

The Public Policy Lab is a nonprofit innovation lab for the public sector. We tackle challenges facing poor and marginalized Americans using human-centered methods from design, social science, and technology development.

**WHAT WE DO**

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## Strategy, Policy Design & Futures

The mission of our public-interest practice is to design better policy-enabled futures. We **support policy leaders and experts** in identifying human-centered paths to meaningful policy change.

### OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS

**Elected executives:** We create **research-informed policy guidance** for executive offices on topics such as digital service delivery, opioid use, and homeless services.

**Foundations:** We provide philanthropies with **research, strategy, and facilitation** to understand the effects of social marginalization, to evaluate the outcomes of evidence-based policy change, and to support government innovation programs.

**Program leaders & NGOs:** We generate and test **future scenarios** to transform policy and service delivery with service providers, on topics such as mental-health services, Medicare enrollment, and STEM education.

**Research institutes:** We provide **human-centered frameworks** for policy innovation around digital access and privacy, municipal regulation, benefits delivery, and government transformation.

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## Government Operations & Service Delivery

We **collaborate with public agencies and service providers** to design and test new programs and operations that directly serve disadvantaged communities.

### OUR SERVICE DESIGN PRACTICE AREAS

**Children and families:** **benefits access** for food-insecure families, federal program pilots to support **prenatal and postnatal benefits, education supports** for kids living in shelter, **pupil transportation** for disabled students

**Health and disability:** **Medicare enrollment and communications, mental-health access** for vulnerable populations, **digital health equity, digital mental health services, public health** communications

**Housing and homelessness:** **affordable housing** access, **public housing** maintenance, **shelter services**, multi-agency service coordination for **insecurely housed people**

**Justice and violence:** projects on **intimate partner violence** in the shelter system, **jail overcrowding, supervised-release programs, civil-court access**

**Veterans:** multiple projects to transform **VA services** for America's 21 million+ veterans

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## Digital Product Development

We **build human-centered digital products** that augment agency operations and result in effective and equitable user experiences for the public.

### OUR DIGITAL PRODUCTS

**Public-facing products:** co-designed **tool to guide underserved STEM founders** (innovationcompass.io), qualitative **data platform for decision-makers** to engage with the experiences of the public when shaping public policy and strategy (thepeoplesay.org)

**Service delivery products:** **AI-powered notices generator** to create accurate, plain-language SNAP notices for state agencies (coming soon), **digital playbook** for citywide program to connect families to mental health and support services (familypathways.nyc)



▲  
PPL conducts in-person research and co-design with members of the public and frontline staff.

### THE HUMAN-CENTERED FOCUS OF OUR WORK

We specialize in designing with and for Americans who have life experiences that are underrepresented among people with institutional power. Our teams of researchers and designers conduct **person-to-person research** to understand problems first-hand. We co-design **new services and policies** with members of the public, service providers, and public-sector leaders. To validate innovative ideas, we do **rapid testing and evaluation** in real-world settings with real users. And we go deep into policy, operational, and training requirements to get our **solutions implemented at scale**.

Since our founding in 2011, we've used this human-centered approach in collaboration with government and public-interest partners that have real authority over delivering public value. Through genuine engagement among our teams and the public, we've developed policies and programs that help millions of Americans.

#### Organization Information

Legal name:  
Public Policy Lab, Inc.  
Corporation type:  
501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation  
Year/state of incorporation:  
2011, New York

#### Primary Contact

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#### Entity Numbers

EIN: 27-4631171  
DUNS Number:  
067339706  
SAM Unique Entity ID:  
TME7WQZZS794  
CAGE/NCAGE:  
75KH8

#### Core Capabilities

Communications Design  
Community Engagement  
Digital Product Design  
Ethnographic/User Research  
Monitoring & Evaluation  
Piloting & Implementation  
Policy & Strategy Consulting  
Service Design  
Training & Capacity Building

