

Lender Center Internship Program

About the Lender Center:

Founded in 2018, the Lender Center for Social Justice is a university-wide research hub setting the standard for collaborative, innovative, and interdisciplinary community partnerships and engagement that fosters a more just society. The mission of the Lender Center is to support proactive and solution-oriented research co-created through deep partnerships among students, faculty, and community leaders at local, regional, national, and global levels.

Lender Center Internship Program Description:

As a university-wide Center, student interns come from all SU Schools and Colleges. In keeping with the Lender Center's mission, the Lender Center Internship Program attracts Syracuse University (SU) undergraduate and graduate students interested in deepening their interdisciplinary knowledge and hands-on learning experiences in community-engaged research. Lender interns build interdisciplinary research skills, learn innovative data techniques and a range of interdisciplinary methods, both quantitative and qualitative, while building lasting connections with Lender-affiliated faculty, other students, and community leaders and stakeholders in Central New York and beyond. All Lender research aims to bridge the gap between university-based research, local community needs, and real-world impact.

Working at the Lender Center's Internship Program:

Lender student interns are working members of the Lender Center who join other student teams with a supervising faculty member on one of Lender's many research projects. Each position is associated with a specific project or initiative, and student interns may choose either summer, semester (Fall or Spring), or other short interim session arrangements (i.e., "Maymester"). Students will conduct their work either at the Lender Center on campus (207 Bowne Hall) or, online, and engage in outreach with community partners in Syracuse, Central New York, or elsewhere. The Lender Center is a welcoming place for student interns to work, and we also support student interns who prefer flexible, hybrid, or entirely online working formats. Lender student interns will work in a collaborative, team-based model, as students build and apply their research skills and develop professional networks, helpful to future career prospects and endeavors.

Webpage:

- ▶ Application (Qualtrics input [form](#))
- ▶ Lender Research [Projects](#)
- ▶ Orientation and Methods Training (see guides below) Contact Corrinne Zoli at cbzoli@syr.edu
- ▶ Questions about the internship or methods training? Contact Kate Schwartz at kschwa03@syr.edu or visit the Lender Center at 207 Bowne Hall.



Lender Center Internship Program Orientation and Methods Training:

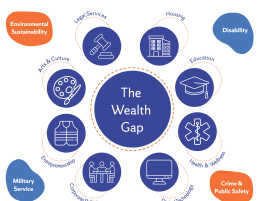
The Lender Center occupies a distinctive position in the university research landscape: as a university- wide interdisciplinary center, we work at the intersection of academic inquiry and community engagement, partnering with community-based organizations in Syracuse, Central New York, and beyond. We address community-driven questions about data needs, economic opportunity, housing and health equity, educational opportunities, and more. That means the methods that our interns learn and use are not merely academic or abstract, but tools developed in the service of meeting community needs for real people in real places.

We use some of the following training modules designed for a mixed audience of undergraduate and graduate students, eligible from all Syracuse University (SU) schools, colleges, and programs. Lender research has often focused on data science and interdisciplinary and humanistic social science fields (i.e., public administration, sociology, political science, economics)—but no single or prior set of methods courses is assumed. We meet students where they are. We hope you leave your Lender Center internship with broader, practical experience in many methods and tools (i.e., “big data” collection, policy analysis, community-based research approaches) and a more integrated toolkit.

Lender Center Data Integration Portal

Designing a Multi-Systems Approach to “Wealth Gaps” and Data-Driven Economic Opportunities

Welcome to the Lender Center’s Data Portal and its multi-sector dashboards. This project is designed to support university-community collaborations to increase our shared knowledge and understanding of economic opportunities and “wealth gaps” at a dynamic historical moment of social and technological change. Users can find data and information about multiple dimensions of economic inclusion and development to facilitate shared understanding, collaboration, and creative interventions to decrease or remove barriers.



In this Section

- [Meet the Team](#)
- [Community Based Organizations \(CBOs\)](#)
- [Systems](#)
- [Syracuse Demographics Overview](#)
- [Disability in Syracuse](#)
- [Veterans in Syracuse](#)
- [Housing in Syracuse](#)
- [Education in Syracuse](#)
- [Data Request](#)
- [Give us Feedback!](#)
- [Arts and Culture](#)
- [Digital Technology](#)
- [Economic Empowerment](#)
- [Health and Wellness](#)

PURPOSE

Establish a shared framework for why and how the Lender Center conducts research in partnership with community organizations in Syracuse, across Central New York—and beyond.

