

Katharine W. Ferguson

(b) (6)

EXPERIENCE

THE BIDEN-HARRIS TRANSITION TEAM

Appointments Team, Deputy Lead, USDA

September 2020 – January 2021

- Lead staff member charged with building the Day One team for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE, COMMUNITY STRATEGIES GROUP

Denver, CO & Washington, DC

Associate Director

August 2018 – Present (currently on leave)

- Lead strategist and project director for *Thrive Rural: Connecting Rural Development, Health and Opportunity* a new multi-year, multi-million dollar initiative focused on the convergence of racial, geographic and economic inequity and creating the community conditions essential to advance opportunity, health and equity with a focus on low-income communities and communities of color.
- Strategic partner to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; involved in strategy and deployment of their rural investment portfolio, for example, jointly developing and managing funding opportunities.
- Develop and manage strategic partnerships with a wide range of national, regional, state and local organizations ranging from national organizations to regional funders and regional civic-sector intermediaries e.g. community development financial institutions and community foundations
- Write, speak, and present with frequency on the connections between on economics, history, development, health and equity with the aim of advancing bold, new policy ideas and more inclusive narratives that reflect the full diversity of communities and Native nations in the rural U.S.
- Provide facilitation, peer-learning and policy expertise and run decision making processes for a range of public-sector and public-interest organizations. Sample clients include: Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Center for Heirs Property and Preservation, Kansas Health Foundation.

Independent Consultant

June 2017 – July 2018

- Served as interim director of public policy for a statewide non-profit focused on hunger; crafted a successful application for \$2 million in USDA Food and Nutrition Service SNAP outreach funds.
- Developed and implemented a rural outreach strategy for Colorado's Attorney General, Phil Weiser
- Jump-started implementation of a federal grant prompting 21-counties across western Colorado are coordinating and committed to screening 100,000 Medicaid patients for social needs.
- Supported electoral candidates with policy platform development (TX) and rural outreach (CO).
- Involved in launch of a new political advocacy organization focused on anti-trust and monopoly.

THE WHITE HOUSE, DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

Washington, DC

Special Assistant to the President (SAP) and Chief of Staff to the DPC

March 2016 – January 2017

- Responsible for day-to-day management of the Domestic Policy Council (DPC) staff of fifty, providing strategic guidance and support to ensure timely completion of high-quality work.
- Wrote, edited, reviewed, and provided input on Presidential policy memos regarding domestic affairs.
- Coordinated the federal government's response to unexpected events, such as the Flint water crisis.
- Built consensus and resolved conflicts between staff and federal agencies with competing views, particularly on topics related to food, nutrition, agriculture, rural affairs, and economic development.

Senior Policy Advisor for Urban Affairs, Justice, and Opportunity

May 2015 – March 2016

- Served as lead policy expert on food and nutrition within the Domestic Policy Council, working closely with the Office of the First Lady, *Let's Move!* and the White House Council on Rural Affairs.

- Organized a high-profile event linking child hunger to long-term outcomes and prompting advocates to create a media campaign designed to change public attitudes toward federal food assistance.
- Brought order to a multi-agency economic development effort focused on creating long-term partnerships between the federal government and local leaders in twenty-two communities.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, DC

Chief of Staff for Rural Development

July 2013 – June 2015

- Responsible for day-to-day management of field-based organization of 5,000 staff, 47 state components, and 400 offices; helped increase employees' rating of the agency by ten points.
- Led annual budget formulation process, oversaw execution of the agency's \$700 million operating budget and worked with staff to improve oversight of the agency's \$216 billion loan portfolio.
- Served as the Secretary of Agriculture's Senior Policy Advisor for Rural Development, providing timely memos, policy briefs, and strategic advice in addition to input on speeches and public events.
- Directed an additional \$2.5 billion to high-poverty, rural census tracts in only three years without new funding or authorities via an internal initiative incentivizing investment in high-poverty places.
- Led implementation of the 2014 farm bill, crafting some 10 regulations (e.g. rural broadband, renewable energy, and healthy food financing) with a multi-disciplinary team.

U.S. SENATOR SHERROD BROWN - OHIO

Washington, DC

Rural Policy Director

July 2011 – May 2013

- Collaborated with state-based field staff translating priorities, concerns, and ideas of rural Ohioans into policy proposals and funding priorities on a range of topics ranging from broadband to trade.
- Crafted legislation that served as the foundation for three titles of the 2014 farm bill topics including a bi-partisan farm program reform, local and regional food systems, and rural economic development.
- Partnered with advocates to effectively defend essential federal nutrition and safety net programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and school meals.

