

RACHEL FINKELSTEIN

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Climate policy and communications professional with 10+ years experience. Collaborative, creative and thoughtful leader and communicator with a passion for solving complex problems.

Selected Experience

New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Santa Fe, NM
Climate Policy Bureau Chief, Energy Conservation and Management Division April 2023 - present
Launched a new bureau focused on climate policy for New Mexico's State Energy Office. Lead interagency efforts to build state capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, coordinate across state agencies to implement the Governor's priority actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, grow the state's green economy, and develop and implement a statewide Climate Action Plan. Building and managing a team of policy experts and program managers to manage the cabinet-level Climate Change Task Force and engage external stakeholders to promote effective climate action in New Mexico.

New York City Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, New York, NY
Acting Deputy Director and Senior Policy Advisor, External Affairs August 2018 - November 2022
Served as Acting Deputy Director for External Affairs since Nov. 2020, and led communications, public engagement, elected official outreach, legislative affairs, and press engagement for New York City's climate priorities, including decarbonization, renewable energy, environmental justice, and resiliency.

Acting Chief of Staff November 2017 - August 2018
Oversaw day-to-day management of 60+ staffers and operations of three offices within the Climate unit, and advised the Senior Director of the Climate unit on policy, operations, and strategic planning.

Policy Advisor, Community Affairs and Strategic Outreach April 2016 - November 2017
Supported the External Affairs team's engagement with the public, elected officials, and the media on New York City's inclusive climate action program. Developed and implemented strategies for engaging diverse stakeholders on large-scale climate change adaptation infrastructure projects, including the production of accessible materials to explain complex technical and policy information.

MIT Community Innovators Lab, Cambridge, MA June 2014 - May 2015
Community Engagement and Planning Intern, Operation Paydirt
Created engagement and communication strategy for a national, artist-driven, multidisciplinary project to support awareness of lead contamination and to help end childhood lead poisoning.

Center for Court Innovation, New York, NY
Planner, Red Hook Community Justice Center March 2012 - July 2013
Worked with senior staff to conceptualize, plan, and develop innovative legal initiatives, including collaboration with on-site and community-based partners. Developed communications strategy, including relationships with public agencies, other nonprofits, and community groups.

Program Associate, Technical Assistance July 2010 - March 2012
Organized and hosted structured site visits to CCI's demonstration projects in New York City for justice system stakeholders, practitioners, and community members to learn about innovative approaches to community justice. Planned workshops and an annual international conference.

Selected Research Assistantships and Projects

Research Assistant, Professor Amy Glasmeier, MIT

September 2014 - May 2015

Collected and mapped data. Researched and wrote a literature review on the militarization of law enforcement in U.S. cities.

Research Assistant, MIT Displacement Research and Action Network

September 2013 - August 2014

Recruited and served as main point of contact for academics, nonprofit leaders, advocates, policymakers, and others for an international network that developed research and theory on internal displacement and migration caused by development, climate change, and conflict. Planned international conference, workshops, and lectures on displacement, land, and housing rights.

Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

September 2015

Master in City Planning

Concentration: Housing, Community, & Economic Development/Environmental Policy & Planning

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

May 2008

Bachelor of Arts

Double major in Sociology (honors), and Spanish Language and Literature

Awards, Honors, and Fellowships

MIT Climate CoLab Fellowship

April 2014 - July 2016

Selected to collaborate with an expert panel to develop, market, and judge three contests as part of the 50,000-member Climate CoLab, a crowdsourcing platform where citizens work with experts and each other to create, analyze, and select creative proposals to address climate change.

Bemis Fund Grant for "Planners as Democratic Leaders," MIT

September 2014 - May 2015

Student-initiated course and workshop series on leadership and ethics in planning

Lloyd and Nadine Rodwin International Travel Fellowship, MIT

August 2014

Research Travel Grant to Delhi, India

Fellowship for Emerging Leaders in Public Service, New York University

November 2012 – May 2013

Selected for a prestigious leadership program at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service to enhance leadership and management skills, engage in discussions with high-level public service executives, develop a career plan, and build a cross-sector leadership network.

Language

Full professional working proficiency in Spanish.