Community-Led Participatory Policymaking Toolkit

WE POWER POLICY
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For over 500 years, we have contended with a history of contradiction. The United States was founded on stolen land, colonized by those seeking freedom from persecution, through the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The Declaration of Independence states that all “men” are created equal, yet the United States’ culture, economy, and governance is built upon the erasure of Indigenous peoples, anti-Black racism, a legacy of slavery, sexism, and classism. The narrative of our country is that we are a democracy—a society free of autocratic rule and oppression—yet our local, state, and federal governments are controlled by those in the ruling class—holding onto wealth, power, and privilege at the expense of everyone else.

Without reprieve from pain, oppression, and injustice from 1492 to 2020, there remains a clear pathway to reparation, redemption, and possibility. We have centuries of guiding light to help us move forward. We are witnessing legacies of freedom fighters with the continuous calls for abolition, from Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman to the Movement for Black Lives today. We are witnessing the living tradition from Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker movement to today’s mutual aid networks and cooperative economics rooted in anti-racist and anti-poverty efforts. We may not have created the systems that we were born into, but we do have a collective responsibility to transform these economic, cultural, and political systems into ones that build a society of radical inclusion, deep democracy, and righteous justice. This pathway requires transforming our culture, economy, and politics—together. In order to create change, we need multiple strategic approaches.
A critical approach is to engage with changing the policies that keep structural violence and injustice in place. Far too often, engaging in policy has been reserved for academics, technical “experts,” and those with wealth and power. Because we live in a society shaped by racial ideologies, white supremacy, and power, prioritizing technical expertise and policy solutions devoid of this context—absent the radical inclusion of community leadership and solutions—will never work. Failing to see communities as groups with the agency to influence and implement policy will only replicate harms of the past. Elected leaders tend to say that we must make policies that will impact “those closest to the pain,” but if communities are not driving and shaping the policies, how can the solutions ever achieve these goals?

This participatory policymaking toolkit advances the practice of transformative alignment (see Appendix) through a collective and community-driven process. These processes are intended to transform governance, contend for power, dismantle systems of white supremacy and racism, and create opportunities for building accountability and decision-making power within our public institutions and communities.

Ella Baker once said, “Give people light, they will find the way.” People don’t need policy experts or elected officials telling them what should happen within their communities. People have the solutions and vision. Conditions must be created where people are heard, resourced, and supported to craft the solutions necessary for change. This is the belief that undergirds this participatory policymaking toolkit. Policymaking should be about creating processes and pathways to shed light on the sacred value of community wisdom and experience.
Simran Noor (she/her) comes to racial, economic, and social justice work as a survivor of violence, experienced personally and systemically. Born into a Punjabi Sikh, Hindu, and Parsi family in New Delhi, raised outside of Baltimore, and based in New York, Simran’s latest endeavor is co-creating an NYC-based BIPOC Consulting Cooperative set to launch in mid-2021 and reflective of her interest in community building and solidarity economies. Simran is currently an interdependent consultant and coach. She focuses on personal power and resilience, strategy and organizational development, and movement building, with a focus on developing processes and setting clear outcomes to achieve racial justice and healing as a means to shift the ways systems dehumanize, separate, and harm all people, particularly women and communities of color.

She brings over ten years of experience working in and directly with impacted communities, developing policy and strategy, leading organizational change processes, and serving as staff within the philanthropic sector.

Since starting NOOR Consulting in February of 2018, she has worked with numerous clients in various capacities. These include the American Medical Association, Career Rise, Community Change, Detroit People's Platform, EMPLOY Youth Collaborative, Enterprise Community Partners, International Panel of Experts on Sustainability (IPES-Food), It Takes Roots, SPARCC, as well as a number of philanthropic organizations including Annie E. Casey, Chorus, Community Food Funders, Doris Duke, Jessie Smith Noyes, Kresge, MS, Nathan Cummings, Neighborhood Funders' Group and the Surdna Foundation. She has facilitated events for business social impact programs including Sir Kensington’s and Adidas. Previously, Simran served as a Senior Fellow at Race Forward and (premerger) was Vice President of Policy and Programs at the Center for Social Inclusion and Deputy Director of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). Prior to joining CSI, Simran held various roles including as staff at the W.K. Kellogg and Annie E. Casey Foundation and as a middle school teacher and nonprofit leader in Baltimore City.

Simran has written and commented for a variety of media including the Detroit Free Press, The Times-Picayune, The Hill, Aljazeera America, and City Limits Magazine. She also has been a featured panelist on MSNBC’s Melissa Harris-Perry. Simran holds a dual bachelor’s degree in American Studies and Political Science from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and a dual master’s degree in Public Administration and Social Policy from the University of Pennsylvania. She also serves as a Project Team Member of the Building Movement Project and a Board member of Borealis Philanthropy and South Asian Americans Leading Together. She is a proud member of Warriors for Embodied Liberation, a program of Universal Partnership (UP).
Anthony K. Rogers-Wright (he/him) serves as the Director of Environmental Justice at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Anthony has been influential in shaping policy and organizing strategy for the United Frontline Table and Green New Deal Network while facilitating alignment and movements towards a climate just platform for federal policy. Anthony brings over ten years of policy analysis, community organizing, and outreach/advocacy experience. While serving as a policy analyst for various environmental consulting firms in California and Colorado, he specialized in land use, Clean Air Act, and environmental justice compliance. He has used his organizing and outreach experience to advocate for a variety of social justice campaigns including environmental justice, affordable health care access, income inequality, and civil rights for LGBT citizens.

In 2016, Anthony acted as a surrogate and policy advisor for the Sanders presidential campaign and testified on the need for increased action on climate justice to the DNC Platform Committee. In 2012, Anthony led the effort to make Colorado Health Insurance Cooperative the first health insurance provider in the State’s history to remove transgender health exclusions from all of its policies.

Anthony was selected as one of Grist.org's 50 People You’ll Be Talking About in 2016 and as a participant in the Young Climate Leaders Network. He’s written numerous articles discussing the axiomatic nexus between the climate crisis and social justice, and spoken of this issue at universities throughout the United States and in Europe. Anthony earned his undergraduate degrees in Environmental Science and Policy and Jazz Composition as well as his graduate degree in Community Development, Environmental Science, and Public Policy, both from Clark University. Anthony serves on the Boards of Friends of the Earth Action Board and Evergreen Action. He is blessed to be the father of his energetic, entertaining, and VERY loquacious son, Zahir Cielo (aka “Bean”).
Anthony Giancatarino (he/him) is a father of three and rooted in Philadelphia, PA. Anthony is the Strategy Lead for the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy and Anthony has led the JCET project, incubated as a fellowship, for the last four years, working with community partners to create community-driven processes in policy development, strategy, and collective governance towards an anti-racist and regenerative economy. Anthony's primary work has been through the lens of energy democracy, race, and policy. In this role, Anthony has co-designed and co-led participatory processes to develop community toolkits such as the Energy Democracy Scorecard and the Peoples Orientation to a Regenerative Economy, which helps provide shared analysis and political education materials to support community-driven solutions.

