

Speaker: *Asheley Van Ness*

Presentation title: Filling in the Gaps: The Role of Advocacy in Building the Evidence Base for Gun Policy

Co-author: *Andrew Morrall* (RAND, USA)

Despite substantial public concern, the U.S. is struggling to effectively address its current epidemic of gun violence because the federal government, our biggest research funder, has significantly underinvested in gun research for more than two decades. The consequences have implications beyond the U.S. as underfunded research and data systems leave considerable gaps in the ability to study gun violence and as a result there are very few researchers who spend the majority of their time on gun issues. In 2018, Arnold Ventures launched the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research and committed \$20 million to advance scientific research on gun policy in addition to launching a national expert panel on firearms data infrastructure. Separately, Arnold Ventures advocated for federal funding to support research at a scale commensurate with the problem — something only the federal government has the power to do. In 2019, Congress approved gun violence prevention research funding for the first time in more than 20 years. However, until the federal government commits to a large and sustained portfolio of research on gun violence prevention, the need for the Collaborative's funded research will remain urgent to build the evidence base needed to support fair and effective gun policies. This presentation will discuss the foundation's gun violence research and data portfolio, its advocacy strategy around federal funding and its implications on the broader field. New federal funding that was recently allocated is welcome and needed, but there is still enormous ground to be made up to build the evidence base needed to support fair and effective gun policies.