



New Fellow Spotlight: Dr. Calvin C. Johnson Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Dr. Johnson is Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring at the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Located within HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research, he serves as one of the principal advisors to the Department's leadership on research, demonstration, and evaluation activities. He oversees a broad evaluation portfolio to include projects exploring the impact of housing on non-housing outcomes – economic self-sufficiency, health and wellness, and educational achievement. Dr. Johnson's portfolio includes demonstrations, evaluations, and research covering a range of topics including housing discrimination, homelessness, aging in place, disaster resilience/recovery, community planning and development, and building science and technology.

Prior to joining HUD, Dr. Johnson served dual roles as the Associate Director of the Office of Research and Evaluation and the Performance Improvement Officer at the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia (CSOSA). While at CSOSA, he was principal advisor to the Director and technical and program advisor to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's federal stakeholders (CJCC – U.S. Parole Commission, Superior Court for The District of Columbia, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, and the Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia). In his advisory role with the CJCC, he was responsible for managing a team of technical staff in delivering enterprise support for offender reentry program design and evaluation, operations research, performance management, and advance analytics.

Dr. Johnson has also served in research, evaluation, and policy positions at the University of Pennsylvania, The Urban Institute, and with the Executive Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia.

Dr. Johnson is a part-time Visiting Professor of Practice at Bowie State University, College of Business - Master of Public Administration Program. He teaches public policy analysis and evaluation research.

Dr. Johnson earned his doctorate in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Maryland at College Park

What are you most looking forward to as a NAPA Fellow?

I am looking forward to meeting Fellows who share similar interests across the Academy's Grand Challenges. This is an awesome opportunity to partner and collaborate with thought leaders in the Academy who promote evidence-building across domains with an eye towards better public service.

What inspires you during these challenging times?

During these challenging and uncertain times, I am often reminded of my mother's words of encouragement – "This too will pass. We've experienced challenges before. We'll get through this." So, I have been inspired by leaders nationally and internationally who have demonstrated an ability to lead by showcasing an unwavering commitment to navigating us through a global pandemic by doing "what's right instead of what's easy." I've been most inspired by their ability to use data and science to inform decisions that will slow the spread of the coronavirus and slow the growth in the number of deaths attributed to COVID-19.

What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

I partner with my team of more than 30 professionals and a broad range of internal/external stakeholders to conduct and manage evaluations, demonstrations, and research focusing on the needs of our nation's poorest citizens. We evaluate the effectiveness of programs and program models in meeting the needs of these citizens. Our efforts help inform policy and program decisions, to include evidence-based strategies to house people experiencing homelessness, improve economic self-sufficiency among subsidized households, establish supportive services for elderly residents to age in their own home, foster inclusive and equitable community development, and leverage spending on housing in ways that result in demonstrated benefits on non-housing outcomes like education, health, and employment.

Who or what inspired you to work in public service?

My mom inspired me to work in public service. She had a 35-year career in public service and even today, continues to inspire me to “be a part of the solution.” After spending part of my early career at a think-tank and then at a university, I was presented with opportunities to work with city governments tackling criminal justice and human services challenges.

When I asked my mom, “What should I do?” – Mom asked, “Where are you likely to have the greatest impact on solutions – real solutions?” The rest of my public service story is history.

Which of the Academy's Grand Challenges resonate most with you?

I am looking forward to working with Fellows on the ‘Foster Social Equity’ Grand Challenge. Specifically, issues of fairness and equity in our systems of justice, housing, education, health, and employment spillover and produce disparities that are harmful to segments of our population and set citizens up for disadvantaged and limited opportunities throughout their entire life. Remarkably, a lifetime of limited opportunities can disadvantage citizens and that disadvantage often gets passed on from generation-to-generation. I believe that my interest in fostering social equity will lead to collaboration with Fellows working in ‘Connect Individuals to Meaningful Work’ and ‘Build Resilient Communities’ challenge areas.

What advice can you give to folks beginning careers in public service?

I would encourage folk who are beginning a career in public service to identify a public servant whose work ethic and approach to the work you admire. Figure out how to get that person to provide you with career advice and perhaps serve as your mentor. Additionally, volunteer for workgroups (internal and inter-agency). These workgroups will expose you to new folk throughout your organization and to similar folk at other organizations. Expanding your network and creating new networks might lead you to extremely rewarding assignments. At the very least, you meet other public servants and might establish relationships that will enrich your career in public service.

What is the first concert you attended?

My first concert was Earth, Wind and Fire. The concert was at the Capital Centre in Landover, MD. Yes, I danced all night long!