

Elizabeth Lower-Basch

Gray Cat Policy



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Profile

Strategic policy analyst and advocate with 25+ years of experience influencing federal and state policy on public benefits, economic mobility, and immigrant access to supports. Experienced with large-scale stakeholder engagement, with proven track record of bridging policymakers, agency staff, advocates and service providers to diagnose problems and build buy-in for solutions. Skilled at rapid-response analysis of complex federal actions and their implications for states, localities, and the families they serve. Committed to equity-centered policy that respects the dignity of the people programs serve.

Policy areas of expertise include:

- Economic support programs including TANF, SNAP, Medicaid and refundable tax credits, with a focus on cross-program alignment, reducing administrative burden, and improving payment accuracy without undermining access
- State/county governance and administrative structures
- Work requirements across programs: planning for implementation, creating and analyzing metrics for monitoring, and mitigating harm for families and agencies
- Immigrant inclusion and mixed-status family access to benefits
- Benefit cliffs, subsidized employment, and TANF-workforce coordination

Services

Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Communications

- Analyze complex federal and state policies to identify requirements, opportunities and risks.
- Design and implement systems for monitoring rapidly evolving policy landscapes, including AI-assisted tools for monitoring proposed rules, state legislation, and administrative actions.
- Create accessible materials that explain technical policies to diverse audiences, including testimony, regulatory comments, presentations and trainings, policy manuals, and articles, reports and fact sheets.

Strategic Advisory and Technical Assistance

- Support state and local agencies in modernizing and improving benefit delivery systems, including reducing error rates.
- Analyze rapidly changing federal administrative and regulatory actions and their implications for state programs and the families they serve.
- Identify opportunities based on analysis of potential funding streams, program requirements, braiding/blending strategies and opportunities for flexibilities or waivers.
- Guide program design and implementation based on research on best practices and lessons learned from other jurisdictions and/or other programs.
- Incorporate equity in policy design and implementation, including through stakeholder engagement.

Advocacy Campaigns and Coalitions

- Navigate and influence regulatory and legislative processes.
- Connect organizations to advocacy ecosystem, allowing them to contribute in the most effective ways.
- Develop high-functioning collaborations and coalitions, including across sectors, to advance policy goals.

Professional Experience

GRAY CAT POLICY, Founder and Lead Consultant (October 2024-)

Provide strategic policy advice, technical assistance, and rapid-response analysis to national and state-based organizations on economic mobility, public benefits, and immigrant access to supports.

- Led engagement analyzing opportunities to lower SNAP payment error rates without reducing access for participants, based on interviews of state agency staff in states combining lower error rates with strong program access. Produced actionable recommendations for other states.
- As senior advisor to Protecting Immigrant Families and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, track and analyze federal administrative changes affecting immigrant and mixed-status families' access to benefits, data sharing demands, and their implications for states, localities and service providers. Create materials to explain changing policies to diverse audience, including directly impacted communities.
- Advise on policy responses to federal changes affecting SNAP and Medicaid access, including work requirements, employment and training program opportunities, and immigrant restrictions.

CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY (CLASP)

National, nonpartisan, anti-poverty nonprofit advancing policy solutions for people with low incomes.