#### NAICS Codes

541490: Other Specialized Design Services (Primary)  
541420: Industrial Design  
541430: Graphic Design  
541611: Administrative Mgmt & General Mgmt Consulting  
541720: Research & Development in Social Sciences & Humanities

#### Selected Government Partners

Arizona Dept. of Economic Security  
Louisville Dept. of Corrections  
Michigan Supreme Court  
New Mexico Human Services Dept.  
NYC Admin. for Children's Services  
NYC Dept. of Health  
NYC Dept. of Homeless Services  
NYC Dept. of Probation  
NYC Housing Authority  
Oregon Dept. of Human Services  
Philadelphia Mayor's Office  
US Exec. Office of the President  
US HHS Centers for Disease Control  
US HHS Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
US Dept. of Housing & Urban Dev.  
US Dept. of Veteran Affairs  
Wyoming Dept. of Health

#### Selected Funders

Bank of America Foundation  
Bloomberg Philanthropies  
Casey Family Programs  
Citi Community Development  
The Families & Workers Fund  
Kaiser Permanente  
National Endowment for the Arts  
National Science Foundation  
New York Community Trust  
Public Benefit Innovation Fund  
Robin Hood Foundation  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Rockefeller Foundation  
The SCAN Foundation

#### Selected Public-Sector Partners

Beeck Center for Social Impact & Innovation  
Center for Justice Innovation

# GovPay. A Modern Benefits Payment Platform.



GovPay enables government agencies to instantly and securely deliver benefit payments to members of the public.

## AGENCY CHALLENGES

Government agencies are facing:

- **High volumes of benefit payments**, with \$270 billion per year (4% of federal spending in 2025) across SNAP, EITC, SSI, UI, TANF, and WIC.
- **Fragmented payment systems**, dominated by a few legacy vendors with limited interoperability.
- **Declining quality of payment systems**, including outdated technology and poor customer service.

## RECIPIENT CHALLENGES

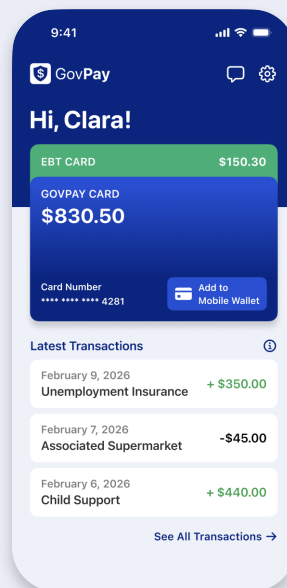
Meanwhile, benefit recipients struggle with:

- **Payment delays** of 1–3 days for deposits and weeks for prepaid cards, leading to missed bills and late fees.
- **Burdensome fees**, including for ATM usage, balance inquiries, card replacement, and customer service.
- **Multiple portals and cards** to navigate across benefits.
- **Privacy risks** arising from extensive personal data being collected and shared.

## OUR SOLUTION: A UNIFIED, PRIVACY-FIRST PLATFORM

GovPay will provide user-centered benefits access:

- **Instant payments** that are delivered in seconds.
- **One portal** to manage and view benefits at a glance.
- **No-fee prepaid card** for unbanked recipients.
- **Mobile wallet integration** for payments on the go.
- **24/7 customer service** for responsive help.
- **Privacy-by-design** features and policies:
  - Minimizes data collection to strictly necessary information and provides clear disclosures to users.
  - Provides data to agencies only for legitimate uses like fraud monitoring or dispute resolution.
  - Keeps identity and transaction data in separate locations that require authorization to link.
  - Rejects any unlawful requests for user data.
  - Meets federal cybersecurity standards (NIST CSF).



