

# Data Tool Playbook

Using data to address equity challenges in local government

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Centre for  
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Center for  
Inclusive Growth

# About

*Data for Equity* introduced local governments and public servants to data tools that can help inform policies related to creating an inclusive economy, particularly for Black and other communities of color. A broad variety of tools were presented during the cohort, ranging in focus from resident financial health to city workforce development to the distribution of ARPA funds.

Our Tool Playbook features data tools from the cohort that can be used by other local governments and public servants. It aims to provide the information needed to increase inclusive and equitable growth in their economies. The tools listed in this section reference different components of the economy and identify areas of growth, and/or provide pathways for growth.

The Tool Playbook is divided into categories to allow public servants to find tools most pertinent to their work:

- Economic health and inclusion indicators
- Workforce and job industry
- ARPA and federal funding
- Urban space and environmental
- Personal finance
- Broadband access

*Note: the Tool Playbook does not include resources focused on racial and gender equity. While these identities factor into tools in the list, future iterations of this Tool Playbook will include dedicated racial and gender equity tools.*



# Economic health and inclusion indicator tools

This section covers data tools that provide an overview of factors related to an inclusive economy, like economic growth, social progress, and economic resilience data.

<b>Inclusive Growth Score   Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth</b>	
<p><b>Key words:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inclusive economy</li><li>• Economic health</li><li>• Census-level data</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tool</a>   <a href="#">User manual</a></p>	<p>The <a href="#">Inclusive Growth Score</a> is a public-access tool created by the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, our partner in the <i>Data for Equity</i> cohort. It measures the economic health and economic inclusion of census tracts across the U.S. using 18 key metrics. The Score is a percentile rank, with data available for each of the 18 metrics, averaged to create a single score for each census tract.</p> <p>The Inclusive Growth Score tool provides local planners, governments, and decision makers with a clear, simple view of social and economic indicators for any census tract in the US. Users can explore different economic indicators like infrastructure, business growth, and social conditions at the city, neighborhood, and community levels. We recommend using this tool when a broader picture of economic inclusion and growth is needed to implement and design policy interventions, track the health of communities over time, and compare neighboring census tracts for prioritizing investment and initiatives.</p>
<b>Data Labs Playbook   The Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation The National Governors Association</b>	
<p><b>Key words:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation</li><li>• Data project</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tool</a></p>	<p>The <a href="#">Data Labs Playbook</a> is a practical guide for public servants who want to launch a data-informed project in their state. Each section offers best practices, key questions, and tactical tools to use to advance any data project action plan, whether the project is new or existing. The information can be used to build trust, support economic stability, and ensure the effective use of data to inform policy solutions and maximize project benefits for residents.</p>
<b>Response Outreach Area Mapper   U.S. Census Bureau</b>	
<p><b>Key words:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement</li><li>• Surveys</li><li>• Hard-to-reach areas</li><li>• Census-level data</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tool</a>   <a href="#">User manual</a>   <a href="#">Quick tips</a>   <a href="#">Data dictionary</a></p>	<p>The <a href="#">Response Outreach Area Mapper</a> (ROAM) application was developed to make it easier to identify hard-to-survey areas and to provide a socioeconomic and demographic characteristic profile of these areas using American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. It provides a Low Response Score, i.e. a "predicted mail non-response rate", for each census-tract area of the U.S. ROAM was last updated in June 2019 and uses multiple datasets from 2013-2019.</p> <p>Learning about each <a href="#">hard-to-survey area</a> allows governments and other relevant actors to create tailored communication and partnership campaigns, and to plan for field resources including hiring staff with language skills.</p>
<b>Rural Opportunity Map   Center on Rural Innovation</b>	
<p><b>Key words:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rural communities</li><li>• Rural innovation</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tool</a></p>	<p>The <a href="#">Rural Opportunity Map</a> is a suite of data visualization and mapping tools to help local leaders, national policymakers, investors, and donors see the potential in rural America. The tools contain hundreds of economic, health, education, and other datasets curated to give community-level insights into tech- and innovation-based economic development strategies and opportunities. The map tools were last updated in 2019.</p>

## NAACP Black Progress Index | Brookings Metro NAACP

### Key words:

- Black cities
- Black progress
- Well-being
- City-level data

[Tool](#) | [Report](#)

NAACP and Brookings Metro partnered to create the [Black Progress Index](#), a new analysis of the places where Black people are thriving most, as measured through their life expectancy. The Index supports a greater understanding of the well-being of Black people in cities and counties across the U.S., and the conditions that impact their lives. It was released in September 2022 and uses 2018-2020 data sourced from the University of Wisconsin's County Health Rankings and Roadmaps program.

