



HARVARD Kennedy School

RAPPAPORT INSTITUTE for Greater Boston

Greater Boston Applied Field Lab

20th Anniversary Report

2024–2025 Academic Year

Two Decades of Experiential Learning, Civic Partnership, and Public Service



Photo 1. Field Lab alumni at the 20th Anniversary Symposium, June 2025



HARVARD Kennedy School
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT



Greater Boston Field Lab

Executive Summary

Twenty years ago, we embarked on a bold experiment: to embed Harvard students directly in solving complex, real-world challenges facing local governments, as a part of their education. What started as a pilot program in the City of Somerville has evolved into a distinctive model of experiential education in public finance and governance, becoming what Professor Jeffrey Liebman (Faculty Director, Taubman Center on State and Local Government) calls “the biggest innovation in teaching at the Kennedy School since the adoption of the case method.”

Since 2004, over 600 students from across Harvard and MIT have participated in over 200 projects in more than 70 municipalities, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations. We provide rigorous training through two experiential learning courses (taught by Professors Linda Bilmes, Justin de Benedictis-Kessner (JDBK), and Brian Iammartino) that help prepare students for leadership positions across the public sector, strengthening civic capacity across state and local government.

Field Lab participants gain direct experience of challenging, real-world assignments that require demanding coursework, high-performing teams, and close collaboration with city officials. Students produce analytical materials, detailed financial models, dashboards, and GIS maps. Several teams have written white papers that have attracted widespread attention and praise. The work is conducted under intense faculty supervision, with students receiving detailed feedback and mentorship.

Since 2005, the Rappaport Public Finance Summer Fellows program has provided Field Lab students with the opportunity to work in state and local government across Greater Boston. Over the past two decades, more than 50 fellows have participated, making significant contributions to public finance innovation in the region and joining a strong network of Rappaport Fellows alumni dedicated to public service. Each year, several students from the Field Lab are selected as Rappaport Public Finance Summer Fellows to continue working on the projects they began during the semester. This continuity allows Fellows to deepen their analysis and further strengthen relationships with our project partners.

On June 18, 2025, with the generous support of the Rappaport Foundation, the Taubman Center, Harvard Kennedy School, and the Bloomberg Cities Initiative, we convened an immersive, *participatory* symposium to celebrate and reflect on the Applied Field Lab’s twenty years of success. The symposium brought together nearly 200 program alumni and city partners, together with a group of distinguished speakers that included Congressman Seth Moulton, Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, and former Mayor Joe Curtatone. The symposium’s innovative format included experiential mini-workshops and “participatory panels” that reflected the Lab’s pedagogy of active problem solving. Topics included capital budgeting, climate resilience, artificial intelligence in government, federal and state funding gaps, and infrastructure plan implementation.



Photo 2. Field Lab alumni with Phyllis Rappaport at the 20th Anniversary Symposium



Photo 3. Field Lab alumni at the 20th Anniversary Symposium



Photo 4. Field Lab alumni engaging in discussions during the 20th Anniversary Symposium

Greater Boston Field Lab

20 Years of Civic Impact: By the Numbers

Projects and Partnerships:

- 200+ field projects completed across cities, states, and agencies
- Over 100 local governments, state agencies, and nonprofit partners engaged
- Over 40 municipalities in Greater Boston, plus partners in 10 U.S. states, Canada, and Puerto Rico.
- Over 600 student participants in Field Lab projects
- 95% of participating students report that the experience directly influenced their career path
- Over two-thirds of Field Lab graduates have taken careers in local, state, regional, and national governments, and/or affiliated organizations such as think tanks and schools