## Potential Use Cases for GovPay

- Disability
- Cash Assistance
- Disaster Relief
- Food Stamps
- Child Support
- Unemployment
- Social Security
- Tax Refunds

## Impact

- Efficient Benefits Administration
- Dignified Recipient Experience
- Protected Civil Liberties

## OUR STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **Co-design with the end-users.** We'll design GovPay with agency staff and recipients so that it meets their needs.
- **Establish as digital public infrastructure.** We'll make GovPay available for any agency to use, and we'll set up an independent entity for ongoing implementation support, standards-setting, and platform improvement.
- **Leverage existing infrastructure and precedents.** We'll build on FedNow payment rails and draw from successful public payment platforms (Pix, UPI, PayNow, PromptPay) and governance models (Open Mobility Foundation).

## OUR PHASED APPROACH

1. **Build evidence and partnerships.** Conduct user research; assess legal, regulatory, and technical requirements; engage key partners; and recruit a cohort of pilot agencies across the country.
2. **Co-design and pilot with our cohort agencies.** Build platform with cohort agency staff and recipients, run a pilot, gather evidence, and iterate on platform design.
3. **Scale adoption of platform.** Help agencies implement the platform, open source the code and playbooks, and establish a nonprofit entity for long-term stewardship.

## OTHER CURRENT PUBLIC POLICY LAB EFFORTS

### Leveraging the voices of Americans to drive policy and system change

#### The People Say

With the SCAN Foundation, PPL launched The People Say ([thepeoplesay.org](http://thepeoplesay.org)), a first-of-its-kind data tool to help decision-makers engage with the experiences of the public when shaping public policy and strategy. Expanding on this proof of concept, PPL is now developing a v2 Civic Data Platform, comprising a nationwide participant pool and AI-enabled data-management and insight-generation tools to streamline how policymakers, philanthropists, and researchers analyze and act on crucial insights from low-income and underrepresented Americans.

### Developing economic-support models and tools for child welfare

#### Connecting Families to Economic Supports

With the NYC Administration for Children's Services and the NYC Department of Social Services, PPL is co-creating program models and tools to connect families and young people with the resources they need to support economic stability and upward mobility. These models will be scaled across New York City's child welfare system, ultimately reducing the likelihood of family involvement with child protection, foster care, and youth justice services.

### Researching equity-driven models to integrate AI into primary care settings

#### Patient Voices in Artificial Intelligence

With the Commonwealth Fund, PPL conducted qualitative research with patients who are historically underserved by healthcare — those most at risk from poorly implemented AI — to drive AI implementation that better meets their needs. Our insights and design principles will provide healthcare system leaders with actionable guidance for AI tool selection and implementation, in pursuit of strengthening patient-provider relationships and driving more equitable outcomes.

### Using AI to improve SNAP notices and reduce error rates

#### AI SNAP Notices Tool

With the Public Benefit Innovation Fund and Center for Civic Futures, PPL is developing an AI-powered tool to streamline SNAP notice generation. The tool generates compliant, accessible SNAP notice templates that are compatible with states' benefit-delivery systems, reducing program error rates and improving families' access to benefits. We are co-designing and piloting the tool with North Carolina, New Mexico, and Oregon, with plans for expansion to other states and other benefit programs.

### Augmenting New York City's capacity to use human-centered methods

#### New York City Collaborative Design Partnership

With the NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity and CUNY School of Professional Studies, PPL is carrying out collaborative policy- and service-design projects with multiple City agencies, including development of a 'digital locker' for residents to store benefits-eligibility documentation. PPL is also building the capacity of City staff to use human-centered methods, as well as developing mechanisms for cross-agency knowledge sharing.

### Simplifying forms for the nation's largest housing subsidy programs

#### National Common Application for Subsidized Housing

With the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and FirstPic Inc., PPL simplified tenant application materials for the nation's largest subsidized housing programs, including Section 8, enabling local housing agencies to meet new modernization requirements. Agencies can adopt the user-friendly template forms to create improved application materials, simplifying the tenant experience and connecting more Americans to affordable housing.

#### GET IN TOUCH

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