As part of the JCET work, Anthony provides policy and political strategy support with frontline communities, participatory program development, and evaluation design, and cultivates alignment efforts among communities, institutions, and other sectors within the movement. Anthony facilitates collective governance processes to support statewide efforts to address racism, extraction, and the urban-rural divide and city-wide efforts to address housing injustice, displacement by investing in-home repairs, equitable electrification, and affordable housing. Anthony partnered with the Solutions Project to co-design and lead a participant-driven and cultivated leadership program: the Fighter League.

Prior to this project work, Anthony spent over seven years working at the Center for Social Inclusion, fostering partnerships with frontline communities, organizations, and leaders in the Gulf South, New York, and across the nation to advance policy strategies to dismantle structural racism in energy and food systems while piloting models for transparency, participation, and accountability in governance. Anthony serves on the Boards of the Article 20 Network, Serenity Soular, and 100% Network. Anthony holds a dual bachelor’s degree in Political Science and Theology from the University of Scranton and a Master's in Public Administration from New York University.
This toolkit aims to be a companion resource for facilitators and bridgers in movement work, community leaders who are looking to deepen the practice of policy organizing and collective governance, and policy-makers who are looking at how to do policy differently. This toolkit is by no means a “best practice” or the only resource available. Throughout this entire toolkit, you will find references and links to resources and processes of considerable value, led by community organizations that inform the work.

Simply, this toolkit offers a synthesis of some of the critical lessons learned around policy strategy and organizing in order to be a resource for those who are doing work around community-centered processes to create transformative change, adding to the many voices calling for a change of status quo: top-down policymaking.

This toolkit was synthesized from and informed by over a decade of work rooted in multiple perspectives and experiences across race, class, and gender within the United States. While it is the outcome of a collaboration of the three authors, this toolkit would not be possible if it were not for the ideas and expertise of leaders and communities over generations. Insights and learnings that have shaped this process— and this toolkit— are informed by decades of brilliance by those who have seen the true value of community expertise, wisdom, and power.
The wisdom within this participatory policymaking toolkit has been deeply influenced by many organizers, grassroots leaders, and community members across the country, particularly from the networks and organizations below. Please note, the list of organizations does not signal endorsement, rather these are organizations that have deeply influenced participatory processes over the years. Please note, the list of organizations does not signal endorsement, rather these are organizations that have deeply influenced participatory processes over the years. We strongly encourage you to learn about, and, if you are able, support these organizations and efforts as you consider this toolkit.

- California Environmental Justice Alliance
- Center for Coalfield Justice
- Center for Social Inclusion
- Climate Justice Alliance
- Cooperation Jackson
- Emerald Cities Collaborative
- Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy
- Gulf South for a Green New Deal
- HEAL Food Alliance
- Kentuckians for the Commonwealth
- Movement Alignment Project (formerly known MMP)
- Movement Generation
- Movement Strategy Center
- National Black Food and Justice Alliance
- New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
- New York Energy Democracy Alliance
- Partnership for Southern Equity
- PA Climate Equity Table
- PA Poor People’s Campaign
- Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance
- Put People First! PA
- Race Forward
- Southern Movement Assembly
This toolkit should be viewed as a living document that offers principles and values to guide community-led policymaking processes. This toolkit should be tailored to each community's needs and challenges, as there is no “one size, fits all” or “silver bullet” to policymaking. There is, however, core intentionality with this toolkit to democratize power, learning, and decision-making while advancing equity and justice. Please use this toolkit with that intention in mind and feel free to adopt, tweak, expand upon, and develop this process to make it stronger!

The toolkit offers a few key components:

1. **Putting Gears into Action** are steps that you can use to advance participatory policymaking processes in your community. These act as guides and recommendations, offering insights to help you create a process with your community.

2. Accompanying **Resources, Tools, and Reflection Prompts** for deeper learning and introspection. The resources and tools are just a selection of a few critiques that the authors found valuable as a starting ground, but there are many more! The reflection prompts are meant to encourage active introspection for you as a facilitator, and also to do with your community so you all can collectively learn together in this process.
Power can be defined in different ways. For our work together, and throughout the toolkit, we approach power as a multidimensional framework that touches on individual, organizational and structural levels. The grid below is from The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation and offers a helpful outline to understand power.

### What is Power

**Power Over:**
- Repression, force, coercion

**Power Of:**
- Refers to the unique potential of every person to shape their life and world.

**Power With:**
- Finding common ground and building collective strength

**Power Within:**
- A person’s self-worth and self-knowledge – the capacity to image and have hop
Power over (repression, force, coercion) is the way in which most folks define power, it is also the way in which systems of white supremacy most often exercise power.

Power with (finding common ground and building collective strength) is the type of power central to phases II and III where collective strength and finding common ground are foundational to developing and implementing any policy strategy.

Power of (unique potential of every person to shape their life and world) really speaks to a fundamental belief central to this toolkit: communities have the ability to craft and drive their own policy solutions. This idea of self-determination is a key assumption to this entire process.

Power within (a person’s self-worth and self-knowledge) really speaks to the incorporation of personal power, resiliency, and ultimately restorative healing that is also needed to ensure individual change agents have the muscle to live into and fully exercise their own agency.

While this framework is helpful, another helpful dimension to consider when thinking about power is structural. In a structural sense, we offer a working definition from Glenn Harris of Race Forward, “that power is the ability to define reality.” Systems of white supremacy and structural racism create disparate outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color in the United States and globally. These same systems ensure that narratives and cultural norms are also shaped, driven by, and continuously create these structural elements. Put together, these systems define reality and therefore we must continue to hold this working definition of power as we move towards defining policy.

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

- Frederick Douglass
There are many avenues for fostering community-driven participatory work: budgeting, research, and the arts, to name a few. No matter what the focus, democratizing processes and power, and creating space for a community to share knowledge and build together is a vital component to movement-building work. Changing policy is a critical component of the author's work, so this is the perspective from which to view many of these ideas and processes. This toolkit offers a particular lens around policy for three primary reasons:

- Participatory policymaking is a direct challenge to the existing power structure. Government and institutional policies are often used to keep political, economic, and social power structures in place. Counter-hegemonic policies are critical in helping to dismantle abusive power structures.
- We need to demystify the belief that policymaking is only for those who are highly trained, have technical skills, and access to power. Effective and just policy requires the expertise of a community to shape it.
- A more democratic and participatory process is more likely to safeguard against corruption and inequitable influences on how policies are made and implemented, as it gives more power and ownership to the community rather than corporate and institutional interests.

This does not dismiss expertise. Quite the contrary. Participatory policymaking is about expanding the boundaries of what is considered “expertise” to include not only lawyers, academics, or policy consultants, but community leaders with everyday experience of the challenges and solutions required for a true participatory process.
Participatory policymaking ensures that those with technical skills (such as lawyers) or access to power (such as national policy organizations) are repositioned to build with community and support a community’s ability to build internal capacity to create and demand change. If the community is given enough support, frameworks, and capacity to shape policy creation, it can be in a position to build and self-determine the technical help necessary to create policy, rather than be told what support it needs. Thus, participatory policymaking is about reprioritizing who gives voice and has ownership of policy ideas, moving from a top-down process to one that is ground-up.

