



Vanessa is the Senior Program Manager for Digital Inclusion, a program area under Economic Opportunity that promotes digital literacy and workforce readiness through credentialing, upskilling, and access to emerging technology. In this role, she manages the selection, development, curriculum, and data-driven maintenance of four Digital Inclusion Centers in the City of Pittsburgh.

Prior to coming to Neighborhood Allies, Vanessa worked as a History teacher at a leading high school in the Czech Republic. Ironically it took moving abroad to learn the full, unfettered history of Civil Rights movements in US and South Africa, as well as African and Asian colonial history. After six years abroad, she decided the best use of her energy and skills was to be a true ally and dedicate herself toward building better communities for everyone.

Vanessa is passionate about finding innovative, sustainable, and scalable models for financial and digital training interventions. To do this she uses

design thinking to explore what users *really* want. Next, she leverages a strong background in business and financial planning to build a model that delivers that value at the lowest price point. Finally, she collects data on user progress so Neighborhood Allies and our partners can improve services and lobby for effective policy interventions, which start to dismantle the structural barriers that stand in the way of equitable development.

One such program was the Accredited Financial Counselors (AFC) certification cohort that she created under Economic Opportunity in 2019. This program trains and credentials individuals and businesses who seek to provide financial advice to low- and medium- income communities. Our inaugural cohort certified four advisors who went on to provide professional services through their own companies and social service agencies and our second is underway.

Vanessa holds a M.S. in Public Policy and Management (with a certificate in Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation) from Carnegie Mellon University, an M.A. in Comparative History from Central European University, and a B.A. in International Relations from American University.