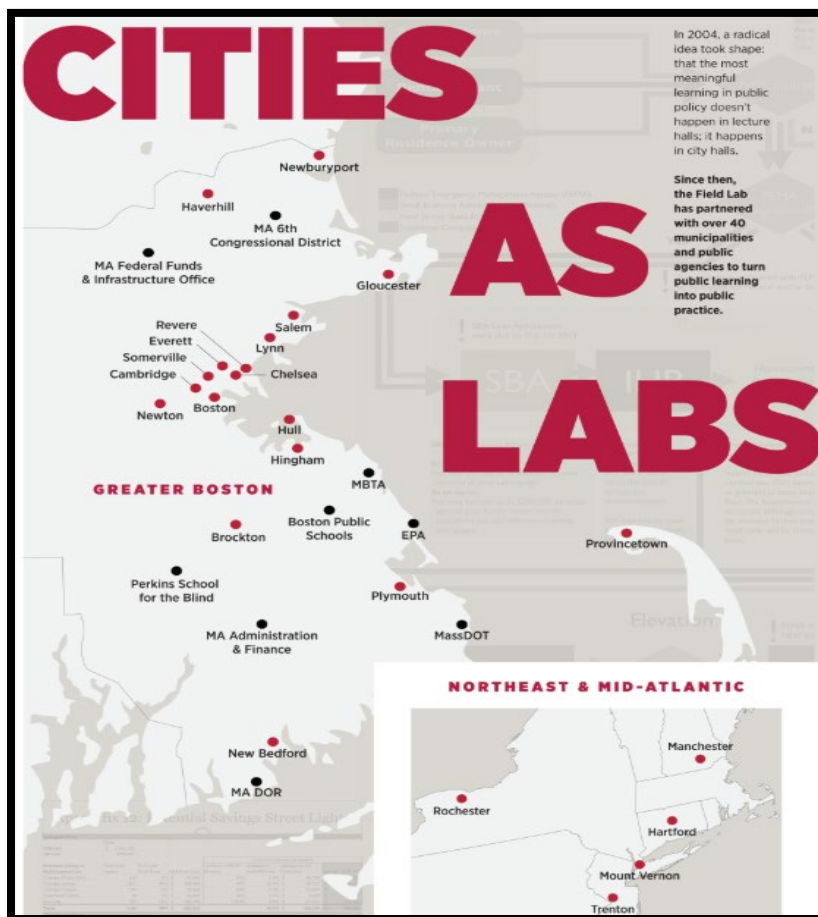


Photo 5. Visual Map of Field Lab projects across 40+ municipalities

Greater Boston Field Lab

Reimagining the Symposium

Planning for the Symposium began by soliciting feedback from Field Lab alumni, including a number of former students now working in city governments. They urged us to adopt an active format that put alumni directly in conversation with one another, rather than passively sitting through panel discussions. They also asked for substantive engagement and information on some of the most urgent municipal issues—finance, technology, housing, infrastructure, and governance.

In response to this feedback, we reimagined the Symposium. This was not a sit-back-and-listen reunion. We limited the number of traditional speeches and created an interactive environment filled with workshops and discussions, collaboration, and collective problem-solving. Participants engaged in mini-workshops, interactive panels, and informal networking sessions that brought the Field Lab pedagogy to life.



Photo 6. Field Lab alumni at the 20th Anniversary Symposium

Keynote Speakers

We invited three key elected officials—all of whom have hosted Field Lab students for many years—to deliver keynote talks. Congressman Seth Moulton (MA-6, MPA 2011) has sponsored more than ten Field Lab projects on topics ranging from economic development and flood prevention to the North-South Rail Link, culture, and the arts. Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, who previously served as Mayor of Salem, partnered with the Field Lab on projects related to senior citizen transit services and subsidized flood insurance. The Lab also worked closely with former Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone (MC/MPA 2011) for over a decade on initiatives that helped transform the city's budget, finance, and management.

Congressman Seth Moulton delivered the keynote address. He described the Field Lab as “a great example of why Harvard matters... not just to the people who come here and get great résumés, but to the people who really have an impact on the world in which we live.” He cited the North-South Rail Link analysis as an example of rigorous, student-led work that influenced the policy debate on infrastructure, housing, and climate. He credited Professor Bilmes’ leadership: “Linda is the only person at Harvard that I go to and ask to do work with my community...Linda and her students deliver. The impact is real.”