U.S. SENATOR MICHAEL BENNET - COLORADO

Washington, DC

Legislative Assistant

March 2009 – June 2011

- Developed policy positions and legislative proposals via memos, speeches, letters, and briefs on topics including agriculture, conservation, rural economic development, nutrition, and public health.
- Crafted legislation reducing paperwork required to serve free meals to all kids in high-need schools; included in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, affecting more than 30 million children.
- Represented the Senator at community meetings in rural Colorado, conveying his stance on a broad range of issues and engaging with constituents to align the Senator's agenda with local priorities.

OHIO FOR OBAMA

Columbus, OH

Deputy Rural Vote Director

August 2008 – November 2008

- Tailored national policy proposals and messaging to resonate with rural Ohio voters
- Crafted and executed an aggressive rural outreach and communications strategy.
- Built a "Farm Team" of rural community leaders across Ohio willing to volunteer their time
- Created and executed an earned media campaign via "Barns for Obama" barn painting events

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY &

U.S. SENATOR TOM HARKIN - IOWA

Washington, DC

Professional Staff, promoted from Executive Assistant

August 2007 – February 2009

- Instrumental member of team developing policy and the political strategy behind the 2008 farm bill.
- Gained a first-hand understanding of the legislative process and history of current farm policies.

- Provided day-to-day executive support to the Staff Director, including ensuring memos, briefings, and speeches for the Ag Committee Chair were of high-quality, relevant, and timely.
- Built relationships, collaborated, and negotiated with people and organizations involved in food, agriculture, conservation and nutrition in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

U.S. SENATOR BEN NELSON - NEBRASKA

Washington, DC

Staff Assistant

April 2006 – July 2007

- Professionally staffed the Senator’s front office interacting with constituents and giving capitol tours.
- Learned the basics of the legislative process and insight into the inner workings of Congress.

EDUCATION

MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, Syracuse, NY

Executive Master of Public Administration

Certificate of Advanced Study in Conflict and Collaboration

TUFTS UNIVERSITY, Medford, MA

Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, *Summa Cum Laude*

MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Moscow, Russia

Russian Language and Culture

Emerging Leaders, Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education, Cambridge, MA, Fall 2014

Results Based Leadership Training, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Washington, DC, Fall 2015

Key Leaders Training, Metro Industrial Areas Foundation, Washington, DC, May 2017

Lean Six Sigma Blackbelt Training & Certification, Denver PEAK Academy, Denver, CO August 2018

PUBLICATIONS, REPORTS, ARTICLES, EVENTS

Nancy F Krebs, Jamie L Westcott, Donna J Rodden, Katharine W Ferguson, Leland V Miller, K Michael Hambidge., “Exchangeable zinc pool size at birth is smaller in small-for-gestational-age than in appropriate-for-gestational-age preterm infants.” *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Volume 84, Issue 6, December 2006, Pages 1340–1343, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/84.6.1340>

Event Lead. *A Conversation on Child Hunger in America*. The White House. January 27, 2016.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/27/fact-sheet-obama-administration-announces-major-investments-preventing>

Lead Editor. *Big Data: A Report on Algorithmic Systems, Opportunity and Civil Rights*. The White House. May 2016

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/2016_0504_data_discrimination.pdf

Project Coordinator. *Improving Tribal Consultation and Tribal Involvement in Federal Infrastructure Decisions*.

U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Interior. January 2017.

<https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/as-ia/pdf/idc2-060030.pdf>

Using Active Management to Improve Efficiency and Drive Investments to High-Need Communities. The White House Domestic Policy Council Blog. January 4, 2017.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2017/01/04/using-active-management-and-data-driven-tools-improve-efficiency-and-drive>

Celebrating Eight Years of Progress Towards a Healthier America. The White House Domestic Policy Council Blog. January 12, 2017. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2017/01/12/celebrating-eight-years-progress>

Want Big Changes in Rural Policy? Start Working Now. The Aspen Institute Website. March 2019. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/want-big-changes-in-rural-policy-start-working-now/>

Introducing Thrive Rural: Connecting Rural Development, Health and Opportunity. The Aspen Institute Website. February 2020. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/introducing-thrive-rural/>

Redesign Required: Reimagining Rural Policy in the COVID-19 Era. The Aspen Institute Website (cross posted with the Brookings Institution). April 2020. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/reimagining-federal-rural-policy/>

Redesign Required: Four Ideas for Reimagining Federal Rural Policy in the COVID-19 Era (cross posted with the Brookings Institution). June 2020. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/redesign-required-four-ideas-for-reimagining-federal-rural-policy-in-the-covid-19-era/>