This tool can be used when an understanding of the quality of life and prediction of life expectancy of Black people is needed. For instance, local governments can use this tool to identify factors that would increase life expectancy for Black residents and direct investments and resources to these areas.

## U.S. Social Progress Map | Social Progress Imperative

### Key words:

- Social progress
- Growth
- Census-level data

[Tool](#) | [Overview](#)

This interactive map created by the [Social Progress Imperative](#) uses 60 social and environmental indicators across the 12 components that make up the Social Progress Index®. It provides the first-ever analysis of social progress outcomes offering consistent, comparable insights across 169 countries fully and an additional 27 countries partially. This tool state, city, and census-tract level data, and was last updated at the end of 2022. Social and environmental data across all 50 states in the U.S. and 500 of the nation's top cities, down to 34,000 neighborhoods will be added.

Policymakers, businesses, organizations, and community members can use the index to identify areas of need, map spending against results, and learn what works in a bid to replicate and scale efforts across communities.

## My Community Explorer | U.S. Census Bureau

### Key words:

- Resilience
- Underserved areas
- Census-level data

[Tool](#) | [Video walkthrough](#)

The [My Community Explorer](#) dashboard provides selected demographic, business, and resilience information to help users identify potentially underserved areas of their State, Counties, and communities. Data from multiple sources, and primarily from 2019, are used to estimate individual and household risk factors and resilience to shocks. The data are presented in maps, interactive dashboards, and tables at the U.S. state, county, or census tract level. The tool was last updated in February 2023.

This tool can be used to understand inequality and to help determine what resources counties in the United States need in order to support their communities. For example, a government worker who focuses on economic development can use this tool to analyze the income-to-poverty ratio in their county.

## NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard | Argonne National Laboratory Economic Development Administration

### Key words:

- Resilience
- Economic recovery
- EDD level data

[Tool](#)

In partnership with the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), Argonne developed the [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer](#) (NERDE) to provide a variety of users across the country with data to assist in local economic recovery and resilience analysis. The tool presents economic distress, demographic, workforce, local economy, industry and risk and resilience indicators at a U.S. county-level. Data is verified regularly.

The NERDE Economic Development District tool can be utilized by governments, academia, and industry to identify and assess specific needs areas within the United States, and to provide informed assistance for communities to recover from periods of economic distress.

# Workforce and job industry tools

The tools featured in this section focus on the American workforce and the job industry. These tools aim to support economic development workers or workforce development officials with creating strategic plans for expanding the workforce and/or industries in their cities.

## Smart Growth Strategies | The Brookings Workforce of the Future Initiative

**Key words:**

- Job industries
- Industry development
- MSA level data

[Tool](#) | [Tutorial](#)

[Smart Growth Strategies](#) is part of the suite of tool offerings from the Brookings Workforce of the Future initiative, which aims to address the growing divide among people and places in the U.S. by empowering companies, workers, and regions. This tool provides data-driven insights into the forces shaping labor markets. Local industry and workforce data originate from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Esmi Burning Glass, and the University of Minnesota, and are available at the U.S. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Economic Development District (EDD) levels. The index was last updated in 2022.

The Smart Growth Strategies tool is designed for regional economic and workforce development officials. In three steps, it allows users to evaluate tradeoffs among various strategies for industry growth and high-quality, equitable job creation, and provides details about each strategy's feasibility and implications for the local workforce.

## Stellarsight STARs Strategy Dashboard | Opportunity@Work

**Key words:**

- Job opportunities,
- Inclusive workforce development
- Diversity
- County-level data

[Tool](#)

[Stellarsight](#) enables users to create a workforce strategy and confidently source skilled workers based on the latest national labor market data. Prioritizing skills opens access to more than half of U.S. workers who are [Skilled Through Alternative Routes \(STARs\)](#); i.e. through work experience that serves as an alternative pathway to obtaining a traditional college degree. STARs are a diverse talent pool with the skills for in-demand jobs that they gained from on-the-job experience, military service, and community college, among other alternative routes. This tool provides data on the skills and talent landscape, and occupation information by region, county and neighborhood.