Photo 7. Congressman Seth Moulton (left) with Professor Linda Bilmes at the 20th Anniversary Symposium

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, introduced by Rappaport Institute Executive Director Kathryn Carlson, reflected on the challenges of implementing policy change in local government. Drawing on her experience as Mayor of Salem, she emphasized that even the best policy ideas can fail without the ability to operationalize them. She underscored the importance of bringing “fresh eyes,” strengthening succession planning, and sharpening problem definition. She praised the Field Lab’s ability to target well-scoped projects—neither too broad nor too narrow—where student teams can make a tangible difference.



Photo 8. LG Kim Driscoll addressing Symposium attendees



Photo 9. Mayor Joe Curtatone and Kathryn Carlson at the Symposium

Former Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone joined Professor Bilmes in a fireside conversation tracing the Field Lab's early years in Somerville. Curtatone reflected on the city's long partnership with the program, crediting student projects with strengthening fiscal management, data-driven decision-making, and long-term planning. Professor Bilmes noted how those collaborations informed the Lab's approach to experiential learning and helped shape its distinctive pedagogy.



Photo 10. Mayor Joe Curtatone and Professor Linda Bilmes engaging in a fireside conversation tracing the Field Lab's early partnership with Somerville

Mini-Workshops

The mini-workshops were intentionally designed as the most experiential segment of the Symposium, closely mirroring the Field Lab's in-semester approach. Organized in collaboration with state and local government partners, the sessions enabled alumni, faculty, and civic leaders to tackle complex public-finance problems, apply problem-solving frameworks, and collaborate in small, high-energy teams.

The workshops were designed by Professor Brian Iammartino and Professor Justin de Benedictis-Kessner, with support for scoping, drafting, and coordination from former Teaching Fellows Bran Shim and Natasha Lawrence. Together, they curated the cases, designed the process, and developed a complete suite of materials that enabled the teams to quickly immerse themselves in the challenge and produce substantive results within a limited timeframe.



Photo 11. Field Lab alumni collaborating in small teams during mini-workshop sessions

Workshop Materials

The planning team developed a one-page mini-case based on each project partner's real-world problem, with optional exhibits to enrich the discussion (data trends, performance metrics, and excerpts from relevant strategies and plans). These materials captured the fiscal and legal context, policy aims, and the key considerations facing project partners.

Participants received a worksheet with guiding questions and suggested timeframes to structure the discussion and record analysis, insights, and recommendations. Workshop facilitators received reference notes that connected the case to skills and concepts taught in the Field Lab course, along with discussion prompts and potential deliverables to balance participation and manage group dynamics as needed.

The planning team also created a Field Lab Toolkit that included a refresher on project approach, core technical tools, and strategy and presentation frameworks to help ground each case in the Field Lab methodology.



Photo 12. Field Lab alumni gathering for a group photo during the Symposium

Workshop Process

After a brief introduction in plenary, each project partner delivered a three-minute presentation about the project. Participants then moved into teams at breakout tables.

In these smaller groups, participants identified key analytical and policy questions, potential data sources and frameworks, and considerations for a financially and operationally viable outcome. Workshop facilitators—including Samantha Silverberg (MPP 2012), Christina Marin (MPP 2014), Colin Erhardt (MPP 2019), and Brian Cain (MPP 2022)—met with project partners in advance to preview case facts and helped ensure conversations stayed focused, every participant had space to contribute, and the group’s ideas moved toward actionable outcomes.

Following the breakout sessions, the teams reconvened in plenary to share key takeaways. Each group presented its main insights, identified critical tradeoffs, and outlined the next steps they would recommend to real-world decision-makers. This structure made the workshops highly interactive and demonstrated the power of the Field Lab’s applied methodology.



Photo 13. Phyllis Rappaport with Field Lab alumni during workshop discussions

Mini-Workshops List

1. Investing in AI to Support Our Small Businesses: Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development

Project Partner: Jeanney Liu (MPP 2024), Program Director, Business Front Door

Massachusetts is rethinking how businesses access a rich but fragmented web of over 30 programs and incentives administered by over 10 state and quasi-public agencies. To address this, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development has begun to create the Business Front Door, a centralized platform to access state services and incentives, modeled after a successful effort streamlining municipal access to grant programs.