While policy is the overarching frame of this toolkit, creating change is not limited to policy. It requires narrative, culture, governance, and economic transformations. In essence, transformative change requires dismantling systems to build new ones. As you work through this toolkit, please try to keep an open mind for additional venues to make an impact and how that connects to the policies created. Particularly, if you are interested in participatory budgeting or economics, Cooperation Jackson, the Participatory Budgeting Project, and New Economy Coalition offer toolkits and resources. If you are interested in participatory research, the Solidarity Research Center and Women’s Policy Institute offer resources, trainings, and mentors. If you are interested in participatory artmaking, Monument Lab, Allied Media, and Center for Cultural Power offer examples, resources, and perspectives of democratizing public art and culture.
Many times, we shy away from policymaking because we feel that we lack legal expertise, policy language development, or access to policymakers—whether they be legislative members such as city councilors or regulatory policymakers like public utility commissioners. Ceding policymaking to those “with expertise” means that we actually cede the ability to make power. It does not need to be this way. In fact, policymaking is quite straightforward. There are two key elements to understand when entering the policy arena.

First, a majority of policymaking processes tend to follow the typical model as shown in the diagram on the following page. Simply, it goes like this: identify an issue and a solution, assess the policy solution, engage lawmakers, implement, and evaluate. Anyone can go through these simple steps—it’s really about changing who has access to influence the creation and design of the ideas, and creating a framework to ensure that policy ideas are rooted in values of justice and liberation. As it stands, this standard method for policy creation—whether it is at a local, state, or national level of governance—limits opportunities for community decision-making and is often shaped and/or unduly influenced by those who have access to power and resources. As a designed system and process, this fails to allow for real community input and influence, where consultation and engagement of community often happen after issues and policy ideas are created.
Second, it is important to note the different avenues of policymaking:

- **Legislative:** The most commonly held policymaking process. Policymaking at this level requires elected officials to draft and vote policy ideas into laws. This process is done at local city councils, county commissioners, statehouses, and the US Congress.
- **Administrative/Regulatory:** Often referred to as policy implementation, these policies are shaped by government agencies who are given authority to enact legislative laws. This process tends to be less inclusive than legislative processes and does not always require votes. These are extremely critical areas for intervention and should be part of policymaking strategies.
- **Judicial/Litigation:** Policies can often be established through courts (such as desegregation in Brown v. Board of Education). Judicial policymaking is more focused on interpreting the intent of the legislative or regulatory policy, but many times judicial rulings are a form of policymaking and build precedent for future laws.

This process throughout the toolkit is mostly geared towards legislative policymaking. However, it can be heavily applied to administrative rulemaking as well.

The participatory policymaking process detailed on the next page takes this standard policy process and builds in a more robust model for community decision-making processes. No one should feel that policymaking is out of reach! In fact, people living in a “democratic republic” should feel deeply empowered to own and shape how policies are made and implemented in their community.
PARTICIPATORY POLICYMAKING: A DIFFERENT MODEL

1. Listen and Landscape
2. Building Anti-Racist and Anti-Classist Political Education
3. Power and Collective Governance
4. Strategy Development
5. Community Assessment
6. Solutions
7. Resourcing for Transforming Power
8. Implement Strategy
9. Evaluation
UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNITY AND THE LANDSCAPE FOR WHICH YOU WORK

The first fundamental step in creating any equitable and just policy starts with a deep listening process. Whether you are a community leader, organizer, advocate, or policymaker in a position of power and influence, you should be constantly listening to those most impacted by the challenges. It is important to take stock of the context in which you are working, and listen to understand and learn how you can build power collectively to create the change you wish to see; to ensure that change aligns with those most impacted. Far too often, advocates and policymakers come into communities with ready-made socio-technical solutions that may appear like the best ideas, but are devoid of community expertise, value and leadership. If you are a facilitator or advocate, you must take time to listen, learn, and understand the context in which you are operating. If you are a community leader, you might already be putting deep listening processes in motion. Regardless of your position, deep listening to your fellow community members creates pathways to solutions that go beyond what top-down policy consultants deem “technically” feasible.

Assess your readiness.
Are you ready to listen? Community leaders, facilitators, and advocates play different roles; regardless of which you are, taking a moment to fully engage yourself is vital and essential to any deep listening process.

Try mindfulness.
Dominant culture and historically capitalist and racist systems condition us to listen to respond. Deep listening invites us to show up differently, to be open and present with those sharing their stories, experiences, and community context. Mindfulness can support us in training our minds to be quieter and prepare us to actively listen. Mindfulness activities including yoga or simply physical stillness can support us in preparing ourselves for the deep listening process.
Participate and practice active reflective listening.
Active listening requires us to expressly intend to listen to understand (set intentions) and to repeat or reflect back what we’ve heard. Given how much our own power and privilege shape our understanding of the world, it is important to ensure we are not applying our own filters to what is being shared with us.

Detach from any particular outcome.
Deep listening requires us to detach from a particular outcome. If you go into the listening process with an intention to affirm what you already thought, you are very likely to miss nuance and ground-truthing that must inform and direct your strategy.

When you have quieted your mind, set intentions to understand, detached from a particular outcome, and are ready to practice active reflective listening you are ready to do your homework.

PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION

Do your homework. Understand the context of the community you are working in:
- Who are/were the people Indigenous to the land?
- What is the creation story of the Indigenous people and the land?
- How has it influenced your community?
- What is the history of the place you are working in?
- What are the political challenges and opportunities?
- What undergirds the social structures that operate in the community?
- What are the conflicts, tensions, and divisions in the community that would get in the way of moving this work forward?
- How does the economy shape community outcomes and in what ways can the economy be shifted to support the community?
- What is the cultural story of the community? In particular, what food, music, arts, and other cultural assets tell the story?
- Who are the cultural workers and leaders who help shape the narrative and vibrancy of the community?
- What is the story of the community’s relationship to the land?

Build a Leadership Team. Who are your critical connections? If you are an organizer, advocate, or policymaker, be sure to spend time and build relationships with community leaders. Listen and honor expertise and wisdom from youth and elders. If you are a community leader, identify your team of leaders with whom you want to build this work.

- Engage and work with 2-3 critical leaders who can be the Leadership Team to hold and shape this collective process.
Be transparent. Set clear expectations and define why you are doing this: your goals, role in this work, and how you will be accountable to all members of the community as you build out the project or policy campaign.

Identify what is currently being done. Learn who the key leaders in the community are (not just people with status, but the people who are heard and respected). Identify what gaps exist and what can be shifted to create just solutions. Listen to understand the collective work that can be done to bring people together in a transformative way.