Deputy Executive Director for Policy, 2022-2024

Director, Income and Work Supports, 2013-2022

Senior Policy Analyst, 2006 - 2013

- Developed and led innovative cross-organization areas of work, including incorporating the expertise of people with lived experience of poverty into policy development, feedback and advocacy as part of our racial and gender equity commitment. Designed scenario planning process to identify partnerships, research and other activities to undertake based on emerging opportunities and challenges.
- Drew on lessons from the Work Support Strategies initiative, a multi-state technical assistance project transforming delivery of TANF, SNAP, child care, and Medicaid, to design and lead a 15-state learning community of advocates focused on administrative reform. Results included improved client communications, reduced administrative burden, higher share of cases with same day decisions and increased enrollment. Provided technical assistance to diverse state and county agencies on federal policies, requirements and flexibilities, data sharing, performance measurement, best practices from other states, process mapping, use of data and rapid cycle testing to improve access and remove administrative burden. Supported front-line staff in one county through the transition to an integrated case management system and a task-based (vs. case-based) distribution of work.
- Based on virtual convenings of administrators from diverse states, stakeholder interviews and literature review, analyzed cross-state variation in political and economic context, governance, operations and technologies and their implications for economic support program participation and reach.
- Together with partners at CLASP and the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), conceived, launched and co-led the multi-sector Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) campaign in response to threats to low-income immigrant families' access to health care, nutrition, and other benefits. Built a multi-sector coalition spanning immigration, health, housing, disability, faith, and anti-poverty organizations.
- As appointed member of U.S. Department of Agriculture's Equity Commission, educated fellow members on systemic barriers to access to nutrition programs for communities of color. Developed actionable recommendations that would have meaningful impact that were unanimously included in report.
- Identified and championed opportunities to use subsidized employment as an economic mobility tool. During the Great Recession, identified that states were leaving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Fund money on the table. Real-time research and intensive technical assistance led to states drawing down the full \$5 billion, twice as much as the Congressional Budget Office originally estimated. Resulted in families receiving cash assistance and more than 260,000 low-income parents and youth being hired in subsidized jobs.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION (ASPE)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Policy Analyst (1996 - 2006)

- Assessed proposed TANF and job training policies to support senior officials across administrations. Analyzed expected effects on families and made recommendations for improving program effectiveness.
- Synthesized research on AFDC waivers and TANF "leaver" studies, including first analysis of differential outcomes for Black and Latino/a parents leaving cash assistance.
- Led Congressionally mandated study of TANF outcome and performance measures, including review of the research literature and implications for program accountability.

Education

Master of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Kennedy Fellow; Thesis: Employment in the Health Care Industry as an Economic Resource for Boston

Bachelor of Arts, Yale University

Phi Beta Kappa, Magna cum laude and with Distinction in History.

Selected Publications

RECENT WORK

- Lower-Basch, [Thirty Years of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: What Changed, What Didn't, and What it Means for Today's Work Requirement Debates](#), CLASP, 2026.
- Lower-Basch, [Education and Training Count: State Strategies for SNAP & Medicaid Work Requirements](#), Gray Cat Policy, 2026.
- Schwartz and Lower-Basch, [Administrative Actions Tracker](#), Protecting Immigrant Families, 2026.
- Lower-Basch, [Work Requirements in H.R. 1 \(OBBBA\) as Enacted](#), Updated 2026.
- Lower-Basch, [Five reasons states should be planning for Medicaid and SNAP work requirements together](#), 2025.
- Danker, Gonzales, Lower-Basch, and Rachamalla, [House Republican Reconciliation Bill Takes Away Health Coverage, Food Assistance, Tax Credits from Millions of Immigrants and Their Families](#), CBPP, 2025.

EARLIER PUBLICATIONS

- Lower-Basch and Mehta, [Putting the Pieces Together for Families with Young Children: Aligning State HHS, Nutrition, Child Care, and Paid Family Leave](#), CLASP, 2023.
- Lower-Basch and Fairbanks, [Understanding State Contexts for Benefit Administration](#), CLASP, 2021.
- Lower-Basch, [Fight Poverty, Hunger and Health Care Needs by Removing Barriers to Program Access](#), CLASP, 2020.
- Lower-Basch, [Improving Access, Cutting Red Tape](#), APHSA Policy and Practice, 2017.
- Lower-Basch and Schmit, [TANF and the First Year of Life: Making a Difference at a Pivotal Moment](#), CLASP, 2015.
- Lower-Basch and Dorn, [Moving to 21st Century Public Benefits: Emerging Options, Great Promise, and Key Challenges](#), Coalition for Access and Opportunity, 2012.
- Pavetti, Schott and Lower-Basch, [Creating Subsidized Employment Opportunities for Low-Income Parents: The Legacy of the TANF Emergency Fund](#), CLASP and CBPP, 2011.
- Lower-Basch, [Guide to Use of TANF and MOE Funds](#), CLASP, 2011.