This tool can be used by employers who are diversifying their workforce and working to meet DEIB hiring goals, as well as to support people who are often excluded from the workforce due to educational barriers to entry.

## Mobility Pathways | The Brookings Workforce of the Future Initiative

**Key words:**

- Job industry
- Inclusive workforce
- MSA-level data

[Tool](#) | [Tutorial](#) | [Video example](#)

Navigating the labor market as a job seeker can be overwhelming. The [Mobility Pathways](#) tool aims to clarify professional trajectories by illuminating realistic upward pathways through the labor market. It features national and city-by-city data on wage levels, labor demand and job mobility rankings for 441 occupations. The tool also includes the mobility index which refers to the future prospects of workers in an occupation. The tool was last modified in October 2022.

The tool can help employers identify the right workers to address staffing needs. It suggests industries and occupations where recruiters might find individuals likely to succeed, perhaps with some targeted training or upskilling. The mobility pathways tool is also meant to help local policymakers design and facilitate workforce development efforts and create talent pipelines.

## Visualizing Vulnerable Jobs | The Brookings Workforce of the Future Initiative

**Key words:**

- Workforce
- Vulnerable jobs
- MSA-level data
- Industry growth

[Tool](#) | [Article on purpose and use](#)

[Visualizing Vulnerable Jobs Across America](#) is a new interactive tool from the Workforce of the Future initiative to help local policymakers better understand job vulnerability by sector and subsector for 380 metropolitan areas and 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The tool also allows for comparison between different areas by incorporating detailed data on the scale and dispersion of vulnerable jobs from sources such as the 2018 American Community Survey, 2018 and 2019 Occupational Employment Statistics, and Emsi. It was last updated in 2020.

Local leaders can use this information to identify where job vulnerability exists in their economies and devise ways to enhance workers' resilience to economic shocks as localities recover and grow.

## Roadmap to Growing Good Jobs | Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth The Brookings Workforce of the Future Initiative

**Key words:**

- Economic opportunity
- Industry growth
- City-level data

[Tool](#) | [Article on purpose and impact](#) | [Background on data and methodology](#)

The [Roadmap to Growing Good Jobs](#) uses labor market data from 25 American cities to provide insights on local labor market dynamics and employment prospects. The tool analyzes each city's unique capabilities—including infrastructure, talent, and institutions—and helps leaders map new opportunities to grow sectors based on their city's strengths and priorities. The tool was last updated in February 2020.

Government leaders and community members can learn where their city stands now and how they can embrace the future with an inclusive economy tailored to the particular strengths of that region.

## Where Low-Income Jobs Are Being Lost to COVID-19 | Urban Institute

**Key words:**

- COVID-19
- Job growth
- County-level data

[Tool](#)

The neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19 job losses are home to workers in industries like tourism and transportation, which are bearing the brunt of the economic shutdown. To identify which neighborhoods are most at risk, the "[Where Low-Income Jobs Are Being Lost to COVID-19](#)" tool estimates how many low-income jobs (i.e. annual earnings below \$40,000) have been lost by workers living in each census tract or were at risk when stay-at-home orders were in place. It also estimates the rate of low-income job loss by industry. Estimates are based on the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Current Employment Statistics data for monthly employment by industry and on 2014–18 five-year American Community Survey (ACS) IPUMS USA microdata. The tool was last updated in August 2021.

This tool is intended to help nonprofits, foundations, and government target support where it's most needed. This tool has not been updated since August 2021, so it may be helpful in understanding the impacts of the first one and a half years of the pandemic and identifying any ongoing disruptions.

# ARPA and federal funding tools

The tools presented in this section provide information on American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds, and other federal grant funds. While some tools present information on where local governments should funnel money to support equity initiatives, others report where funds have been allocated. One tool focuses on meeting the grant threshold for grants regarding unemployment and income.