As the project moves to its next phase, there is also an opportunity to leverage artificial intelligence to scale its impact. An internal tool could help staff identify relevant information across hundreds of program documents, licensing regulations, and certification processes based on business descriptors. A public-facing tool could enable businesses to ask questions in plain language and receive consistent answers 24/7, improving response time and allowing staff to focus on higher-touch support. Participants explored what questions Massachusetts businesses need answered most frequently, how resource needs vary by type and geography, and examples of other state and local governments using AI effectively.



Photo 14. Jeanney Liu presenting the AI and small business workshop

2. Identifying Resources for Housing and Economic Development: Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance

Project Partner: Bran Shim (MPA 2024), Senior Advisor

Massachusetts aims to add 222,000 homes over the next decade. Among other policy interventions, unlocking sufficient housing development will require corresponding public infrastructure investments at a time when governments face fiscal constraints. Participants were introduced to the Infrastructure Investment Incentive (“I-Cubed”) Program, a mechanism to leverage new state tax revenues generated by private development projects to finance public infrastructure. Through a rigorous approval and monitoring process, these new revenues are used to justify the debt service on the bonds that financed the infrastructure.

Originally created in 2006 and most recently expanded by the 2024 Affordable Homes Act, I-Cubed can now be used for mixed-use and residential projects. Participants explored the sources of new tax revenue associated with residential development and how to design a responsible and realistic compliance regime for bond financing.



Photo 15. Bran Shim presenting the I-Cubed Program workshop on leveraging tax revenues from residential development

3. Governing Climate Resilience: City of Boston

Project Partners: Chris Osgood, Director of the Office of Climate Resilience; Ksenia Acquaviva (MPA 2022), Senior Climate and Coastal Resilience Infrastructure Planner and Project Manager

Boston's Office of Climate Resilience was created in 2024 to coordinate an all-of-government response to climate threats, working across City departments to protect residents and neighborhoods. However, Boston now faces additional uncertainty due to federal funding. For example, in April 2025, the U.S. federal government cancelled the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program, including nearly \$35 million for flood-protection projects in Boston. Participants explored how Boston can better align departments that work on climate resiliency for projects that are under its control, particularly budgeting and capital planning processes that are often out of sync with project development timelines and metrics. They also discussed how Boston must depend on other governments and private actors, given the scale of the challenge and the complexity of property ownership, necessitating strong relationships and governance models across federal, state, and private stakeholders.



Photo 16. Chris Osgood (center) discussing governance challenges with Field Lab alumni

4. Costs of Growth: City of Everett

Project Partners: Matt Lattanzi, Director, Planning & Development Department; Jay Monty, Director, Transportation & Mobility Department

Everett has been experiencing an economic revival fueled by major real estate developments. Everett is now reviewing a plan to convert the 100-acre former ExxonMobil site into the Everett Docklands Innovation District, a 7.2 million square-foot mixed-use development promising 3,200 units of housing plus labs, offices, and manufacturing space—and about \$23 million in annual tax revenue for the City. Such growth can broaden the tax base and create jobs, but it also raises questions about financing necessary infrastructure and services such as schools, roads, water, fire, EMS, and police. Participants explored how to model the fiscal impact of new development tools like District Improvement Financing (DIF), Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), impact-fee agreements, and state or federal grants to develop a fair and fiscally sound strategy for growth.



Photo 17. Teams working through Everett’s Costs of Growth case, modeling the fiscal impact of the proposed Docklands Innovation District development

5. Rural School Sustainability: Town of Hatfield

Project Partner: Andrew Levine (MPP 2017), Town Administrator

The rural Town of Hatfield has made great efforts to balance essential services and infrastructure investments within tight revenue and borrowing limits. But a shrinking cohort of local students, down roughly 15% in the last five years, is straining the small district's enrollment base. The Town's most recent Comprehensive Plan made very clear that maintaining Hatfield's local schools was a key priority. Still, many stakeholders voice interest in examining policy options, such as joining a regional district or paying for students to attend other schools. Participants explored how to project operating and capital costs of maintaining the current school system as well as alternative scenarios, connections with appropriate housing and economic development, and overall strategies to improve the long-term fiscal viability of Hatfield Public Schools.



