



Abby Wilson

Lead Instructor and Coach

Abby Wilson uses design practice and other deliberative tools to change how people and mission-driven organizations work, think, and solve problems. She's been a senior member of LUMA Institute's instructor community since 2011 and currently leads her own facilitation, mediation and consulting practice.

Abby recently stepped down from her role as Dr. Karen Hacker's Deputy Director for Policy at the Allegheny County Health Department, where she spearheaded design-led policy and civic engagement efforts on healthcare access, substance use, vaccination and lead exposure. In 2014, Abby completed her term as founding director of the federal government's first design-led innovation lab. She partnered with The White House, USDA, FDA, VA and many other federal agencies to develop more people-friendly policies and services.

Trained as a cultural anthropologist and international lawyer, Abby has lived, worked and studied in Africa and Europe, observing the power of people and organizations to solve even the most complex problems. She believes that design literacy supercharges the human 'fixing' instinct by making it more resilient and creative, especially in the presence of material, financial or cultural constraints.

She has contributed research to international tribunals, built a policy network across the Rust Belt and conducted health fieldwork in rural South Africa. She is a practitioner of deliberative democracy, and used this approach to guide discourse on issues including climate change, natural gas drilling and municipal consolidation.

She was a Press Secretary at the New York City Council, where she developed expertise in education, housing and health policy. She supported the drafting of numerous pieces of legislation.

Abby holds a B.A. in Cultural Anthropology from Columbia University, an LL.M. in Public International Law from Universiteit Utrecht and a J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a professionally trained alto and seasoned theatrical improviser.



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