Core Frameworks and Concepts Covered

1. Theories of community-based research: Community-Engaged research is a core foundational commitment for what we do at the Lender Center, that is, research with communities rather than on them. We will look at theories of community-informed to community-led research; Participatory Action Research (PAR); Power dynamics in university-community partnerships and how to navigate them; Asset-based vs. deficit-based framing of community research questions; Co-production of knowledge: what it looks like in Lender projects. Data-driven, multi-systems approach to community research.

2. A Note on Methods as Research Practice: Methods are not checklists—but living, iterative practices that require a growth mindset, judgment, adaptation, and reflection, especially when working in community settings with real people. The five modules (below) are designed to give Lender Interns a foundation for research, not a formula. We will all encounter problems or moments where a textbook-application of an answer does not work, does not fit the person or community situation at hand—that is where real learning, innovation, and growth often happens. Bring those moments to your colleagues, supervising faculty members, and the team for discussion and learning together.

3. Central New York (CNY) Community Partners and Context: Lender Interns will be introduced to Lender's research projects and the CNY region's landscape including Micron's historic semiconductor investment as a case study in how economic development intersects with community. We will also examine (brief mapping and historical exercise) the physical and economic transformations happening in the CNY region, due to transportation infrastructure.

MODULE	FORMAT	DURATION
Module 1: Community-Engaged Research	In-person / Online	10 min.
Module 2: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods	In-person / Online	30 min.
Module 3: The Data Integration Portal & AI Interface	Hybrid hands-on (with RA tutorials)	20 min.
Module 4: Other Lender Research Projects	Optional	10 min.
Module 5: Research Ethics, Creating Teams, Q&A	Online / Discussion	10 min.

Lender Previous Research and Student (RA) Research: We will build on previous research completed by faculty and students (see video archive).

Broad Learning Outcomes: Lender Interns will be able to...		
✓	Describe community-based research and leading theoretical frameworks & approaches.	Working understanding of qualitative methods used in community-based research and Lender projects.
✓	Apply an asset-based lens when scoping a research question with or for a community-based organization or partner.	Learn and apply “big data” collection, cleaning, integrating, and visualization practices, including familiarity with federal public data.
✓	Design research models that involve community partners as co-creators of research, methods, and outcomes.	Use concepts from other programs and fields (i.e., Maxwell students from public administration, anthropology & political science will see links between community research and participatory and democratic governance).
✓	Bridge theories to applied practice.	Become fluent in understanding the difference between qualitative methods and when each is appropriate given a research question and community context.
✓	Create durable relationships with Lender students & faculty and community members.	Ethical and institutional framework governing research and data collection community-based work.

MODULE 02: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods in Community Research	30 MIN.
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Lender Interns will use multiple types of methods in their work at the Lender Center. The Lender Center’s Data Integration Portal is built on quantitative data thus far (i.e., Census surveys, municipal datasets), with the aspiration to include community organizational data. Lender Interns will build a working knowledge of quantitative and qualitative reasoning and their uses in community-based research.

PURPOSE	Build quantitative and qualitative skills and introduce mixed-methods design so interns can interpret, use, visualize, and communicate data from the Portal—with community partners.
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Qualitative Methods:

Many core research questions facing communities, especially the often complicated, multifaceted “why” questions, cannot be answered by numbers alone. Qualitative methods help to address the underlying reasons for the diversity of human experiences, the variety of ways that individuals make meaning, the nuances of motivations and experiences, and the complexity of context informing data. Qualitative methods often supply personal accounts, narratives, and stories, bringing life and detail to data.

Examples of Qualitative Methods & Tools:

- In-depth interviewing: semi-structured protocols, rapport-building, active listening.
- Focus groups: design, facilitation, and interpersonal dynamics for community settings
- Observational data collection and field notes
- Document and content analysis (policy documents, organizational reports, media) including field notes and memo-writing as an analytical practice
- Thematic coding and qualitative data analysis fundamentals
- Transcription and note-taking protocols used at the Lender Center

Practical Example:

- When thinking about a current Lender research theme (e.g., barriers to economic opportunity in Syracuse), a student intern might ask (during a debrief): What surprised you? What would you probe further? How did positionality, including your own, shape the conversation?