Photo 18. Town Administrator Andrew Levine presenting the Hatfield rural school sustainability challenge to workshop participants

Participatory Panels: Conversations Across Sectors

The Symposium included a series of Participatory Panels, structured to embody the Field Lab's pedagogy of active learning and collaborative problem-solving. Rather than positioning speakers as distant experts delivering prepared remarks to a passive audience, we created an environment where practitioners and alumni could engage directly with one another around specific and pressing challenges. Each Panel began with brief contextual remarks from speakers, who then dispersed among small tables to facilitate focused discussions. This ensured that each participant had the opportunity to engage directly with practitioners working at the forefront of their fields. The conversations were guided by structured prompts that encouraged participants to draw connections between current challenges and their own Field Lab experiences, fostering both reflection and forward-looking dialogue.



Photo 19. Alumni engaging in participatory panel discussions, dispersing to small tables for focused conversations with practitioners

1.From Washington to Main Street: Infrastructure Implementation in a Shifting Federal Landscape

Samantha Silverberg (MPP 2012), former Deputy Assistant to President Biden for Infrastructure Implementation, drew on her experience within the White House Infrastructure Implementation Team to examine how IIJA and IRA investments are reshaping local decision-making. She emphasized both opportunity and strain: states and municipalities must scale administrative capacity, reconcile funding timelines with readiness, and build equity-focused project pipelines. She urged participants to act as “infrastructure translators,” bridging policy across federal, state, and local systems with clarity and urgency.



Photo 20. Samantha Silverberg discussing infrastructure implementation with alumni at table discussions



Photo 21. Field Lab alumni continuing conversations

2. Rethinking Capital Finance: Innovation, Inclusion, and Infrastructure

Christina Marin (MPP 2014), Former Director of Treasury Services and Public-Private Partnership Finance at the MBTA, offered a perspective on rethinking capital finance amid increasing complexity and scrutiny. She questioned the exclusivity of the traditional capital market—“Why can anyone casually invest in Amazon, but not in their local school or train station?”—and discussed the evolving landscape of P3s, Sustainability Bonds, and Green Bonds, as well as innovative revenue streams such as congestion pricing, delivery-truck fees, and Fair Share/Millionaire’s Tax proceeds.



Photo 22. Christina Marin addressing participants on rethinking capital finance and questioning why citizens can’t invest in local infrastructure

3. Governing through Gridlock: The Power and Precarity of the Appropriations Process

Philip Tizzani (MPP 2014), Professional Staff Member of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, grounded the conversation in constitutional principles while offering a candid analysis of the challenges Congress faces in exercising its power of the purse. He discussed how partisan polarization and executive overreach complicate budgeting while highlighting the potential of bipartisan collaboration.



Photo 23. Philip Tizzani discussing congressional appropriations challenges and the potential for bipartisan collaboration

4. Government Innovation and the AI Frontier

Professor Mitch Weiss of Harvard Business School brought a future-facing lens to the panel, probing how artificial intelligence might reshape the architecture of state and local governance. He emphasized public entrepreneurship: governments should take informed risks, test innovations, and adapt to rapidly evolving tools while maintaining ethical guardrails and public trust.



Photo 24. Professor Mitch Weiss exploring how artificial intelligence might reshape state and local governance while maintaining ethical guardrails

5. Innovation in Policing: AI as a Response to Staffing Challenges

Police Lieutenant Matthew Barter of the City of Manchester, NH Police Department offered a front-line perspective on the intersection of public safety, technology, and governance. Confronting acute staffing shortages alongside rising service demands, he described how departments are turning to artificial intelligence to bridge capacity gaps. He detailed Manchester PD's pilot of AI-assisted report-writing tools that transcribe body-worn camera audio into preliminary reports, potentially increasing patrol time and reducing paperwork. Surprisingly, a randomized controlled trial showed no measurable time savings. Barter underscored the fiscal reality: while often grant-funded at the outset, high-cost technologies can strain municipal budgets once external support ends. He urged careful attention to ethics, civil liberties, and public trust.



Photo 25. Police Lieutenant Matthew Barter describing Manchester PD's AI pilot program and the fiscal realities of high-cost technologies in municipal budgets

Cocktail Reception and Celebratory Dinner

Professor Justin de Benedictis-Kessner introduced Harvard Kennedy School Dean Jeremy Weinstein to open the evening program.



