Immediate Release

The GovLab at NYU Tandon releases recommendations for data-driven response to COVID-19

BROOKLYN, New York, November 16, 2020 – The Governance Lab (The GovLab) at the NYU Tandon School, with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, today released guidance to inform decision-making in the responsible re-use of data — re-purposing data for a use other than that for which it was originally intended — to address COVID-19. The findings, recommendations, and a new Responsible Data Re-Use framework stem from The Data Assembly initiative in New York City. An effort to solicit diverse, actionable public input on data re-use for crisis response in the United States, the Data Assembly brought together New York City-based stakeholders from government, the private sector, civic rights and advocacy organizations, and the general public to deliberate on innovative, though potentially risky, uses of data to inform crisis response in New York City. The findings and guidance from the initiative will inform policymaking and practice regarding data re-use in New York City, as well as free data literacy training offerings.

The Data Assembly's Responsible Data Re-Use Framework provides clarity on a major element of the ongoing crisis. Though leaders throughout the world have relied on data to reduce uncertainty and make better decisions, expectations around the use and sharing of siloed data assets has remained unclear. This summer, along with the New York Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library, The GovLab co-hosted four months of remote deliberations with New York-based civil rights organizations, key data holders, and policymakers. Today's release is a product of these discussions, to show how New Yorkers and their leaders think about the opportunities and risks involved in the data-driven response to COVID-19.

As the report and framework describe, these considerations can be summarized through five major takeaways, among them a need to match urgency with accountability; support and expand data literacy; seek to create equitable, positive impacts across communities; engage with legitimate, local

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actors; and develop roles in institutions that can coordinate data re-use. The piece also includes a series of principles—organized around questions of why, what, who, how, when, and where—that detail how organizations can realize these findings in their own data work.

"There is not enough public conversation about data use and reuse," said Dr. Mariko Silver, President and CEO of the [Luce Foundation](#), about the value of the report and deliberations. "The kind of trust building that's required to make data really useful requires us to be engaged in conversations with communities and across communities."

"The Data Assembly shows the importance of engaging with the public and other stakeholders to solve policy and governance challenges resulting from re-using data," said [Stefaan Verhulst](#), Co-Founder and Chief Research and Development Officer of The GovLab. "Data could help mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 but it needs to be used responsibly, legitimately, and in accordance with public expectations."

The Data Assembly Synthesis Report and Responsible Data Re-Use Framework demonstrate how policymakers and institutional decision-makers in New York can balance the potential costs and benefits of re-using data while also taking into account the different, and sometimes contradictory, needs of various stakeholders. The report will be followed by subsequent assemblies in other U.S. cities seeking to understand how interests vary across regions. Additional information on the project will be published in the coming weeks.

Until then, the guidance can be found online at The Data Assembly website ([thedataassembly.org](#)). Parties interested in additional analysis are invited to subscribe to The GovLab's Data Stewards Newsletter or visit its website ([datastewards.net](#)).

About the Henry Luce Foundation
The [Henry Luce Foundation](#) seeks to enrich public discourse by promoting innovative scholarship, cultivating new leaders, and fostering international understanding. The Foundation advances its mission through grantmaking and leadership programs in the fields of Asia, higher education, religion and theology, art, and public policy. Established in 1936 by Henry R. Luce, the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Time, Inc., the Foundation's earliest work honored his parents, missionary educators in China. The Foundation's programs today reflect the value Mr. Luce placed on learning, leadership, and long-term commitment in philanthropy.

About The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering
The Governance Lab's mission is to improve people's lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. We approach each challenge and opportunity in an interdisciplinary, collaborative way, irrespective of the problem, sector, geography, and level of government. For more information, visit [thegovlab.org](#).

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering

The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT, cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

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