"THE UNEXPECTED ACTION OF DEEP LISTENING CAN CREATE A SPACE OF TRANSFORMATION CAPABLE OF SHATTERING COMPLACENCY AND DESPAIR"

- Terry Tempest Williams

Sometimes the technical solution is addressing the wrong problem. For example, the mainstream focus in addressing the climate crisis has been to cap or cut carbon emissions, leading to cap and trade mechanisms that have actually failed to reduce carbon. Instead, these solutions have the adverse effect of driving pollution in lower-income, Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, brown, and Indigenous communities. By taking a community approach, solutions would focus on Just Transition—an attempt to address an extractive economy that exploits people and the Earth.
Additional Resources, Tools, & Reflection Prompts

Resources:
- [Listening -Empathy in Action](#), New Conversations
- [Listening is Radical](#), Chanel Lewis TEDx Talk
- [Deep Listening Resources](#), Earl E Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing

Tools:
- [A Practice of Deep Listening](#), Fetzer Institute
- [Facilitation menu to support authentic, accountable, and practice of deep listening](#), Liberating Structures
- [Tools to understand how you may embody white supremacy or racialized trauma](#), Resmaa Menakem
- [What is meditation? Mind the Gap](#), Universal Partnership
- [Liberate](#), #1 meditation app for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

Reflection Prompts:
- How does your current listening approach replicate the trauma of racism and white supremacy? What shifts do you need to make in your listening approach?
- When you feel most present, what comes up in your body? Where do you feel that presence?
- Who do you notice is not actively engaging in the group? In what ways can you engage them to listen to their voice, story, and experience?
- How can you practice listening with empathy and your whole self?
Problems and solutions are plentiful. The challenge is often around what “container” you will identify and view the problems and the solutions in front of you and your community. Any participatory policymaking process should be seen as an opportunity to build an intersectional analysis that is rooted in anti-racist political education and creates strong racial and class solidarity. This process should focus on transforming society, not just creating transactional policy shifts. It is not enough to create diversity, equity, and inclusion in policy and programmatic solutions, if the solutions continue to prop up an extractive economic system or a governance system that harms its people.

"Political education is the collective process of study, research, and analysis that we need to engage in together in order to do this work" - Movement Alignment Project

To move towards transformation, we posit that an intersectional anti-racist education is critical for any participatory policymaking process so that you do not replicate the harms of our current economy and society. It is vital to understand how anti-Blackness—interwoven with class, gender, and ability—shapes historical and current policies and influences who has the power to govern. Whether it be local or national policy, anti-Blackness and white supremacy are at the root of most policy formations and campaigns.

EXAMPLES

In the late 1890s, the promising populist farmer movement fractured after leaders, such as Tom Watson, abandoned Black residents in exchange for concessions from the ruling class.

FDR’s signature New Deal never reached its full impact as Black Americans were intentionally designed out of the suite of policies in order for passage in Congress. Many of Lyndon B. Johnson’s signature anti-poverty policies were rolled back due to the benefits for Black people, even though the policies had a significant impact on poor white folks as well.
Building a shared political education should be done throughout the entire process. You can take steps to foster this collective education:

- **Identify the collective vision, challenges, and problems facing the community.**
- **Work with your leadership team.** Together build out a root-cause analysis of the problems and challenges, with a clear anti-racist framework.
- **Create an open-curriculum process for bringing in voices, experiences, and wisdom of the collective community.** Have a framework for curriculum, then identify the ways in which the community can build it together as everyone deepens their political education. Remember: alone, we do not know enough no matter how educated and prepared we are, but together we can continually learn and build collective knowledge. In this curriculum be sure to do the following:
  - Create space for non-dominant culture, voice, and learning.
  - Practice the saying, “We are all teachers and learners” and ensure that different people lead different components.
  - Use art, culture, visuals, music, writing, games and play, and diverse presentation styles to build education. Bring in practices and tools that use theatre of the oppressed to help elucidate the challenges and solutions communities face and have.
  - Identify how the group will document the narrative and create a culture of learning. Be sure to include storytelling.
  - Support multi-sectoral learning. Foster ways for people to cut across different sectors from business to public workers, to parents and educators, artists, etc.
  - Support intersectional thinking. Foster approaches that take a look at the intersections of race and gender, class, income, sexual orientation, ability, and mental wellbeing.
- **Examine the levels of governance where problems persist.** This is helpful to best understand and know what entry points exist and are possible. The socio-ecological model of health is helpful.
- **Assess.** Assess practices, solutions, and models of governance that the group can build upon in the next phase.
Using a shared anti-racist political and economic analysis can help you and your community, frame up the challenges in order to identify the necessary solutions. There are numerous sources to consider. Here are some models and examples of intersectional, anti-racist and racial and class solidarity political education:

Books:
- Black Reconstruction, WEB Du Bois
- The Fire Next Time, James Baldwin
- Stamped from the Beginning, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi
- American Poison: How Racial Hostility Destroyed our Promise, Eduardo Porter
- Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement, Barbara Ransby
- Wages of Whiteness, David Roediger

*For white folks, in addition to these resources, also review: Resources, Showing Up for Racial Justice or Trainings by the Catalyst Project

Articles, Sites, and More:
- Just Transition Zine, Movement Generation
- People’s Orientation to a Regenerative Economy, United National Frontline Table
- Resources, Kairos Center
- Resources, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)
- Resources, Racial Equity Tools
- Resources, The Poor People’s Campaign
- Trainings, The Highlander Center
- Vision for Black Lives, M4BL
- Classes, The Peoples Forum
- Curriculum Tools, Project South
- Opportunities for White People in the Fight for Racial Justice, White Accomplices
- Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Resources, Mandala for Change

Reflection Prompts:
- Which opportunities/issues excite your community and create ways for you to explore the intersections of race, class, gender, culture, and other intersectional lenses of oppression and privilege?
- How are you creating shared opportunities for “each to teach” and “each to learn”?
As you and your community work to build a shared political analysis, you also need to start building collective power and governance. Much of this work is figuring out how to transition to a new paradigm: a new level of work that does not replicate the status quo—or the same power dynamics—that returns us to the situation we started from. Simply swapping out one person for another in leadership—but not challenging or changing the model of governance—can recreate harms, continue distrust, or create leadership vacuums.

**PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION**

- **Establish principles.** Work to create collectively-held principles that all will follow and use to hold the community and process accountable. The Southern Movement Assembly’s Principles of Unity is an excellent example. Read and review Charlene Carruthers lessons in Unapologetic when developing principles, particularly focusing on building many strong leaders, incorporating healing justice as a core organizing practice, and combating liberalism with principle struggle.

- **Identify roles.** We all have a role; we all need to engage. It is essential to identify and create responsibilities and actions for every single person involved. For example: identify who will represent the community at public hearings or advocacy meetings. Identify who will lead on research and organizing. Identify who will represent the community in media and social stories. Identify who will shape and develop the overarching narrative that represents the greatest number of people.

- **Create accountability partners.** Make sure that each person, or team, helps call people-in to build long-term relationships and partnership. In particular, if the community chooses to bring in outside support, ensure very clear accountability metrics so that the collective community voice is held and elevated throughout.
• **Establish decision-making processes.** Be very clear on what you are making decisions on versus what is deemed as information gathering. Clearly articulate how decisions for how things are moved are determined. Popular examples include consensus, super-majority, and simple majority. Regardless of your decision process, it is critical that you create mechanisms within this process to ensure that those most impacted, marginalized, and oppressed are centered and have a clear pathway to share and shape decisions.

• **Identify cross-sector and cross-places of work.** For example, identify how elected policymakers—who champion the community and are accountable to them—can be a part of this process, when and where appropriate. Facilitating Power’s Spectrum of Engagement is one tool to think about this strategy.