Photo 26. Professor Justin de Benedictis-Kessner introducing Harvard Kennedy School Dean Jeremy Weinstein

Dean Weinstein reflected on the Field Lab’s 20-year legacy at a time when public institutions face scrutiny. He emphasized the program’s distinctive approach of building long-term partnerships with municipalities and producing work that continues to have an impact beyond the semester. He cited the Massachusetts Green Bank—signed into law in 2023—as an example of how student projects can advance into statewide policy. He concluded by thanking Professor Linda Bilmes for her leadership and Phyllis Rappaport and the Rappaport Foundation for their support in pioneering service-learning that lowers the walls of universities in service of others.



Photo 27. Dean Jeremy Weinstein reflecting on the Field Lab’s 20-year legacy

Dean Weinstein then introduced Phyllis Rappaport, Chair of the Phyllis and Jerome Lyle Rappaport Foundation. Phyllis emphasized the Foundation’s conviction that experiential learning—putting students in the thick of local government—prepares the next generation of civic leaders. She pointed to the high adoption rates of Field Lab student recommendations as evidence of the program’s tangible results.



Photo 28. Phyllis Rappaport addressing the Symposium attendees



Photo 29. Professor Linda Bilmes delivering closing remarks

Professor Linda Bilmes closed the formal remarks by thanking Phyllis for her contributions and for the Foundation’s sustained partnership. She reflected on the privilege of working with Field Lab students, alumni, faculty, and partners over the past two decades, and expressed gratitude for the support of colleagues, collaborators, and funders who have sustained the program’s mission.



Photo 30. Phyllis Rappaport at the 20th Anniversary Symposium (right)

Greater Boston Field Lab



Photo 31. Alumni gathering during the cocktail reception preceding the celebratory dinner



Photo 32. Alumni reconnecting at the 20th Anniversary celebration in the Wexner Common Garden

The evening concluded with a celebratory dinner in the Wexner Common Garden. Alumni from each table offered brief remarks, sharing memories, anecdotes, and reflections from their time in the Field Lab. These toasts, both lighthearted and personal, highlighted the program's influence on professional paths and civic commitments. Together, they captured the sense of community, continuity, and shared purpose that has defined the Field Lab over the past two decades.



Photo 33. Professor Brian Iammartino sharing reflections during the celebratory dinner



Photo 34. Alumni continuing conversations during the dinner celebration

Galleria Boards Exhibit

Visual Storytelling: Two Decades of Projects

The symposium included a galleria of ten 24×36 boards documenting 20 years of Field Lab work across more than 90 projects in Massachusetts and other states. The exhibit traced the program’s evolution, from early Somerville budget analyses to recent work on AI governance and climate resilience. The exhibit highlighted the collaboration between Harvard students and municipal partners, as well as the expansion from Greater Boston to ten states and territories. Alumni revisited past projects, students reviewed the program’s history, and several boards will be displayed at the Rappaport Foundation.



Photo 35. Alumni exploring the Galleria Exhibit documenting 20 years of Field Lab projects

Symposium Publicity & Media Coverage

April 30, 2025: Susan A. Hughes, “[An HKS field lab helps policymakers transform a big idea into impact](#),” *HKS Magazine*.

June 17, 2025: Rappaport Foundation full-page thank you to Professor Linda Bilmes, recognizing her leadership, *The Boston Globe*.

June 23, 2025: Harvard Kennedy School [press release](#) “Harvard Kennedy School’s Greater Boston Applied Field Lab demonstrates remarkable impact on Massachusetts communities as the program celebrates its 20th anniversary.”

July 15, 2025: Susan A. Hughes, “[The impact is real: Two decades of local collaborations through the Greater Boston Applied Field Lab](#),” *Harvard Kennedy School*.

