



THE PROGRAM IN GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Creating “The Global Immune System” to Protect Society from Health Security Threats

Policy Challenge Task Forces

The Program in Global Public Policy and Social Change (PGPPSC) connects global health practitioners with policy makers and thinkers from multiple sectors and disciplines to address the most compelling global health and health security policy challenges of our time. In 2020–2021 we aim to co-sponsor and facilitate four Policy Challenge Task Forces, each tackling a high-level policy question relevant to the current state of health security, as informed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The task force model is meant to foster a sense of shared purpose across stakeholders and to build cross sector communities of policy practice. The deliverables of each task force are designed to influence policy discussions in multiple domains going forward and “grow the table” of stakeholders considering a particular and challenging policy issue. Selecting, overseeing, and administering the four task forces concomitantly allows PGPPSC to align ideas and identify common challenges and opportunities across task forces, facilitating their work and magnifying their impact.

THE ECONOMY, FINANCE AND HEALTH SECURITY: *What are the capabilities and governance structures our public health systems need to drive economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in the short term and underwrite economic prosperity in the long term?* The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated, in striking ways, how public health underpins a robust economy. Yet, in the U.S. robust and equitable public health and health care systems are still largely conceived of as ‘nice to have’ rather than ‘need to have’ aspects of society, and over the last two decades, public health funding has declined precipitously. As the nation seeks to end the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that business leaders who are tasked with re-opening the economy are grounded in the public health strategies required to safely return to work. The business-health task force will provide a forum for leaders and policy makers to learn from each other about best practices and strategies to protect the health and economic welfare of states across the nation.

This task force will bring together leaders of states’ economic recovery teams, political leaders and public health practitioners to consider the short-and long-term public health investments needed to ensure economic stability and growth going forward. Deliverables may include an *Economic Compact for Public Health* that participants will draft and sign as well as development of an *Economy and Health Tracker* that will monitor the relationship between economic activity and the dynamics of the COVID-19 crisis. The first meeting will occur in September 2020, with

three subsequent workshops taking place over the subsequent four months. The goal will be to create a compact for health and economic policy that can be presented in the next administration.

TECHNOLOGY AND U.S. PUBLIC AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: *How should we revitalize and rebuild our public health information and communication technology infrastructure?* The technology sector has enthusiastically embraced digital contact tracing and other technologies to improve the public health response to the COVID-19 crisis. Technology innovations are key to scaling contact tracing initiatives, which presently are a human-resource intensive process. While the initial tools under development in this regard have sparked debates about privacy, their efficiencies offset the severe communication and information problems facing those trying to stand up contact tracing efforts in their cities or states. Contact tracing traditionally has been the purview of public health departments. However, few have the resources to cope with the size and scale of this pandemic. In exploring ways in which digital technology can assist, it has become clear that public health systems are woefully behind in technological innovation. For example, contact tracing involves getting databases to sync, creating new and often cumbersome secondary databases to track contacts, and adding new functionalities to communication systems. Many public health labs and departments across the country have poor Internet access and continue to rely on facsimile machines to communicate information to providers and to patients. In order for digital technology to assist in the contact tracing effort, the technology community as a first priority must identify technology needs then build and organize a technology infrastructure across public health systems. Moreover, new technological innovation must take into consideration today's privacy and security concerns.

The task force will be co-led by [Jonathan Zittrain](#), the George Bemis Professor of International Law at Harvard Law School and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Professor of Computer Science at the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Director of the Harvard Law School Library, and co-founder the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society. It will consist of four interdisciplinary teams of researchers drawn from the task force that will undertake the work over a nine-month period, from July 2020–March 2021, to address security, privacy, governance, and health.

BIOTECHNOLOGY, COUNTERMEASURES, AND HEALTH SECURITY: *How can global public sector investment and governance improve the production cycle and equitable delivery of public goods, and position itself to rapidly make use of innovations in biotechnology?* The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated two interrelated shortcomings of governance in the biotechnology space: the limited ability to catalyze rapid production of public goods during a health crisis (i.e., vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics) and the inability to rapidly uptake, allocate, and deploy biotechnological innovations that are produced in a timely, equitable, and effective way. The struggle for states to strategically allocate and rapidly deploy limited COVID-19 testing resources stands as an example. Globally, the competition, strategic alliances, and geopolitical

fall-out thwart attempts to produce and distribute vitally needed therapeutics and vaccines to the areas where they are most required.

The Biotechnology, Countermeasures and Health Security Task force will be co-chaired by [Kendall Hoyt](#), assistant professor at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine and lecturer at the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College. The task force aims to convene industry leaders from the life sciences community, academic researchers, and public health policy makers to consider these dual challenges over the course of four workshops, starting in the fall of 2020. The deliverables will include two sets of recommendations. The first regards how the federal government can incentivize rapid innovation and production of public goods. The second is aimed at the state level for how they can improve their horizon scanning, strategizing, and planning processes to make use of innovations in COVID-19 preventatives, diagnostics, and therapeutics produced by biotech leaders.

DIPLOMACY AND GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY: *How should the world govern global health security going forward?* The COVID-19 crisis has brought tough health governance questions to the fore of global diplomacy. These questions all center on how collective action to contain and mitigate a health crisis can be orchestrated rapidly, effectively, and equitably. It is clear that governance of global health crises, given their devastation in lives and treasure, cannot be left solely to even a reformed and more empowered World Health Organization. The Diplomacy and Global Health Security Task Force will convene security and diplomacy thinkers as well as those from global financial institutions to 1) map out the critical decisions and stakeholder positions that must be navigated over the next three years regarding ending the COVID-19 crisis and 2) produce a white paper regarding how the U.S. diplomatic enterprise should prepare to participate in these negotiations during the next administration. The task force will convene monthly for nine months starting in the fall of 2020.

The Program in Global Public Policy and Social Change

Health and consideration of global health risks have been siloed in narrow academic and policy communities for far too long. The result is that when a pandemic such as COVID-19 hits, important stakeholders from finance to security to technology are slow to understand the implications for their sectors and do not take aggressive actions to support containment and mitigation of health crises. PGPPSC is designed to connect health practitioners and health delivery researchers who work across the globe with leading political, economic, security and geopolitical thinkers to address challenging health problems. Our theory of change is that engagement in discussion, policy analysis and joint research with others outside of the health sector will spark increased investment, innovation and advances in health policy and governance.