two most important questions of our age. Asking individuals to become their own data stewards is asking too much …Nonprofits are uniquely positioned to serve this role." — Vilas Dhar and Patrick McGovern (see more detail in their Op-Ed on pages 34-35 below)

LONG TERM INVESTMENTS IN DATA INFRASTRUCTURE TO ESTABLISH TRUST

An orientation towards short-term results, driven by philanthropic funders, has made it difficult to secure funding to build the infrastructure necessary to help people next year. We need a reorientation towards long-term investments e.g. transparent and unbiased data collection, storage and usage practices.

NEW METRICS BY WHICH TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Our current KPIs lack the nuance and humanity to measure impact today e.g. instead of defining societal success by employment rates and inflation, how do we measure wellness and the ability to thrive? To do so would allow us to improve decision-making and resource allocation at all levels of government & society.
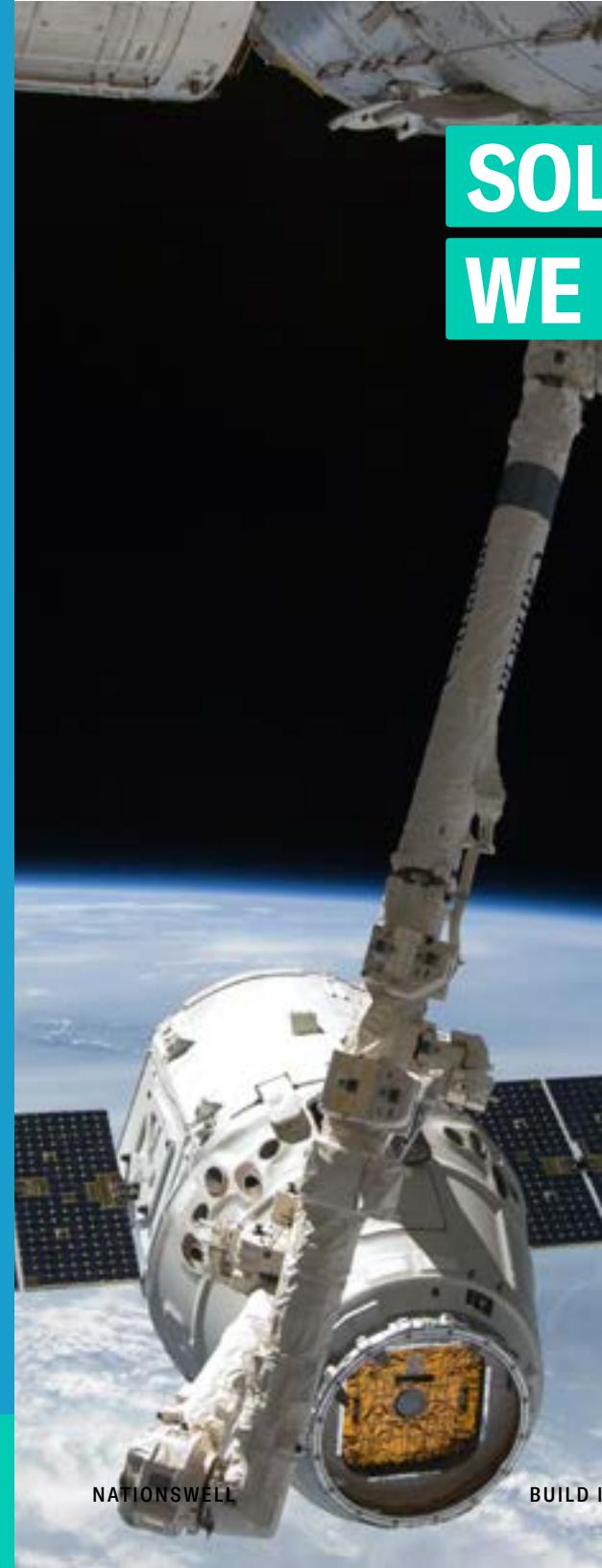
SOLUTIONS WE NEED

Solutions that our group of experts identified that address an urgent, unmet need

A CLEAR, SHARED SET OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DATA & AI, THAT ARE WELL-KNOWN AND WELL-USED

Technology and data organizations need training in how to be stewards of an ethical mission: a common framework to embrace the same values and principles that we can then apply to practices and technologies; Perhaps a simple one-pager that captures data definitions, data resolution, data privacy, open data principles...including testable propositions so individuals can evaluate whether they are acting effectively and ethically or not.

A LONG TERM VISION FOR AMERICA'S USE OF TECH AND DATA FOR PUBLIC GOOD

"What is our country's position on developing technology for the public interest? It's currently only talked about by the government in the military context." — Vilas Dhar

We need the government to use our technological prowess to do good around the world, and incentivise others to do so. Could we/should we create a U.S. Department of Data that fills the data gaps, breaks down silos, and creates data sets as public goods? Would that need to be a public/private partnership to ensure trust and accountability?

CAPACITY BUILDING AT SCALE

Within organizations (particularly nonprofits and underserved communities) there is a lack of capacity and skills when it comes to collecting and using data & AI — many need support to become more "data mature" e.g. skills training, multilingual databases that speak to each other.

