

## **NC Office of Strategic Partnerships Team Bios**

### **Eliza Edwards**

As Deputy Director, Eliza oversees OSP operations to ensure the team is successful in identifying, developing, launching, and enhancing partnerships between state agencies and non-governmental partners. She also plays a critical role in doing this work. Other aspects of her role include providing leadership to and support for OSP's portfolio of cross-sector research partnerships; coordinating and managing a range of OSP meetings/convenings and communications deliverables; managing OSP's intern program; providing supervisory support to the Director of OSP; representing OSP at speaking engagements/presentations; and contributing to OSP's overall strategic planning and implementation efforts. Prior to joining OSP, Eliza was a member of North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper's policy team.

### **Keegan Huynh**

As Program Support Specialist, Keegan supports the team on an array of existing and emerging projects focused on institutionalizing partnerships between state government and the state's research and philanthropic sectors. This includes coordinating meeting logistics, drafting the OSP Highlights newsletter, documenting outreach & impact, and maintaining OSP's electronic files. Prior to joining OSP, Keegan served as a fellow in UNC Chapel Hill's Lead for North Carolina program, where he worked to strengthen the capacity of local government to effectively deliver services in NC's Tier One communities. As a former paralegal and field organizer, he brings extensive experience in office administration and a passion for public service.

### **Lori Ko**

Lori Ko is an undergraduate Intern with OSP through the State of North Carolina Internship Program. In this role, Lori is exploring how cross-sector partnerships enable state government to effectively generate and use evidence to support policy and programmatic functions. She is a B.A. candidate in Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and is minoring in Survey Research and Data Analytics and in East Asian Languages and Civilizations, with a concentration in Korean Studies.

### **Tago Mharapara**

Tago Mharapara, Phd is a Fulbright Fellow with OSP and The Policy Lab at Brown University, and a Research Lecturer (Assistant Professor) at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Tago has research expertise in leader behavior, work design, and wellbeing. Tago is an applied researcher who seeks to improve the recruitment, retention, and wellbeing of workers in undervalued professions such as Midwifery and Early Childhood Education. Tago is a 2022 Fulbright Scholar and has received multiple grants to fund his research program.

### **Jenni Owen**

As Director, Jenni identifies and launches strategic partnerships between and among state government, universities/colleges, philanthropy, and other entities. This includes deepening state government connections with external research experts and increasing agency capacity to conduct and use evidence to improve policy. Jenni was previously Policy Director for Governor Roy Cooper and Director of Policy Engagement and on the faculty of the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. A 2007 Eisenhower Fellow to South Africa, her civic roles have included: commissioner, NC Indigent Defense Services; board member, El Futuro and Durham Children's Initiative; Policy Council, Association of Public

Policy Analysis and Management; and member, National Conference of State Legislatures Evidence-Informed Policymaking work group.

### **Joy Vermillion-Heinsohn**

As Philanthropy Liaison, Joy works to build, strengthen, and institutionalize relationships between state government and the philanthropic sector in North Carolina. Prior to joining OSP, Joy spent over 22 years in the philanthropic sector, serving most recently as Assistant Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. She has served on numerous local, state, and national boards and commissions. Joy is a recipient of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Lucius N. Littauer Award, a former Hull Fellow of the Southeastern Council of Foundations, and an alumna of Leadership North Carolina.

### **Ruth Wygle**

As Doctoral Associate, Ruth offers research and programmatic support to the OSP team. This includes helping develop new research projects for state government agencies, identify potential research partners, and create OSP communications about research partnership opportunities and other efforts to enhance the use of evidence-based decision making in state government. She is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at Duke University, with qualifications in demography and criminology.

### **David Yokum**

David Yokum, JD, PhD is Director of The Policy Lab at Brown University, Senior Advisor to OSP, and host of the 30,000 Leagues podcast. As Senior Advisor, David brings unique and important skills and experience from leading and managing a wide portfolio of work leveraging scientific insights and methods to improve public policy and operations with governments across the country. David was previously the founding director of The Lab @ DC in the D.C. Mayor's Office and, before that, a founding member of the White House's Social & Behavioral Sciences Team and director of its scientific delivery unit housed at the U.S. General Services Administration.