

Hilary Olson

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Summary

As an interdisciplinary researcher skilled in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, I am passionate about conducting policy-relevant research and data-driven program evaluations. Specializing in social innovation, my research interests include social finance, international development, collaborative governance, co-production, and systems change.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Public Policy & Management *May 2024*
Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California

- Specializations: Social Innovation & Program Evaluation
- Dissertation: Outcomes-Based Contracting through Impact Bonds: Ties to Social Innovation, Systems Change, and International Development
- Future Faculty Teaching Institute Certification

Master of Public Policy (MPP), Certificate in International Policy and Planning *May 2018*
Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California

- Price Women & Allies Board Member

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Diplomacy & World Affairs (Major), Economics (Minor) *May 2012*
Occidental College

- Microfinance Investment Fund Board Member

Professional Experience

Independent Researcher/Consultant *Los Angeles, CA*
Self-Employed *June 2024 – present*

- Design, conduct, and support research studies and program evaluations.
- Manage research assistants, conduct literature reviews, and employ mixed-methods approaches to produce policy-facing insights.
- Share findings through presentations and academic articles, including a peer-reviewed book chapter and two academic conferences.

Doctoral Researcher *Los Angeles, CA*
University of Southern California *Aug 2018 – May 2024*

- Designed and executed independent studies on Outcomes-Based Contracts.
- Collected primary data through stakeholder interviews and conducted rigorous qualitative analysis using process tracing and thematic coding through NVivo.
- Disseminated research through a published dissertation as well as presentations, panels, and posters at three academic conferences.

Research Assistant *Los Angeles, CA*
Price Center for Social Innovation *Aug 2018 – July 2023*

- Collaborated on research projects assessing Social Impact Bonds and Emergency Aid funds.
- Supervised research assistants and liaised with clients throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation of social innovation programs.
- Conducted literature reviews, participant and stakeholder interviews, and quantitative and qualitative data analyses using Stata and NVivo.
- Co-authored five publications and participated in three academic conferences and a podcast.

Research Assistant

Gould School of Law

Los Angeles, CA

Sept 2017 – May 2020

- Provided research assistance for projects related to immigration detention, conducting literature reviews and preparing quantitative data for analysis using Excel and Stata.
- Co-designed a participatory study to explore the impacts of Community Bail Funds using interviews and surveys.
- Awarded two research fellowships from the Immigrants and Global Migration Initiative and the Linnie and Michael Katz Endowment.

Student Consultant

University of Southern California

Los Angeles, CA

Aug 2017 – May 2018

- Partnered with three other students to consult with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- Developed a framework for identifying effective and transferable approaches for promoting good governance and sustainable development.
- Analyzed four global case studies, including by conducting interviews with program coordinators and academic professionals.
- Presented findings from the final report at the United Nations.

Research Assistant

Milken Institute, Center for the Future of Aging

Los Angeles, CA

Aug 2017 – Dec 2017

- Researched initiatives for successful aging programs in support of the Mayor's Pledge, a campaign to make communities more livable for older populations.
- Cleaned, analyzed, and visualized data in support of the Best Cities for Successful Aging report.
- Provided research support as-needed for conferences and presentations.

Student Consultant

University of Southern California

Los Angeles, CA

Jan 2017 – June 2017

- Worked on a seven-person consulting team for the Italian Civil Protection Agency.
- Created a person-centric approach to disaster response, with a focus on social media.
- Met with members from the local media, nonprofit, and private sectors in Milan to identify major stakeholders and objectives.
- Helped prepare the final report and presented findings to the Agency in Milan.

Account Executive

Charity Brands Consulting

Los Angeles, CA

Oct 2016 – May 2017

- Researched companies whose corporate social responsibility objectives matched our clients' interests.
- Identified organizational alignments for public-private partnerships and mission-driven campaigns.
- Wrote memoranda outlining client strategies and potential partners.

Teaching and Mentorship Experience

Adjunct Lecturer (Master-Level)

University of Southern California

- Policy and Program Evaluation (Spring 2026)
- Foundations of Public Policy Analysis (Fall 2025)

Mentor (Master-Level)

University of Southern California

- Price Professional Mentorship Program (2024 - 2025)

Teaching Assistant (Master-Level)

University of Southern California

- Applied Econometrics for Program Evaluation (Fall 2020)
- Policy Analysis Practicum (Summer 2019 - Spring 2020)
- Economics for Policy, Planning & Development (Summer 2017)

Publications

Results-Based Funding via Development Impact Bonds Stakeholder Perceptions on Benefits and Costs [↗](#)

2026

Hilary Olson

IGI Global Scientific Publishing

Program Design to Ease Administrative Burden in Times of Crisis: An Evaluation of Two Emergency Aid Programs in Los Angeles [↗](#)

Jan 2025

Jeimee Estrada-Miller, **Hilary Olson**, and Gary Painter.

Social Policy & Administration

- Can a Focus on Co-Created, Strengths-Based Services Facilitate Early-Stage Innovation within Social Impact Bonds?** [↗](#) June 2022
Chris Fox, **Hilary Olson**, Harry Armitage, Susan Baines, and Gary Painter.
International Public Management Journal
- Are social impact bonds an innovation in finance or do they help finance social innovation?** [↗](#) Apr 2022
Hilary Olson, Gary Painter, Kevin Albertson, Christopher Fox, and Christopher O’Leary.
Journal of Social Policy
- An evaluation of the emergency aid programs at the University of Southern California and Los Angeles Community College District** [↗](#) May 2021
Hilary Olson, Kalen Cornelious, Riley Carbonneau, Victoria Ciudad-Real, Dr. Jovanna Rosen, Cynthia Barboza-Wilkes, Hannah Lee, and Gary Painter.
Sol Price Center for Social Innovation
- Social impact bonds 2.0? Findings from a study of four UK SIBs** [↗](#) Dec 2020
Chris Fox, **Hilary Olson**, and Harry Armitage.
Sol Price Center for Social Innovation

Honors and Awards

- Henry Reining Award for Best Dissertation (2024)
- Price Fifth Year Fellowship (2022 - 2023)
- USC Graduate School Summer Research & Writing Grant (2022)
- Price/Graduate School Fellowship (2018 - 2022)
- Immigrants & Global Migration Initiative Research Fellowship (2019)
- Linnie & Michael Katz Endowed Research Fellowship (2018)
- Robert P. Biller Award for Best Policy Analysis (2018)

Skills

- Qualitative & Quantitative Methodologies
- Research Design, Policy Analysis, & Program Evaluation
- Writing Academic Articles, Evaluation Reports, & Policy Briefings
- Presenting & Communicating Findings to Broad Audiences
- Stakeholder Engagement & Cultural Competency
- Experience with STATA, NVivo, ATLAS.ti, ArcGISPro, Canva & Python

Languages

English: Native proficiency

French: Advanced proficiency