

2026 NERSA / NARSC Program for Early Career Regional Science Scholars

Housing and Regional Science

We are excited to invite early career regional scientists¹ to participate in the upcoming Northeastern Regional Science Association (NERSA) Workshop on Housing and Regional Science, which will begin with a keynote speech from Dr. Lei Ding before moving into data sources, methodologies, and policy related to housing across geographic scales.

Experts will share insights into various aspects of housing dynamics, covering topics such as discrete choice modeling, machine learning, and network analysis. A key focus of this workshop is fostering interdisciplinary collaboration by bringing together early career scholars, senior researchers, and practitioners in a dynamic, engaging, interactive environment.

Join us for this 18-month cohort-based virtual or hybrid program that not only advances regional science but also builds a lasting community of scholars dedicated to addressing pressing socio-economic and policy challenges through innovative research. If you are passionate about being part of the next generation of regional scientists, we encourage you to get involved, develop your ideas, and join the community of Regional Scientists!

Objectives

Learning Objectives

The NERSA Workshop has the following format to guide students through housing analysis in regional science:

- 1. Data sources for housing Analysis:** Following the initial keynote lecture, students will receive an in-depth examination of the data used in housing research. This will provide

¹ “Early career scholars in regional science” includes doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers, lecturers and junior faculty members, and professionals (e.g., agency staff) with terminal degrees. The phrase also refers to more senior scholars to whom regional science is new.

students with a basic understanding of the inputs to housing research prior to moving on to selected analytical methods.

2. Methods in Regional Science: The next section will cover selected methods in regional science. These include discrete choice analysis, machine learning, and network analysis. These sessions will give an overview of various techniques and demonstrate their practical use through real-world examples. The goal is to get students quickly using each method.

3. Policy Overview: The final lecture will be a broad overview of housing policy and regional science. This will cover a wide array of topics that students can apply learned methods to. Various topics covered include housing laws, zoning and regulations, and feedback with regional economic systems.

4. Develop a research proposal: By the end of the program, students will work to draft an initial paper idea, which will be presented at the end of July. Each student will present initial ideas for feedback and potential collaborations with other students.

Community Objectives

While specific objectives will vary with the annual program topic and participant cohorts, the overall aim is to promote interaction and collaboration among participants representing the different disciplines that comprise regional science. Interactions and collaborations are intended to be both scholarly and social, building a community of rigorous, mutually supportive Regional Science scholars who interact with practitioners. Participants in the program will enjoy meetups at various conferences as well as mentoring opportunities for the following program cohorts.

Programming

The NERSA early career regional science scholar program is a cohort model program with a kick-off meeting, a keynote lecture, and a series of virtual workshops. Participants will then present initial ideas at the NARSC annual conference before undertaking the research to be presented at NARSC the following year. Cohort participants are encouraged to recruit, volunteer, and provide feedback for subsequent cohorts to ensure the long-term viability of the program and grow the community.

Housing Keynote Lecture – June 30th 2026 11 am Eastern Time (Online)

Dr. Lei Ding

Community Development Research Officer
Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

Lei Ding was initially trained as a mechanical engineer, but his strong interest in social science led him to work as a senior research associate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and later as a faculty member in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Wayne State University. He joined the Community Development and Regional Outreach Department in 2013, researching housing and community development; specifically, credit access, gentrification and neighborhood change, and affordable housing.

Lei understands how important it is to use evidence-based research to help people understand the effects of policy issues on housing, community development, and access to credit. He believes this research not only allows policymakers to better develop intervention strategies and improve existing policies but also allows us all to better understand the nature of our society.



Date	Time (Eastern)	Series	Topic	Speaker
June 25 th	11am	Kickoff and Student Introductions		
June 30 th	11am	Keynote		Dr. Lei Ding <i>Federal Reserve Bank</i>
July 7 th	11am	Data Sources and Methods	U.S. Data Overview and Selected Topics	Dr. Edward Coulson <i>University California Irvine</i>
July 14 th	11am	Methods	Discrete Choice	Dr. John Carruthers <i>Cornell University</i>
July 16 th	11am		Machine Learning	Dr. Isabelle Nilsson <i>Cleveland State University</i>
July 21 st	11am		Network Analysis	Dr. Laurie Schintler <i>George Mason University</i>
July 23 rd	11am	Policy	Local/Regional Policy in the US	Dr. Terry Clower <i>George Mason University</i>
July 30 th	11am		Local Policy – Scarcity, Subsidies and Finance	Dr. Yesim Sayin <i>DC Policy Center</i>
August 6 th	11 am	Student Paper Idea and Group Formation		Dr. Keith Waters <i>NERSA President</i>

Note – Workshops will be recorded and made available to attendees.

