

Andrew John Calhoun

Leading on Opportunity, Senior Manager, Data and Evaluation

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WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

Charlotte, North Carolina

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN CHARLOTTE AREA?

20+ years

TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOU?

Here's my bio: AJ Calhoun blends expertise in economics, design, and theology to address complex community challenges. Prior to joining LOO, AJ led a collaboration between United Way, Knight Foundation, FFTC, and Bank of America to develop a strategic plan for disrupting displacement across Mecklenburg County. He currently chairs the North Star Data Committee within Charlotte Executive Leadership Council's Healthy Communities Working Team and serves on Novant Health's Community Engagement Advisory Council. AJ is also an Associate Fellow of the Kirby Liang Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge where he is a member of the Economics Research Hub. He holds a master's in public policy from the University of Chicago, Bachelors' in urban studies and political science from Furman University, and spent two years in Malaysia as a Fulbright scholar. He's currently completing a master's in theology. AJ is a Charlotte native whose passion for community development was sparked growing up in the local YMCA. Outside the office, AJ enjoys cooking, reading, and learning about flags.

DURING YOUR TIME VOLUNTEERING FOR A COMMUNITY ACTIVITY OR PROJECT, WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT?

Just this week I had the opportunity to join Communities in Schools' annual Difference Makers trip. About 50 community and student leaders traveled to DC for a jam-packed three days of museums, monument walks, and a college visit. It was incredible to build relationships and social capital with the young people and community folks on the trip— I spend most of my time thinking about education data, so the opportunity to hear stories first-hand from high school juniors and seniors about their journeys was memorable and impactful!

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY? PLEASE BE AS DETAILED AS YOU CAN.

In my role with Leading on Opportunity, I have the pleasure of contributing to the advancement of economic mobility in Charlotte through data. My goal is to bridge community expertise with more traditional forms of information. Specifically, I focus on using data to make sense out of complexity by visualizing the college and career readiness ecosystem, identifying areas for alignment and cooperation between organizations, and evaluating community progress.

PLEASE LET US KNOW ANY AWARDS OR RECOGNITIONS YOU'VE RECEIVED IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Community Building Initiative Leaders Under 40

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES OR INTEREST?

I love to cook. My housemates and I host community dinners at our house every Wednesday night for anyone who wants to show up. You're invited.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE THAT YOU STAND BY?

“Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.” – Wendell Berry (from the poem Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front). I have this tacked up on a sticky note above my computer. As someone who looks at data on our community’s most pressing social challenges, this is a very helpful reminder in the face of frequent frustration that changing systems takes generations.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS? 10 YEARS?

In the next five years, I hope to continue leveraging data to build useful tools and design innovative strategies to improve quality of life and access to opportunity for all Charlotteans. In the next ten years, I hope to scale this impact beyond Charlotte.

CAN YOU SHARE ONE THING THAT IS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

I would like to become a certified Master Gelatiere (Gelato maker).

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU USED YOUR PASSPORT?

I spent three weeks off the grid this summer in the UK. I stayed in an old manor house in a village called Greatham and spent my days reading philosophy and going on walks in the English countryside.

WHAT IS A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF THAT NO ONE KNOWS?

I am a rescue diver.

WHO IS YOUR HERO?

My dad, Andy Calhoun.

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ?

I just recently finished *Compass of Affection* by Scott Cairns.

WHAT WAS THE LAST MOVIE YOU SAW?

Céline Sciamma’s film *Petite Maman*

WHAT WAS THE LAST CONCERT YOU SAW?

Bahamas at the Visualite

HOW DID THE COVID PANDEMIC AFFECT YOUR PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

I’d known for a few years wanted to move back to Charlotte someday. I thought someday might be 2025 or 2030... but the pandemic brought me back in 2020 and opened doors to work with United Way and then to LOO. So, while COVID made much of life more sad and complicated, it also brought me back to Charlotte!

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