RELEVANT
CONTENT

7

TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, NONPROFITS MUST BECOME DATA GUARDIANS

Dec. 2020
by Vilas Dhar & Patrick McGovern

Data use and ownership is concentrated in a few tightly held hands. Those few hands make decisions about how the data of billions of individuals is used, re-used and shared. Who owns our data and what they do with it are perhaps the two most important questions of our age. Asking individuals to become their own data stewards is asking too much — between baffling usage agreements, online scraping, and more. We need institutions to step forward.

Nonprofits are uniquely positioned to serve this role. As charitable organizations, they are already holders of the public trust. They also have the capacity (with a little work) to understand data at an institutional level – identifying relationships between the harms or vulnerabilities they fight and the population they serve. To see just a few examples of that, look to health-oriented nonprofits that advocate for delivery of federal services based on census data or environmental nonprofits that can monitor air quality and pollution.

In a world where data has become a driver of both opportunity and vulnerability, nonprofits across the spectrum of social change need to equip themselves to serve as champions for data used in just and equitable ways. To build it back better, they must become data guardians for the constituencies they serve.

We see the problem in the "Asterisk Nation" — a name coined by the National Congress of American Indians to describe Indigenous populations who were represented so poorly in federal data sets that they were simply described with an asterisk. The Congress advocates for "accurate,

meaningful, and timely data collection in American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities."

We're beginning to see how cooperatives and nonprofits like NCAI are stepping forward to become data advocates and take control of data gathering and stewardship in these communities to present a new face to federal service providers, and to demand what is just. This same model could happen across the data landscape if we equip nonprofits with this capacity.

Investment in nonprofits to build data capacity, to understand the interplay between data stewardship and their core missions, and to equip them to become effective advocates can rebalance the existing power dynamic of data stewardship – to move voice and agency into the hands of public institutions, and ultimately into the hands of individuals themselves. For non-profits, it means building data capacity and maturity, whether that is done internally or through partnership. New programs

and projects should integrate data planning, stewardship and advocacy — and seek support for these functions. For philanthropy, it means recognizing that building these data capacities is critical for programmatic success and prioritizing support for these efforts.

Among the challenges we should aim to overcome is any sensibility that would suggest data and technology are either too complex to understand, or outside of our control and responsibility. We can make progress on this by first developing our shared vocabulary for what data is, how it's generated and why and how data is used in the world.

CALLS TO ACTION

8

Imperatives for leaders and organizations alike that surfaced from our experts across the track.

1

DON'T LET BIASES INFLUENCE WHAT DATA YOU CHOOSE TO COLLECT

For example, employers might look for data about the employees they want to promote, but fail to collect data on those they "think they know" already, thus there is "already a decision put on people without having data available, based just around bias." — Martha Hernandez, CEO, madeBOS

2

ESTABLISH CLEAR DATA STRATEGIES FOR YOUR WORK

To guide your staff and collaborators, consider and codify how you will collect & use data to drive towards your mission and advance equity; invite stakeholders into that process, and consider using an equity-centered community engagement tool like Creative Reaction Lab's Field Guide.

3

TAKE THE IDEA OF DOING GOOD AS SERIOUSLY AS YOU DO YOUR PROFIT MARGIN/EFFICIENCY

Get the data to measure how much good you are doing — qualitatively and quantitatively — and hold yourself accountable to doing more. Mission driven orgs usually track the # of people reached, but we also need to collect data that shows us how effective the work is.

4

ESTABLISH FEEDBACK LOOPS WITH THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE (NOT JUST YOUR FUNDER)

Ensure you are always starting with, and coming back to, what the beneficiary of your work needs and is experiencing, in order to maximize the impact —not just the 'efficiency — of your work and organization.

5

BREAK DOWN SILOS IN YOUR WORK

We don't live in silos, so why should our data? Consider ways to make your data collection and use more intersectional e.g. could we layer demographic data into medical data? And funders should explore how to incentivize their grantees for efficient data sharing.

6

DON'T ASSUME YOU NEED TO START FROM SCRATCH

Ask yourself: 'What question do I want to answer' and 'Has anyone already gathered answers to that question' before you start to gather data. Also consider 'What accuracy of data do I need?' E.g. Census data is only every 10 years, but is that resolution of data needed to answer your question or will other methods do?

7

COMPANIES: HOW CAN YOU USE TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS FOR STAKEHOLDER VALUE?

Not just shareholder value e.g. you have the chance to build 50% efficiency into a supply chain. Do you take that money as a dividend or do you use it to do good?

8

PHILANTHROPISTS: HOW CAN THESE TOOLS ADVANCE THE WORK YOU ARE DOING?

And do you need to shift from funding programs to also funding infrastructure e.g. becoming data stewards to share data between non profits

EMERGING IMPACT

At NationSwell, our goal is to create the conditions for impact to thrive — and specifically, this track was designed to surface solutions, diversify experts' perspectives and catalyze new collaborations to accelerate impact around Data for Good. We are excited to share several ways in which that impact is starting to emerge.

1

Patrick J. McGovern Foundation aspires to develop a shared vocabulary for what data is, how it's generated and how it's used in the world

2

NationSwell is connecting Patrick J. McGovern Foundation to several participants to explore further support for their work

3

Brandon Anderson & Jenn Wolff connected to discuss how Brandon embeds a disability lens into Raheem.ai

4

NationSwell connecting Howard Pyle with potential collaborators for his new foundation focused on using UI/UX for good

WITH THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

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THANK YOU

For more information,
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