• **Build Conflict Resolution and De-escalation skills.** Conflict is fine, abuse absolutely is not. Tensions are normal and often critical for moving work. Tensions are like friction; they create energy that forces us to wrestle with challenges and move us forward. How groups deal with tension and conflict is what matters. One pathway for developing conflict resolution is to lean into a practice of emergence. When building out conflict resolution processes, be sure to include the following “Elements of Emergence” (as created by Anthony Rogers-Wright):
  - Change is Constant
  - There is always enough time for the right work
  - There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have...find it!
  - Never a failure, always a lesson
  - Move at the Speed of Trust
  - Focus on Critical Connections more than Critical Mass – resilience is built through relationships
  - Less Prep, More Presence
  - What you pay attention to Grows
  - Never Settle for “Negative Peace.”

• **Forge pathways for leaderful engagement.** Create ways for multiple people to move into leadership. This could include models such as rotating leadership, horizontal boards, member-leadership, etc.
  - Acknowledge that not everyone has access to meaningful engagement because the current system of governance, policymaking, and community development has intentionally been designed to minimize the voices of those most impacted. Be sure to listen and work with community members on what systems are needed to support engagement.
  - Be acutely aware of creating a space that allows for quiet leadership and space to be held and heard. Navigate extrovert and introvert presence—make sure that those who prefer to process information externally and take up space do not always dominate conversations and ideas, allow for those who process information internally also have space to engage.
  - Be intersectional in supporting leadership and try to create mechanisms that support the leadership of those who are more often marginalized or have historically been devalued by power. While everyone has a voice and should be heard, how do we make sure we are creating equitable and liberating spaces for all?
Resources:

- Deep Democracy Rooted in Beloved Community Transition Lab, Movement Strategy Center
- Embodying Deep Democracy, Embody Deep Democracy
- Writings, The James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership
- Come Hell or Highwater, Delfina Vannucci and Richard Singer
- Unapologetic, Charlene Carruthers

Tools:

- Building Leadership, Community Toolbox at Kansas University
- Model of Leadership Development, Put People First PA
- Principles of Unity, A Southern Movement Assembly
- Peoples Movement Assembly Tools, Project South and SMA
- The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, Facilitating Power
- Conflict Management and Public Participation, International Association for Public Participation
- Resources, The Center for Nonviolent Communication

Reflection Prompts:

- What interventions can you make as a collective team to ensure that leadership is not about individuals on a pedestal but leaderful, for all to take step in leading?
- How are you considering different forms of leadership (such as servant, advocate, etc.) to create opportunities for all to find their leadership?
- How are you creating opportunities for intergenerational leadership?
CULTIVATING COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS
At the Center for Social Inclusion, we used the phrase, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there,” when we worked on strategies to dismantle structural racism. Having a clear strategy of what you want to achieve (the vision and the goals) is essential to the foundation of any policy development and campaign. Strategy development actually incorporates the next few phases: community assessments, solutions, and resourcing. However, the following elements are essential to begin developing the first phase of strategy.

**PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION**

- **Revisit the vision you established at the beginning of the shared analysis.** Use the “Navigating with a Strategic Compass” tool to sharpen your vision.
- **Clarify and build how you will affect change.** Name the goals you want to achieve and how you will achieve those goals.
- **Identify what your vision solves.** Identify the challenges that this vision seeks to transform and name the root causes.
- **Visualize the context.** Layout the political, economic, social, and cultural challenges and opportunities in achieving the vision.
- **Do a power-mapping analysis.** Identify the power structures in place that need to shift.
  - Who or what is blocking this vision?
  - What needs to happen for this to change?
  - What policies are blocking this vision and need to shift?
- **Strategize for what happens when you win:** How are you prepared for push-back, retrenchment, or harsher attacks? How will you and the community sustain the win? Do you have people ready to move into positions of power to implement the wins?
- **Strategize for what happens if you don’t win:** If you lose the campaign or demand, what shifts can be made for the next effort?
Resources:
- Poor People’s Moral Budget, Poor Peoples’ Campaign
- Resources, Grassroots Policy Project
- Research, Action Center on Race and the Economy
- Equity, Health, Resilience and Jobs: Lessons from Just Growth Circle, Partnership for Southern Equity and Climate Interactive

Tools:
- Navigating with a Strategic Compass, Movement Strategy Center
- Power Mapping Tools, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE-LA)
- Power Mapping Relationships, DFA Training Academy
- Frameworks for Social Change, Training for Change
- Upside Down Power Triangle, Training for Change
- Spectrum of Allies, Training for Change
- Best Influencing Strategy, The Pressure Group

Reflection Prompts:
- How are you disrupting racist power structures and dismantling white supremacy?
- How does the strategy create opportunities to intervene on immediate challenges right now in your community, while creating the opportunities for long-term systemic change that meets your community vision?
- Who are the unlikely allies you need to build with for your strategy to succeed?
- What type of strategy are you building? Policy, political, funding, economic, cultural, or all of the above? How does each context shift who and where you start?
- How are you planning on implementing your strategy? Is it possible in a particular timeline?
ASSESS

PERFORMING COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Intimately knowing your community assets and needs is critical for developing your policy strategy. While needs are often easy to identify, assets and strengths are equally (if not more) important. Once the vision and action plan has been developed, identify community strengths and assets to build upon, and gaps and growth areas that need development. It is important to understand where gaps may be filled internally or where external partnerships may be critical. For example, do you have legal needs that require hiring a lawyer or communication needs that require the support of communication specialists who can work with your leaders to give voice to the problems and solutions? The following are essential for any such assessment:

**PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION**

- **Work with leadership to create a participatory research project that brings in active and non-active residents to support you in mapping available resources and needs.** Participatory research should not only gather community information but also expand organizing to build collective power. The research should be couched within the framework of the community's shared political education developed before, or as a part of, this process, thereby aligning with shared values, vision, and goals. Participatory research requires us to critically frame our research question alongside the community rather than creating methodologies and lines of inquiry in a vacuum.

- **Center the community as experts.** Make sure you use an “abundance frame” when discussing community assets. Many technical and out-of-touch policy solutions rely on ivory tower research to make a case about what's best and or most needed for most impacted communities. Participatory research requires those at the frontlines to be in the driver's seat as experts of their own experiences that can help inform both the challenges and potential solutions. It is also important to avoid the trap that communities must compete with each other over a “scarcity of resources;” this requires enacting the community assessment in the frame of “we have an abundance of gifts.”
- **Identify the community's strengths and assets.** Messages of scarcity and deficit are part of the structural violence caused by an unequal and unjust distribution of power. Part of the assessment process must reframe and ground community members in a different and often erased reality. By naming the skills, resources, land, ideas, knowledge, experience, and stories held and stewarded by community, we not only start from a place of assets and strength, we also begin to shift the false narrative that communities most impacted have little or nothing to offer. Starting from a place of asset, you must also identify the growth areas and gaps that the community (and external partners) needs to fill in order to be successful. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis may be a helpful tool here.

- **Identify the barriers to achieving your strategy.** Focus on the opportunities that can be leveraged to win.

- **Who are trusted partners that you can rely on to support your work?** When taking stock of your community, you may have gaps and needs that go beyond your capacity. Identify what needs you have in this assessment and survey to find potential allied partners who can be trusted to support your work while centering the community’s leadership and voice.
What is Asset Mapping?