Confirmed Mentors: Geoffrey J. D. Hewings (UIUC), John Carruthers (Cornell), Minxuan Lan (University of Toledo), Keith Waters (George Mason University), Andrew Van Leuven (University of Vermont), Ting Zhang (University of Baltimore), Samir KC (Population and Statistics Research Hub).

Initial Project Proposal Submission – August 2026

After the final virtual workshop, participants will finalize teams and develop an initial project proposal for working together over the following year.

Work on the Project Proposal-- August-October 2026 (Online)

The project teams will work on the project, aiming to present progress, theoretical frameworks, and/or preliminary findings at the annual NARSC meetings. Monthly virtual follow-up meetings will be held to discuss progress and assistance needed. Meetings are designed to encourage ongoing engagement, community building, resource-sharing, and long-term collaboration.

Complete Research Proposal Presentation-- November 2026

Team research project proposals will be presented and discussed at length at a day-long workshop on the Wednesday prior to the beginning of the annual NARSC meetings or on a day of linked sessions on Thursday and/or Friday of the meetings.

This workshop will allow participants to present their research theoretical frameworks and preliminary findings, discuss challenges and opportunities they face, and obtain feedback and advice from senior scholars and fellow participants.

In subsequent years, it is expected that prior program participants will attend the workshop to provide feedback and advice on newly forming projects and make connections with the new cohort.

On the last day of the NARSC meetings, teams will present on the state of their work, discuss how they will incorporate feedback and advice, and set expectations for completing their work.

A social event will be organized for cohort participants to attend during NARSC.

Work on the Team Project-- Winter 2026-2027

Program participants will continue to work on their project papers, attend regional science and other academic conferences to present work, as well as advertise the program to potential cohort participants for the 2027-2028 cohort.

Recruiting future participants and maintaining continued involvement are crucial to the program's continuation and the expansion of NERSA.

NERSA will help cohort participants coordinate social events at regional meetings.

Leading the 2027 Workshop-- Spring/Summer 2027

Volunteers from the cohort will be requested to lead introductions and discussions of the subsequent cohort. While the topic will change in the subsequent year, the program's structure will remain consistent, allowing current participants to offer suggestions on how future cohorts can get the most out of their participation.

Complete Project Presentation -- November 2027 (Hybrid)

Cohort participants will present research results at the 2025 NARSC annual meetings in a session or series of linked sessions for cohort members, offering an exclusive opportunity to network and socialize with fellow participants, speakers, and program mentors. Please note that physical attendance at the session(s) is NOT required for participation in this program. Senior researchers and others involved are encouraged to attend the session and provide feedback. Cohort members from prior and subsequent years are also encouraged to attend and provide input on cohort papers.

After the presentations, certificates of completion will be distributed to cohort members, followed by a social event.

Completion

Completion of the program will require participants to produce a topical research paper that is either presented at the North American Regional Science Council annual meeting or submitted for publication in a Regional Science Journal. Papers or presentations may be solo-authored or jointly authored with members of the cohort or senior scholars who participated in the program. Participants in the early career Regional Science scholars will receive a certificate of completion upon submission or presentation. Senior scholars will receive honoraria for participation, separate from inclusion on any papers jointly authored with junior scholars.

How to Participate

In addition to calling for **participants**, we welcome **experts** to share their interests and insights on mobility, migration, and immigration dynamics, covering topics such as concepts and cutting-edge methods used by regional scientists for the study of migration behavior. A key focus of this workshop is fostering interdisciplinary collaboration by bringing together early career scholars, senior researchers, and practitioners in a dynamic, engaging, interactive environment. We also welcome **mentors** to support early career scholars by providing research feedback, career guidance, and networking opportunities. Whether as a presenter, mentor, or both, this is an excellent opportunity to showcase cutting-edge research, engage with a diverse cohort, and contribute to critical discussions on emerging trends and policy frameworks shaping human mobility and migration.

Additionally, we invite **ideas** from the regional science community to enhance the program's impact—whether through innovative session formats, new research directions, or collaborative initiatives that bridge research and policy.

Join us in this **18-month cohort-based** program that not only advances regional science but also builds a lasting community of scholars dedicated to addressing pressing socio-economic and policy challenges through innovative research. If you are passionate about shaping the next generation of regional scientists, we encourage you to get involved, share your ideas, and help make this workshop a success!

If you are interested in being a **participant**, please submit a registration form and a registration fee of \$100.

Registration Form:

<https://forms.gle/WfgVaeCQ7gx3DTUR6>

Pay Registration Fee (NARSC Meeting Savvy Store):

<https://narsc.meetingsavvy.net>

If you are interested in serving as a mentor or potential presenter, please let us know. You can direct any inquiries or express your interest by contacting Dr. Keith Waters at kwaters2@gmu.edu and Dr. Ting Zhang at tzhang@ubalt.edu.

Registration Deadline: June 20th, 2026