Quantitative Concepts, Methods & Tools:

- Reading and interpreting descriptive statistics (means, distributions, rates)
- Understanding Census data structures: ACS, decennial.
- Indicators and index construction for multidimensional phenomena (e.g., wealth gap)
- Correlation vs. causation in community research contexts
- Basic data visualization: what makes a chart user-friendly, accessible (PowerBI)
- Introduction to Excel for data cleaning and basic analysis
- Overview of R and Python for interns with prior experience
- Data dashboard and mapping literacy for the Lender Portal

Mixed Methods Concepts & Design Issues:

- When to integrate qualitative and quantitative data — and how
- Triangulation: using multiple data sources to strengthen findings
- Writing for both academic and community audiences using integrated findings

Practical Example:

What interns will leave knowing:	What interns will leave able to do:
How to read a Census table, interpret a basic regression output, and explain when mixed methods adds value.	Navigate a public dataset in the Portal, identify relevant indicators, and pair them with a qualitative question.

The Data Integration Portal is the Lender Center’s newest research project — a publicly accessible, multi-sector platform that connects university research, community data, and policy impacts in one place.

Many Lender interns will help to build the datasets for the Portal (i.e., cleaning data, drafting narrative summaries, liaising with CBO partners to gather organizational data or testimonials). Lender student researchers (RAs) who worked on building the datasets for the Portal have created a video archive of each aspect of their research and data-collection processes—which we will use as “tutorials” and continue to build upon.

PURPOSE

Lender interns will gain a working familiarity with the Portal’s architecture, data sources, dashboards, and user-friendly, community-accessible design, including data format and standards, naming conventions, quality control protocols, etc.

Portal Architecture: The ‘Wealth Gap’ Multi-System Framework

The Portal is built around the hypothesis that economic opportunity is not produced by a single social factor but by the interaction of multiple social systems, some of which we do not think about as having anything to do with economic wealth or opportunity (i.e., health and wellness). Sectors include housing, education, legal services, labor and entrepreneurship, digital technology, arts & culture and more; variables are equally multisectoral, involving demographics, disability, veterans’ status, among others.

Data Sources & Layers

- National public datasets: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS 5-year, decennial), BLS, etc.,
- State and local-municipal data: NYS data resources, City of Syracuse administrative data
- Community organizational data: contributed by Lender CBO partners (with data governance protocols)
- Asset and deficit mapping layers: spatial data on resources and gaps in CNY neighborhoods

Hands-On Walkthrough (Hybrid) of Lender Portal:

- Navigate through sector dashboards
- Identify 2-3 key indicators and interpret what they show about Syracuse
- Cross-reference a sector (housing) with the Syracuse Demographics Overview for context
- Locate the Community Impact Stories section, examine one CBO, and/or submit a Data Request form as a practice exercise

What interns will leave knowing

How the Lender Portal’s multi-system framework helps to integrate data to better understand community-based research solutions and social science theories for economic opportunity and development.

What interns will leave able to do

Find, interpret, and contextualize public data and data variables and indicators for their impact on specific research questions.

Lender has several concurrent research projects. Lender Interns may be asked for their interest area in a particular project, social system, or community priority area (i.e., Micron transformation, housing, education).

Additional Lender Projects include:

- **Lender Orange Papers** on special topics: ethics in data collection, Procommunity AI, the scholarship of community-engagement, the role of the community in reindustrialization, etc.
- Anchor Institutions in CNY Housing Equity
- Faculty research (i.e., Data Warriors, Public Health)
- CNY Economic and Physical Infrastructure Transformation and Healthy Aging
- Expanding Community Partnerships
- Assessing Community Needs Assessment Surveys and Datasets
- Community Data Testimonials
- Lender Annual Expo

Research and data collection involving individuals and communities always carries important ethical obligations. This is especially true in cases in which individuals, groups, or communities may be historically underserved or over-researched by academic institutions. The Lender Center uses a particularly high standard in its research projects with community partners, ensuring that we center community needs and voices and that we conduct research with partners as co-creators of research design, research questions, and results.

PURPOSE

Share the ethical precepts, frameworks, institutional requirements, and community-specific protocols governing Lender research with community partners and data.

Strategic Plan Alignment: The Lender's 2026-2029 plan calls for community partners to be named as co-investigators in research. This is not just a procedural change — it is a recognition that community members are experts in their own areas and experiences.

Concepts and Topics Covered:

- Ethical data frameworks: Confidentiality, anonymization, and data security for community data.
- Social and historical context in research goals and involving CNY communities.
- Reciprocity: what the Lender Center owes its research partners.
- IRB (Institutional Review Board) basics: when it applies, how to navigate it as a student researcher.
- Informed consent: principles, adaptations for community settings, and documentation.
- Social media and public communication protocols during active research.

Community Partner Protocols:

Ultimately, Lender community partners will each have ideas and specific protocols about data ownership, publication review, and community benefit (i.e., Community Research Agreement) to address such questions as who owns the data, who controls the findings, who benefits from the publication? We will work together to build these frameworks and agreements.