Comparison of Asset vs Deficit Based Approaches

Neighborhood Planning

Assessing Community Needs & Resources

Community Needs Assessment

Community Needs Assessment Guide

Conduct a Needs Assessment

Environmental Justice Mapping

Participatory Asset Mapping

Lowndes County Freedom Party

Youth Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research

How are you leading from strengths and an assets-based approach when you survey your community?

Who from your community is conducting the asset mapping and community assessment? How are you supporting youth leadership in this process?

What skills has your community identified as critical to advance their strategy?

How have white supremacy and racism negatively impacted your community and what assets and strengths does your community have to dismantle white supremacy?

Resources

- What is Asset Mapping?, Vista Americorps
- Comparison of Asset vs Deficit Based Approaches, Memphis University
- Neighborhood Planning, HOPE Collaborative

Tools

- Assessing Community Needs & Resources, Community Toolbox, Kansas University
- Community Needs Assessment, Centers for Disease Control
- Community Needs Assessment Guide, Loyola University
- Conduct a Needs Assessment, Rural Health Information Hub
- Environmental Justice Mapping, Center for Earth Energy and Democracy
- Participatory Asset Mapping, Advancement Project
- Lowndes County Freedom Party, SNCC Digital Archives
- Youth Participatory Action Research, YouthPrise
- Participatory Action Research, Institute of Development Studies

Reflection Prompts:

- How are you leading from strengths and an assets-based approach when you survey your community?
- Who from your community is conducting the asset mapping and community assessment? How are you supporting youth leadership in this process?
- What skills has your community identified as critical to advance their strategy?
- How have white supremacy and racism negatively impacted your community and what assets and strengths does your community have to dismantle white supremacy?
Another critical component to develop your policy strategy is defining the solutions that the community wants to rally around. There are three types of solutions:

- Solutions that build upon the strengths of the community.
- Solutions that support growth and fill gaps.
- Solutions that create structural change and lead to transformation.

The solutions that build upon strengths and support growth could be a part of the structural solutions. However, you may also include solutions that call for immediate interventions that are not necessarily structural, but attend to a short-term need in order for the community to move forward and dismantle long-term systemic problems. When identifying structural solutions, it is important to use a guiding framework to keep you on task. The following is a series of strategic questions that can support this work.

**Putting the Gears into Action**

**Name the problem and the solution**

- Address the problem. Clearly state the problem you are trying to address.
  - Who is most marginalized by the problem, and where are they located if geography is relevant? Be sure to pay attention to race, gender and class.
  - What policies, institutions, and corporations are impacting the problem? (Institutions may be impacting the problem by doing something wrong, doing something right, doing nothing, or some combination of all three).
  - Which of the policies, institutions, and corporations impact the root causes of the problem?
  - What do we know about the history of the problem that must be addressed to solve it?
• Name the solutions.
• What opportunities and solutions would you like to create or put forward to address this problem?
• Why is this important? Describe the values or principles that you want to see at the center of your solution.

**Impact Analysis on Design and Implementation**
• Define who is targeted for impact by this policy:
  o Who benefits? (Be specific.)
  o Who is burdened (by increased taxes, penalties, or responsibilities)?
• What specific actions will advance your solution?
• How much this will cost and where will the financing come from?
  o Where are these resources directed? (This should reflect the “who.”)
• Is there a timeline?
  o When and how long will this policy last?
• What is the decision-making authority? Name where the policy should be implemented, and which agency should be in charge.
  o Is it a legislative, regulatory, administrative, or legal policy solution?

**Use an Anti-Racist Lens to Assess Your Policy Solutions**
• How does this solution take on larger structural issues that harm all communities?
  o Specifically, how does this solution impact Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, brown and Indigenous communities or marginalized and oppressed poor communities?
• How does this solution advance a bigger vision that you have for your community—even if it’s a small piece?
• Will Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, brown, and Indigenous or marginalized and oppressed poor communities benefit, or be in a position to lead and own decision-making?
• What physical, financial, and social infrastructure is impacted by this solution?
  o Does this support the community or create more challenges?
• What are the unintended (or intended) consequences for this policy idea?
  o Are there any trade-offs that you are okay with moving forward?
• Where are the entry points for implementing this solution?
• Who needs to be building power with you, or neutralized, in order to advance this policy?
  o Is it a legislative, regulatory, administrative, or legal policy solution?

*If you cannot answer the equity analysis, be sure to review and augment your policy solution so you can strongly create an equitable policy.*
Assess and advance your solutions

- Groundtruth your policy solution. Go out and see if this policy solution has been done in other places. What can you learn? What worked and did not work? How should the policy be crafted so it fits the context of the community's challenges?
- Revisit the power mapping work with the policy solutions. With the solutions in hand, look at the power mapping that was done in the first phase of the strategy development. In particular, who are the people and institutions that need to be moved, neutralized, or challenged in order to win?
- Build a campaign strategy to win on your proposed solutions. You should do this based on the organizing model utilized by your community leaders.
- Develop clear and specific benchmarks. How will you measure the success of your work from 3 months to 5 years?

Drafting your solutions into policy briefs

With everything above, you have all you need to create policy content and briefs for lawmakers. If you have a strong and trusted ally with legal or policy experience, this can be a great opportunity to use their skills and experience. Additionally, as you ground in truth your policy idea, you might have found policy briefs and language that get to where you want to go. No need to reinvent the wheel! Be sure to reference other legislative or regulatory policies to help make your case. However, if you do not have those trusted partners or policy models, the following are key steps that you can use to create your policy briefs:

- Keep it simple and clear, yet catchy! You want to avoid flowery language or long sentences. Get to the point and address the problem and solution directly. But make sure your title and framing grab people’s attention.
- Know your audience. Are you writing a policy brief for an executive policymaker (like a Mayor) or for your legislator (like your City Council)? Identify who this policy brief is for and make sure that the policy ideas and the introduction to your brief can speak to that audience. Make sure that the policy ideas can be implemented by that audience.
- Frame the problem with purpose and specificity. As a community, you already identified the problems! When drafting this section of the policy brief, be sure you provide a clear and specific context of what the problem is, why it exists, who is impacted, why it is a problem for your community, city, state, or nation.
- Propose the solution. Similarly, your community already has the solution! So, when drafting this section of the policy brief, be sure you provide a clear and specific demand of what needs to be done to address the problem. If possible, identify what agency or government office must be tasked with implementing the solution, identify how much funding is needed (and where that funding should come from), and discuss the impact that the solution will have on your community and the greater city, state, or nation. Be sure to articulate how this solution will directly solve or address the problems!
- Cite your sources and research! You know your stuff, make sure that policymakers understand that too. Citing sources could mean simply community conversations, interviews, or surveys. It could be research journals, news stories, or other policy legislation. Regardless, be sure you show that you have done the work so that policymakers know you are serious.
Resources:
- Policy Briefs, Local Progress
- Comprehensive Building Blocks for a Regenerative and Just 100% Policy, Just Solutions Collective
- Water Equity and Climate Resilience Caucus, PolicyLink
- An Essential Guide to Policy Briefs, International Center for Policy Advocacy

Tools:
- Energy Democracy Flipbook, Emerald Cities Collaborative and JCET Project
- Energy Justice Scorecard, Initiative for Energy Justice
- Propagate, Pollinate, Practice, Movement Generation
- Regenerative Economy & Peoples Solutions Lens, United National Frontline Table
- How to Write a Policy Brief, UNC Writing Center

Reflection Prompts:
- How does your solution dismantle structural racism, economic oppression, and patriarchy?
- What skills do you need to turn your solution into policy language (legal, policy architects, academics, etc). Are these skills available in your community? If not, who is trusted to support you in this process?
- What is your plan for implementation?
- How will you create political will to advance your solution?
CATALYZING COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION
Communities must be resourced to create or advance any policy strategy—and not just financially. Imagine the deepest rest you have ever had. After that rest, how was your emotional, physical, and mental capacity? Were you best prepared for the challenges of the day? That is the level of capacity we want to support our communities.