<b>The ARP Toolkit</b>   Southern Economic Advancement Project Roosevelt Institute	
<b>Key words:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Federal funding</li><li>• ARPA</li><li>• Equity</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tool</a>   <a href="#">ARP spending tracker</a></p>	<p><a href="#">SEAP's ARP</a> toolkit includes a range of resources to help local governments and community advocates decide where and how to funnel ARP funds while centering equity initiatives. SEAP aims to provide local governments with the insight to make equitable investments that encourage recovery and accelerate progress towards long-term goals. The toolkit supports this aim through the inclusion of materials such as an Equity in Engagement Reporting Template, an Equity and Outcomes Resource Guide, Grab-n-Go Policies, and an <a href="#">ARP spending tracker</a>. The tracker provides data at the state, city and county level to assist local leaders with understanding how State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds are being allocated. It shows ARP spending by category, remaining funds and project details. Data was last updated in February 2023.</p>
<b>ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Allocations Dashboard</b>   National Conference of State Legislatures	
<b>Key words:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Federal funding</li><li>• ARPA</li><li>• State-level data</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tool</a>   <a href="#">Methodology</a>   <a href="#">How states are spending stimulus funds</a></p>	<p>This <a href="#">dashboard</a> reports how state legislatures have allocated ARPA funds to all states and U.S. territories. It presents allocations by category and includes descriptions on how the funds were used. Users can also access proposals submitted to the federal government by community organizations, city governments, and nonprofits seeking ARPA funding for recovery projects. Data is available from April 2021 to February 2023.</p>
<b>Measuring Distress: Grant Threshold Tool</b>   StatsAmerica U.S. Economic Development Agency	
<b>Key words:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grants</li><li>• Federal funding,</li><li>• County-level and census-level data</li></ul> <p><a href="#">County-level tool</a>   <a href="#">Census-tract tool</a>   <a href="#">User manual</a></p>	<p>The Grant Threshold tool provides users with a fast and simple way to calculate whether a county, region, or neighborhood may meet federal or state grant thresholds for unemployment and income. The tool presents economic distress criteria including the 24-month average Bureau of Labor Statistics Unemployment Rate, Per Capita Personal Income and Per Capita Money Income. It compares data for the selected area to the U.S. average. The tool also outputs economic demographic characteristics for the selected area. Data is available from January 2000 and is updated monthly; the last update was March 2023.</p> <p>This tool is important to use when determining grant eligibility, and as a resource for finding data to supplement grant applications.</p>

# Urban space and environment tools

These tools focus on issues related to urban space and the environment. One tool highlights the spatial disparities that exist in communities and allows local governments to identify these disparities. Another tool focuses on identifying communities that have been disproportionately harmed by climate change and pollution.

## Spatial Equity Data Tool | Urban Institute

**Key words:**

- Urban space
- Spatial disparities
- City-level data

[Tool](#)

The [Spatial Equity Data](#) tool uses data from the five-year (2015 – 2019) American Community Survey (ACS) to assess demographic and spatial disparities in your data. It was last updated in November 2021. Government agencies, policymakers, and community advocates could upload area-specific data, and the tool will compare the distribution of the uploaded data with the distribution of baseline variables from the ACS. Actors could use the tool to assess which groups are over- and underrepresented in uploaded data or to facilitate state comparisons. Baseline data is available at the state (national-level tool), county (state-level tool), or tract (county- and city-level tool) levels.

## Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool | White House Council on Environmental Quality

**Key words:**

- Climate change
- Disadvantaged communities
- Census-level data

[Tool](#) | [Overview](#)

The [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) identifies communities that have faced historic socioeconomic injustices and have borne the brunt of environmental, climate, or other related disadvantages. The tool uses eight categories of indicators to determine which U.S. census-tracts experience burdens: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development. It was last updated in November 2022.

This tool can be used to determine which communities are entitled to funds to alleviate the harms caused by pollution and climate change. For example, identified communities can benefit from President Biden's Justice40 Initiative, which seeks to deliver 40% of the overall benefits of investments in climate, clean energy, and related areas to disadvantaged communities that are overburdened by pollution and underserved by infrastructure and other basic services. Federally Recognized Tribes, including Alaska Natives, are also considered disadvantaged communities.



# Personal finance tools

This section lists tools that provide information on the financial health and credit health of communities. Identified tools allow local government leaders insight into racial wealth inequities and how the COVID-19 pandemic exasperated people's finances.