Alumni Voices that Shaped the 20th Anniversary

In the fall of 2024, Professor Brian Iammartino and Maja Niksic, Program Director of the Greater Boston Field Lab, conducted alumni interviews to shape the vision for the 20th Anniversary Symposium. Speaking with Stevie Olson (MPP 2020), Brian Cain (MPP 2022), Virginia Carefoote (MPP 2023), Christina Marin (MPP 2014), Sanjay Seth (MPA 2019), Natasha Lawrence (MPA 2021), Morgan McDaniel (MPP 2017), and Colin Erhardt (MPP 2019), they gathered stories that illuminated the Lab’s distinctive “boots on the ground” approach and its influence on careers, communities, and civic leadership. Alumni reflected on the opportunity to confront real-world constraints, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and present work directly to decision-makers—experiences that built technical skills, professional relationships, and a lasting commitment to public service. They also offered forward-looking ideas for the Symposium, from masterclass-style sessions and interactive challenges to showcasing marquee projects and creating pathways for ongoing alumni engagement. These conversations informed the event’s design and reaffirmed the Field Lab’s legacy as a model for experiential learning at HKS.



Photo 36. Field Lab alumni whose voices shaped the Symposium

Symposium Planning Team

The 20th Anniversary Symposium reflected an extraordinary collaborative effort. Our core planning team—joined by partners and supporters—worked for months to bring this milestone celebration to life. Each person contributed expertise, from shaping the vision and curating content to coordinating logistics, media, and creative elements.

Professor Linda Bilmes, Faculty Chair of the Greater Boston Applied Field Lab, served as the key visionary behind the Symposium. She provided strategic guidance, shaped the overall direction, and ensured the event reflected the Field Lab’s legacy and future mission.

Professor Justin de Benedictis-Kessner collaborated on program design and content, ensuring that the panels and discussions aligned with the themes. He contributed to refining the workshop structures and content flow and liaised with the Dean’s Office regarding HKS Dean Jeremy Weinstein’s remarks.

Professor Brian Iammartino worked closely with the Program Director on program content, invited speakers, and liaised with the Dean’s Office. He played an instrumental role in developing the alumni database in Fall 2024 and supporting the growth of the Field Lab’s LinkedIn group.

Maja Niksic, Program Director of the Field Lab, orchestrated all aspects of the Symposium—from strategic planning and stakeholder coordination to creative direction and operations. She managed faculty, alumni, and partner engagement; coordinated design and logistics; and served as the central hub of communication and execution.

Emma Green, Faculty Assistant to Professor Bilmes, partnered with Maja on event logistics, design elements, catering, and coordination with HKS staff. She was integral to behind-the-scenes operations and contributed to the visual presentation.

Bran Shim (MPA 2024), former Teaching Fellow, developed all mini-workshop materials, including project scopes, participant worksheets, and teaching tools for alumni instructors. He attended all scoping meetings and ensured that workshop participants had comprehensive, well-designed resources.

Yahya Chaudhry, long-time affiliate of the Field Lab, supported video coordination, media logistics, and day-of production, working closely with faculty and the Program Director to ensure multimedia elements ran smoothly.

Natasha Lawrence (MPA 2021), former Teaching Fellow, contributed to early conceptual planning and co-designed participant worksheets for the

mini-workshops. She assisted with workshop structure and participant engagement strategies.

Tim Medlock, Executive Director of the Rappaport Foundation, served as a key liaison for the Symposium, supported the preparation of remarks, and coordinated with the Field Lab team.

Sean Horrigan, Communications Director at the Rappaport Foundation, coordinated with 309 Productions to film the event and conduct alumni interviews that featured in a commemoration video.

Jannelle Cioffi, Director at the Rappaport Foundation, worked with Maja Niksic and Emma Green on archival and visual elements for the Galleria exhibit, curating historical photographs and artifacts—including a letter between President John F. Kennedy and Jerry Rappaport—and collaborating on press materials.

Kathryn Carlson, Executive Director of the Rappaport Institute at HKS, introduced Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll and assisted with signage and on-site logistics.

Jonathan Jayes-Green, Master of Ceremonies, brought warmth and connection to the Symposium, guiding the program from start to finish. He opened and closed the main sessions, introduced speakers and panelists, and provided transitions that kept momentum throughout the day.

Claudio Jimenez, HKS Media Services Specialist, provided technical and media support.