Various elements must be secured to help build and sustain power, as seen in this image below. These include resource security, infrastructure, emotional and physical security, and community. When you are able to attend to these different aspects you can be expansive in your vision, lead with abundance, and move mountains for change. However, racism and oppression limit community members’ access to these supports. While you and your community may not have full access to these pathways to building power, there are ways to build individual and collective muscle around these key elements.

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”

- Audre Lorde
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<tr>
<th>INFRASTRUCTURE</th>
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<th>EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL SECURITY</th>
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Throughout the process, the leadership team should identify how to resource this work and the people driving the change process. For example, you can use existing structures such as churches or recreation leagues, or create new social networks and relationships. This will be necessary to establish a sense of belonging, rather than othering and marginalization which are often byproducts of our current systems. Providing meals, childcare, transportation support, counseling, and/or somatic training will support community members to cultivate physical and mental wellbeing, thereby further developing the personal power and resilience needed to continue the work. Oppressive and racist systems strip us of our humanity, so our processes must restore and support our individual and collective healing.

Raising financial resources will more likely be possible after establishing clarity on governance, vision, solutions, and strategy. Once established, develop a proactive approach so the community can both resource the work and redirect dollars towards these efforts. This will ensure you are not in a position where you have to ‘chase the money’.

**PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION**

- **Create a collective fund.** Many communities of color and immigrant communities have long developed and participated in cooperative and solidarity economics as a means of self-determination. By creating a collective fund that aligns with the transparency and decision-making processes established in the collective governance stage, you can build on historical assets while supporting the work in a self-determined way. The Gulf South Rising Community Fund or Put People First’s Campaign to Abolish Medical Debt are both examples.

- **Seek non-extractive resources.** If the community is looking for funding, ask how this funding will support the grounding of your work without requiring more than your fair value of labor.  
  - If seeking foundation funding, find funders who are committed to challenge power and structural racism and ask for general operating grants rather than project-specific.
  - If the community is resourcing a project with private capital, get clarity on the values-driven and just terms of the investment. Is the return low and long-term or short-term and high? What are the potential unintended consequences, if any? How might you disrupt them?
  - If the community is seeking non-financial support (legal, communications, etc) create clear guidelines on how this resource support will be used. Try to create a collaborative two-way approach so everyone is moving from a place of abundance.

- **Create shovel-ready project plans.** Public dollars are often the most impactful and effective resource to achieve your vision. Unfortunately, most public dollars do not invest in the time, capacity, and energy needed to plan and develop projects. Most of the time, public funds flow to communities that have “shovel-ready” projects and plans, which means projects that can hit the ground running if capital is secured. If you are looking for funding to develop infrastructure, be sure to have plans and strategies in place to capitalize on public dollars.
Resources:
- Collective Courage, Jessica Gordon Nembhard
- Cooperative Resources, Sustainable Economies Law Center
- Solidarity Not Charity, Dean Spade
- Holistic Care and Embodiment to support movement leaders, Generative Somatics

Tools:
- Campaign to Abolish Medical Debt, Put People First PA
- Community Controlled Funds, Gulf South Rising
- Cooperative Business Development, Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance
- Mutual Aid Resources, Philly We Rise

Reflection Prompts:
- When you are facilitating meetings, are you providing childcare, food, healing spaces, or resources to support those facing mental or physical challenges?
- How is your community showing up and supporting each other to support those struggling with day-to-day needs (housing, energy, food, water, etc...) in order to create space and opportunity for them to participate and engage in this work?
- What innovative ways can you crowdsource or create community funds to seed the necessary work and strategy for implementation?
- How are you creating fair, transparent, and equitable governance over funding in order to not replicate the harms, traumas, and practices of white supremacy?
- How are you building solidarity economies to create long-term self-determination?

REMEMBER:
THE ROAD TO BAD POLICY IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS!
Implementing parts of the strategy may occur at different phases of this process. Based on the power map, identify a timeline of interventions from three months up to five years, to see where to take action. Implementation is a critical, but often overlooked, aspect of policymaking. Too often communities are resourced to fight to win on a policy, but not to see that policy through, or implement and govern the decisions. At worst, and most often, policy implementation is left to absentee technocrats who are disconnected from the community, and don’t hold the community principles or values at heart. At best, implementers are well-intentioned but lack a deep connection to the community. This needs to shift, and policymaking should include implementation.

For example, the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act offered some clear community-driven solutions, but relied on archaic local and state mechanisms and “shovel ready projects” in order to move funds and programs. This continued the disinvestment and redlining of Black and other marginalized communities, despite the best intentions. In short: implementation matters and should be a key part of your strategy!
PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION

- **Develop accountability metrics.** Ensure that you have a clear accountability process for decision-making. For example, decide who attends a meeting with a lawmaker and identify the process for information sharing and authority.

- **Create clear and transparent external communications.** Be sure the messaging and narrative are clear and to the point. Tailor messages to different audiences as needed, but these messages should convey the principles and values that you are driving. If campaigns are creating serious disruption, work on narratives and stories that are centered on your communities and let identified community leaders control the story.

- **Be flexible and adaptable.** Sometimes you should stick to the game plan, but things are constantly changing and evolving. Be firm in the community principles, but flexible in how solutions can be implemented as necessary and expeditiously as possible.

- **Till fertile ground.** When implementing and resourcing policy ideas, shovel-ready projects are essential. Work to create more favorable conditions for your community to receive federal resources and continue for long-term transformation by practicing new processes to implement more participatory models for change.
**Resources**

- Common Implementation Problems, Rural Health Information Hub
- The Tricky Psychology of Holding Elected Officials Accountable, The Atlantic

**Tools**

- How to Use the People’s Orientation to a Regenerative Economy Toolkit, United Frontline Table
- Law for Black Lives

**Reflection Prompts:** (from How to Use the Peoples Orientation to a Regenerative Economy Toolkit)

- Who from your community or accountable partners need to be in positions of power to advance this policy?
- What local, county, state, regional, tribal or federal government departments are responsible for implementing this policy?
- What community education, training, and processes are needed to shift and align government workers to your solutions and vision?
- What accountability mechanisms can you create to push these implementers?
- What level of government is critical for advancing this policy solution - local, county, state, regional, tribal or federal office?
- What community education and leadership training is needed to get people to run for elected offices?
- What community education, training, and processes are needed for current elected officials who should be accountable to the community?
- What are the accountability mechanisms that you can create to push these implementers?
TAKE STOCK OF WHAT WORKED AND DID NOT WORK.