## Financial Health and Wealth Dashboard | Urban Institute

**Key words:**

- Personal finance
- Financial health
- Racial disparities
- PUMA-level data

[Tool](#) | [Technical appendix](#) | [Strategies for local leaders](#) | [Raw data](#)

In order to help local leaders target their solutions, the [Financial Health and Wealth Dashboard](#) illustrates community members' ability to manage their daily finances, be resilient to economic shocks, and pursue opportunities for upward mobility. Data is shown across Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) and by race and ethnicity, where data are available. The tool looks beyond income to include credit, debt, savings, assets, and wealth. It was last updated in October 2022.

This tool can be used to support equity-based initiatives that aim at investing in historically marginalized and excluded communities. Local solutions can tackle these multiple facets of financial well-being, as well as the structural barriers that created—and continue to reinforce—racial wealth inequities.

## Credit Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic | Urban Institute

**Key words:**

- COVID-19
- Personal finance
- Credit health
- Disadvantaged communities
- County-level data

[Tool](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the financial stability of individuals across the United States. To understand how the pandemic and the economic response influenced credit health—people's credit scores, debt delinquencies, and borrowing—the [Credit Health tool](#) examines credit bureau data at the state and county level, from February 2020 to August 2021. It also looks at racial disparities in credit health. The tool was last updated in March 2022.

This tool can be used by Small Business Bureaus, consumer protections agencies or other types of actors to understand how credit health is related to community well-being. It can be used by local governments to understand where credit health is weakest and find solutions to address it.

# Broadband access tools

This section includes tools that provide information on broadband use and access across the U.S..

## Digital Divide Across 50 States Tool | Tufts University–Digital Planet

**Key words:**

- Broadband
- Digital divide
- Inclusion
- County-level data

[Tool](#) |

[Policy recommendations](#)

Digital Planet identified key facets of the digital divide: access, inclusion, institutions, and digital proficiency. They also examined racial, socioeconomic, and urban-rural distributions, and used this analysis to work toward clarifying the nature and extent of the digital divide in the United States. The maps they share, based on a combination of the best available data organized at the state and county level, offer snapshots of the divide and how it varies across the country. The page was last modified in March 2023.

This tool can be used to identify and understand gaps in broadband access and use. It can provide the foundation for local governments, investors and communities to close the broadband access gap by prioritizing unserved and underserved areas.

## Digital Equity Act Population Viewer | U.S. Census Bureau

**Key words:**

- Digital divide
- Broadband access
- State-level data

[Tool](#)

The [Digital Equity Act Population Viewer](#) depicts the percentage of the population by state lacking fixed broadband services, lacking computing devices or broadband subscription, not using the internet, and not using a PC or tablet device. The viewer also highlights 8 categories of populations that have historically experienced lower rates of computer and internet use. These categories are related to income level, age, incarceration status, veteran status, disability status, language barrier, minority status and rural populations. The tool was last updated in May 2022.

This tool can be used to determine which communities will be eligible to receive funding from The State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program. This Program is the first of three Digital Equity Act programs that will be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) as a part of the Digital Equity Act of 2021. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which the Digital Equity Act was established by, the NTIA will allocate awards to participating States (including the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico) based on their populations, demographics, and availability and adoption of broadband.



To learn more about Data for Equity please [read our full report online](#).

If you are interested in partnering with us or learning more, get in touch with our team: [info@centreforpublicimpact.org](mailto:info@centreforpublicimpact.org)



## Centre for Public Impact

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At the [Centre for Public Impact](#), we believe in the potential of government to bring about better outcomes for people. Yet, we have found that the systems, structures, and processes of government today are often not set up to respond to the complex challenges we face as a society. That's why we have an emerging vision to reimagine government so that it works for everyone.

A global not-for-profit organisation founded by the Boston Consulting Group, we act as a learning partner for governments, public servants, and the diverse network of changemakers who are leading the charge to reimagine government. We work with them to hold space to collectively make sense of the complex challenges we face and drive meaningful change through learning and experimentation.

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## Center for Inclusive Growth

The [Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth](#) advances equitable and sustainable economic growth and financial inclusion around the world. The Center leverages the company's core assets and competencies, including data insights, expertise and technology, while administering the philanthropic Mastercard Impact Fund, to produce independent research, scale global programs and empower a community of thinkers, leaders and doers on the front lines of inclusive growth.

For more information and to receive its latest insights, follow the Center on Twitter, [@CNTR4growth](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [subscribe](#) to its newsletter.

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