Photo 37. Maja Niksic, Field Lab Program Director, and Emma Green, Faculty Assistant to Professor Bilmes, at the Symposium

Greater Boston Field Lab

The alumni host team—recent graduates or recent alumni of the course—ensured that every aspect of the day unfolded smoothly. This volunteer group included Paul Garbarino (MPP 2025), Montserrat Ocana (MPP 2024), Peter Willenborg (MPP 2025), Willie Powell (MPP 2025), Alberto Rodriguez (MPP 2024), Gloria Korpas (MPP 2025), Nora Cahill (MPP 2025), William Stevenson (MPP 2025), Andrew Ruvkun (MPP 2025), Astha Soni (MPP 2025), and Jebb Ricketts (MPP 2024).



Photo 38. Field Lab alumni who volunteered and coordinated behind-the-scenes logistics of the Symposium

2025 Rappaport Public Finance Summer Fellows

Aruni Ranaweera (MPP 2025)

Office of Congressman Seth Moulton, Massachusetts' 6th District

Project Partner: Liam Morehead, Transportation Policy Advisor, Office of Congressman Seth Moulton

Aruni focused on advancing transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities in Somerville, Massachusetts. She developed a comprehensive financial model for the mixed-use redevelopment of the MBTA's Boston Engine Terminal (BET) site, illustrating investor returns from a TOD project supported by a low-interest federal Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan. Aruni participated in stakeholder meetings, coordinated with city officials and potential investors, and integrated findings from the MBTA's ongoing rail maintenance consolidation plan. The project highlighted the financial and economic benefits of redeveloping the BET parcel to attract private investors and community development financial institutions (CDFIs). Additionally, the BET analysis served as a pilot for future development of comparable parcels identified through the Regional Rail initiative, creating a replicable model to inform broader TOD strategies.

Paul Garbarino (MPP 2025)

Office of Congressman Seth Moulton, Massachusetts' 6th District

Project Partner: Katie Donahue, Transportation Policy Advisor, Office of Congressman Seth Moulton

Paul focused on advancing Congressman Moulton's transit development and safety legislative priorities. He researched and authored policy memos on federal programs slated for reauthorization and on new initiatives to strengthen the nation's transportation network, including Regional Transportation Block Grants, freight mode-shift policies, high-speed rail improvements, Amtrak response protocols, cannabis impairment standards, and railroad data-sharing strategies. Paul also carried out core Capitol Hill policy advisor duties such as preparing briefing materials and remarks for hearings, drafting bill and letter summaries, monitoring legislative markups, publishing constituent newsletters, meeting with stakeholders, and drafting communications on federal

transportation initiatives. His work shaped policy options and legislative strategies that support safer, more efficient, and sustainable transportation infrastructure nationwide.

Looking Ahead

In Fall 2025, Professor Justin de Benedictis-Kessner is teaching DPI-325: Urban Politics Field Lab. The course continues the Field Lab tradition of embedding student teams directly with local governments to address urgent policy challenges. Projects include Provincetown's Harbor Plan renewal and compliance with state laws that ensure public waterfront access; Boston's initiative to improve waste containerization and reduce rat infestations and a second project to assess the impacts of school closures, mergers, and grade reconfigurations on students and families; Belmont's effort to incorporate community feedback into commercial redevelopment plans for the Brighton Street corridor; Brookline's evaluation of residents' concerns about property tax override referenda to address structural deficits; and Portland, Maine's resilience planning to respond to sea level rise while protecting vulnerable neighborhoods and maintaining its working waterfront.

Students will combine training in survey design, quantitative analysis of survey data, focus group implementation, GIS mapping, and data visualization with applied fieldwork directly engaging with city officials and residents. Final deliverables will include policy memos and presentations to municipal partners.

Special thanks to the Phyllis and Jerome Lyle Rappaport Foundation, the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, and the Taubman Center for State & Local Government. We are deeply grateful to the alumni, government partners, faculty, staff, and students who have shaped the Field Lab over the past 20 years. We offer a special thanks to Jerry Rappaport (1927–2021), whose vision and leadership made the Field Lab possible and whose impact continues through our projects, partnerships, and alumni who have pursued public service careers.