While assessment is a constant process, creating an evaluation metric is critical to measure where you succeeded and where you failed, so you can improve and build upon the work.

PUTTING THE GEARS INTO ACTION

- **Use the benchmarks that the group set in its strategic plan.** Ask:
  - Which benchmarks were realistic? Which ones were unrealistic in the timeframe?
  - Did you achieve your goals? What did this look like?
  - What wins happened? What shifts are being made?
  - What succeeded in your strategy? What worked well to achieve that success?
  - Where did your strategy fail? What are the lessons that you can take from these failures and apply to the next phase of work?
  - What new things did you discover?

- **Process the evaluation with the community.** Be sure to create evaluation sessions, meetings, and town halls with the community leaders and members with whom you developed and implemented the strategy. Too often, we tend to evaluate our work in silos. Be sure to hold a shared session for evaluation.

- **Capture moments to build momentum.** In the evaluation, make sure to capture images, poetry, and stories to help articulate and share the successes and lessons from this work. This will emphasize and celebrate the expertise and experience of the community while laying the groundwork for the next campaign.

Return to Phase One: Listening and Landscaping. Participatory policymaking is as much succeeding in your policy goals as it is creating an iterative process to building long-term transformational change and power.
**Additional Resources, Tools, & Reflection Prompts**

**Resources**
- Grassroots Action and Learning for Social Change, Center for Evaluation Innovation
- Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power, Marshall Ganz
- Storytelling and Evidenced-Based Policies, Palgrave Communications

**Tools**
- Participatory Evaluation Framework, A Better Evaluation
- Agency Assessments, California Environmental Justice Alliance
- Basic Guide to Program Evaluation, University of New Mexico
- Considering Evaluation, Center for International Media Action
- Participatory Evaluation, Community Toolbox Kansas University
- Tools, Trainings, and Resources, Center for Story-Based Strategy

**Reflection Prompts:**
- Did your policy strategy and solution create opportunities to dismantle structural racism, white supremacy, and patriarchy?
- What succeeded in your strategy?
- What did not work in your strategy, and what are the unintended consequences?
- What lessons can be learned moving forward for the next round of work?
- What factors or events happened beyond your control that influenced your strategy?
- How did you capture moments and stories in this process to build momentum?
We are indebted to those who have come before us and have shaped this work throughout our lives. Appreciations and honor to community leaders whom we have learned from in story and in person cannot fit on a page. The various resources and tools throughout have shaped this toolkit and we are thankful for the deep work that has been done to develop those resources and tools to make this work possible.

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Transformative Alignment
There is no clear definition of transformative alignment. Merriam-Webster defines transformative as “causing or able to cause an important and lasting change in someone or something.” Merriam-Webster offers a few definitions of alignment, with the most apt being: “an arrangement of groups or forces in relation to one another.” Dictionary.com defines alignment as “the agreement or cooperation among persons, groups, nations, etc. with a common cause or viewpoint.”

Together, with added context and experience, the definition of transformative alignment means “a deep and systemic change in how we radically cooperate with each other and collectively govern together towards a common cause or purpose.” There are four key elements to transformative alignment.

- Support critical connections among network leaders to create pathways towards greater alignment in the field of work;
- Practice deep democracy and radical collective governance as a way to practice governance in ways that do not replicate the harm we are trying to undo;
- Work to dismantle racialized barriers, particularly geographic, that create divisions, scarcity, and other challenges to moving towards a just transition;
- Listen and invest in Black, brown and Indigenous leaders — among collaborations and networks to shift the emphasis of policy and resources towards those most impacted and leading the work.

When all four elements are done, we can create the center of the flower, from which emerges the full power we need to transform our society and economy.
Critical Connections: Relationships are often severed because of a variety of challenges due to the scarcity trap, lack of funding, time or space constraints, structural racism, lack of trust, etc. Working in isolation leads to a lack of deeper awareness of what is possible. People who hold the keys to our solutions need to be connected to each other to create opportunities for change. Critical connections means connecting leaders from different sectors of work, geographies, social or cultural homes, and issue areas, who can build vision and solutions together from a position of abundance and strength, beyond ego, but towards collective wisdom. For more about this element, please dive in and read adrienne maree brown’s *Emergent Strategy*.

Embodiment: Spine. The spine transverses neurons and data across our entire body and the brain. If our spine is “out of whack,” not straightened, not flexible, we can have pinched nerves and slower connections. Practice building stronger posture so you can be more receptive to connections.

Deep Democracy and Radical Collective Governance: Building a new energy economy, or beloved community, is just as much a process as it is an outcome. We cannot expect to shift paradigms and realities if we operate solely under the current constructs. There needs to be experimentation in how we build together, people to people. A key piece of the framework is to set and create space for people to dive into new (or old, yet forgotten) ways of collaboration and governing decisions to help catalyze possibility. Much of this element is shaped and influenced by the various transformative practices of Movement Strategy Center, particularly its resource *Getting There Together*.

Embodiment: Muscle. The muscle is only strong if we work it. We need the practice to build muscle to work well and effectively. Just like having good practice in governance, think about ways to build up your muscles to be able to implement and practice health and wellbeing for your body to function.
Dismantle Racist Barriers: Living into the possible does not mean ignoring the reality of today. Immediate and tangible efforts must be made to tackle our greatest economic and social sin of racism. This aspect focuses on addressing deeply racialized barriers in our institutions, society, and culture to create a new relationship of people to people, to institutions, and to culture. In particular, this looks at the racialized geographic barriers that haunt our political and economic challenges of today. Much of this element is shaped and influenced by the MAG framework for “Deep Equity.”

Embodiment: Soul/Spirit. Racism is as embedded in our national soul as anything else. We need to create a spirit of anti-racist thinking and practice. By seeking anti-racism, equity, and deep inclusion, we can build our souls and spirits to be aligned more justly.

Invest in Black, brown, and Indigenous Leaders, and other marginalized and oppressed communities: Black and brown communities have been minimally resourced and have been put into some of the most extractive situations in their own neighborhoods as well as within their own work. If we are going to see a true paradigm shift into a new energy economy, we need to shift whom we are listening to, following, and resourcing fully. It is important to note that, as Audre Lorde says, we live intersectional lives. Racism is at the heart of any structural deficit and divide and other communities — LGBTQ, disinvested rural communities, poor, and immigrant communities — face similar challenges. We need to think in terms of abundance and amplification, and a critical race analysis is at the center of all this. We must acknowledge how the power structures resource and reinforce whiteness in these very oppressed communities to divide us from each other. So we need to challenge this as we think about resource shifts, while acknowledging the severe disparity in resourcing BIPOC leadership, particularly in Black communities.

Embodiment: Heart and Head. So often our heart says one thing and our head says another. We need to create alignment here to make sure that we are connected — specifically trusting that experience is quite often the only expertise needed.
“GIVE LIGHT & PEOPLE WILL FIND THE WAY.”

ELLA BAKER