

Leslie Cornfeld, Associate Fellow

Leslie Cornfeld, an Associate Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, is nationally recognized for designing and leading high profile, cross-sector efforts to tackle pressing social and community challenges. Her expertise is transforming innovative ideas into scalable, measurable, high impact solutions – through a focus on systems, data and innovative partnerships. A former federal prosecutor, non-profit/public sector consultant, she previously served as an advisor to former Mayor Michael Bloomberg for his last two terms in office.

Over the past two decades, beginning with her work for Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in Washington DC, she established a track record of expertise and impact in a variety of areas, including *education, urban policy, civic engagement, juvenile justice, and innovative cross-sector partnerships*. A Washington Post editorial praised the effort she led targeting chronically absent at risk students in NYC as “an example of what’s possible.” The U.S. Conference of Mayors similarly praised that work as a model for other cities; and this year Ms. Cornfeld was awarded the *Children’s Defense Fund Champion for Children Award* in recognition of her decades-long work on behalf of underserved youth.

Specifically in NYC, Ms. Cornfeld designed and led large, cross-sector, multi-agency mayoral efforts to drive policy and programmatic change in targeted high priority areas. Most recently she served as chair and director of the Mayor’s Interagency Task Force to drive student achievement in low-income communities through new strategies to target chronic student absenteeism. Within three years the effort scaled from 25 to 100 pilot schools, serving over 60,000 students. A 2013 Johns Hopkins evaluation found significant impact in a number of key areas critical for student achievement in high poverty communities (www.EveryoneGraduates.org), resulting in the citywide roll out of several key pilot initiatives. She previously served as the founding director of the *Mayor’s NYC Interagency Task Force on Child Welfare and Safety*, following a widely publicized child abuse homicide, where she led a team of policymakers, educators, and agency staff in designing and implementing over a dozen systemic reforms to strengthen NYC’s child welfare and safety apparatus.

As a federal prosecutor, Ms. Cornfeld led a series of large public corruption, criminal civil rights, and human trafficking cases -- resulting in her twice receiving the U.S. Attorney General’s Director’s Award for outstanding performance. Prior to that she was appointed *Deputy Chief Counsel of the NYC Commission to Investigate Alleged Police Corruption (the “Mollen Commission”)* where she helped develop and lead investigations of alleged police corruption and brutality – resulting in NYC’s creation of a permanent police oversight commission. She was a litigation associate at the law firm *Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison*; served as a law clerk to the *Honorable Pierre N. Leval*, SDNY (now U.S. 2nd Circuit), and as Special Assistant to *Senator Daniel P. Moynihan in Washington, DC*.

Ms. Cornfeld has served as trustee on a number of non-profit and other boards, including the *Children’s Defense Fund* national board for over a decade; the *Dalton School in NYC*; the *Hospital For Special Surgery*; the *Center for Law, Brain and Behavior*; the *Harvard Law School Association of NYC*; and is founder of a public speaking program in East Harlem, where she has served as a coach and mentor for several years.

She has contributed articles and opinion pieces in a variety of publications, including the *New York Times*, *Newsweek* magazine, *NY Law Journal*, and *Huffington Post*; has been featured on numerous television and news segments in the areas of education, civic engagement and policing, and is a frequent speaker at national conferences in these areas.

She is a graduate of Harvard College, *Phi Beta Kappa*, and Harvard Law School.