



City of Albany

This summer I had the opportunity to work with researchers at Georgia Tech and the Community and Technology department of the City of Albany in Georgia as an inaugural fellow of the Smart Community Corps. The experience was stimulating as it is the first time that I worked as a liaison between academia and the public sector, and it allowed me to further develop my skills as a public policy scholar—especially important to my doctoral studies in public policy. The specific goal of my work was to aid the city with preparing data (e.g. program funding, utility usage, etc.) for analysis and preparing an open data GeoHub for public use. From a practical perspective, the hub allows for increased engagement between the city and its residents. From a research perspective, this allows for implementation of robust statistical techniques for performing program evaluation and policy analysis.

Throughout my tenure working on the project, I was able to both apply expertise that I had previously acquired as well as acquire new skills. For example, my expertise in research design and data analysis, along with support from Civic Data Science fellows, allowed me to help standardize the data flow that will be used for the storage and analysis of utility data collected by the city while simultaneously acquiring experience in SQL as the large nature of the data requires database usage for storage and querying. I was also able to gain experience in spatial analysis and web design with ESRI's software while working on the GeoHub portion of the project. As my contribution to the project, I will be finishing the design and implementation of the GeoHub that will include web apps to visualize funding of programs managed by the Community and Economic Development department and potential correlational effects of that funding.

I find the amount of collaboration between the Tech researchers and the officials in the City of Albany to be superb as both groups maintain a high level of contact and put a lot of effort into providing as much support as possible. While the initial project timeline is slated to lapse in September 2019, new funding acquired by researchers at Georgia Tech will allow for further work between the Tech researchers and Albany officials into 2020. This funding will allow the team to extend the project and do additional quantitative analysis of program data as well as qualitative ethnographic studies and citizen engagement workshops. I will specifically work on implementation of more modern matching algorithms (e.g. genetic matching algorithm) to bridge the gap from correlational effects of program funding to causal effects and hopefully gain experience in qualitative methods throughout this time.

I am glad to have been able to lend my skills and expertise to this project over the past few months and am excited to be a part of the extension of the project into the future. I can say, without a doubt, that the Georgia Smart Communities Challenge has been a success for Albany, GA and that the continued efforts by both Georgia Tech and the City of Albany will lead to a more open and knowledgeable tomorrow.

-Daniel Marchetto
Smart Community Corps, 2019