



Path to Power

COMMUNITY
Power from the ground up **CHANGE**
Community Change and
Community Change Action

Forward

Charting this path with you

Over the past two years, we have led Community Change and Community Change Action through a period of extraordinary turmoil in our country. We campaigned to defend immigrant communities and protect the social safety net, won positive changes on jobs, child care, and housing at the state and local level—even in this dismal climate—and we ran one of the largest independent expenditure programs in 2018 to mobilize infrequent voters of color. We recognize that the crisis we face demands even more of us, so we embarked on a process of organizational change, developing a 15-year plan—a new business model—that maps our path toward a bold vision of justice.

We initiated the process in March 2016—before we knew what the outcome of the elections would be—with conversations around three big questions: What are the forces driving change in our world and country? How is the social justice sector positioned, and how does it need to change? In that landscape, what is our organization's highest and best use? That process of inquiry took on more urgency in November 2016.

By October 2017, when both boards of directors unanimously approved the plan, Community Change and Community Change Action staff and board members had engaged in conversations with over 600 people outside and within our sector. We spoke with grassroots leaders in low-income communities of color; partners and allies running key social justice groups at the local, state and national level; leaders from the private sector, including Silicon Valley tech entrepreneurs; and futurists and academics looking at big trends and fresh approaches.

We wish to acknowledge and appreciate the hundreds of people who shared their insights and time with us, particularly the members of our staff who carved out the space to imagine the world as it could be in the midst of daily reminders of how far we have to go.

Community Change: Path to Power is our best thinking on the path to economic justice, racial equity, and immigrant rights. It is about building the power it will take to achieve bold, structural change in light of the disruptive forces that are reshaping the world. Although this plan calls for a lot of change, it also represents a deep recommitment to our mission – to the low-income people and grassroots partnerships who are the heart of our strategy and essential to our success. Fifty years after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this combination of bold reinvention and fidelity to core values is essential if we are to build the beloved community he imagined.

Thank you for your partnership and for joining with us in this work. Please contact Katherine Ollenburger, Director of Brand Strategy and Chief Writer, at kollenburger@communitychange.org for additional information.

Onward,

Dorian Warren, President, Community Change and Community Change Action
Deepak Bhargava, President Emeritus, Center for Community Change



Who We Are

Mission

To build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change the policies and institutions that impact their lives.

Vision

All people and communities thrive as low-income people of color, immigrants, and women wield power to reshape our democracy and our economy to be just, equitable, and inclusive.

Values

Courage, Compassion, Creativity are the hallmarks of how we aspire to live inside the organization and how we show up in the broader movement.

People

Our work centers the leadership of people who understand injustice because they have lived it.

People struggling to make ends meet and especially people of color.

Women and especially women of color.

Immigrants and especially immigrants of color.

Our Plan

The Center for Community Change was born into the chaos and heartbreak that followed the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in 1968. Our founders came from the civil rights and labor movements, from Sen. Kennedy's campaign and the war on poverty. **Their vision and their charge—to build power through grassroots leadership, to challenge the government to be a force for good, to focus on poor people, especially poor people of color—are just as relevant today as at the time of our birth.**

In the past five decades, our organization, known as Community Change, and its affiliated advocacy arm, Community Change Action, strengthened the field of community organizing. We incubated hundreds of grassroots community groups and nurtured thousands of grassroots leaders. We also disrupted it, bringing to bear other dimensions of power such as electoral politics, strategic communications, and an inside/outside approach that combines policy and grassroots work.

We won significant anti-poverty victories, including major new investments in affordable housing; expansions of refundable child tax credits and the food stamps program; policy changes that drove billions of dollars of private investment to communities of color; new models delivering good jobs at scale to community residents; and, as part of a broad coalition, won and defended the largest expansion of public benefits in 50 years through health care reform.

We have pioneered new methods to bring grassroots leaders into civic life by nurturing emerging social movements, launching large scale electoral and national issue campaigns.

Their vision and their charge are just as relevant today as at the time of our birth.

But as we marked our 50th Anniversary in 2018, we recognized the entrenchment of fundamental problems of racialized poverty and exclusion and the turbulence we faced mirrored the backlash politics that engulfed 1968. Enormous, interconnected challenges have fundamentally disrupted our politics, economy, and culture: climate change and demographic shifts, automation's growing threat to the future of work, and a communication technology revolution that challenges our notions of knowing, being, and community.

In this context, Community Change and Community Change Action proposed a single overarching goal for 2018-2033: to dramatically improve the material conditions for people struggling to make ends meet in the United States, as measured by changes in poverty rates and racial and gender disparities. A crucial benchmark for us will be to enact a bold governing agenda at the federal level by 2025 on issues of economic and racial justice and immigrant rights.

Our goal and our plan, like our organizations, are rooted in communities of color, and they draw on our unique ability to fuse different dimensions of power—from organizing to ideas to politics—to drive bold, structural change. They reflect difficult organizational decisions to focus our energy, and our plan outlines our four-pronged strategy to build the necessary power, in collaboration with others, to achieve this vision.

Our organizations must also change to reflect our new reality. We also have identified a number of new methods and practices that we will need to strengthen: redefining our partnerships with grassroots groups and strengthening our alliances; deepening our capacity to engage the private sector; investing in our leadership development work and idea generation. We have also identified a number of fundamental organizational capacities that must be stronger, including our public voice, our use of data and technology, our ability to contend with risk in an environment of increasing attacks, and our financing model.

Reinvention is not easy – and even more difficult to accomplish in times of great tumult. But as Peter Drucker writes: “The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence – it is to act with yesterday's logic.”

Our Analysis

Threats and Opportunities for Social Justice

Community Change and Community Change Action based our plan for the next 15 years on consistent themes that emerged throughout our inquiry: disruption, retrenchment, and seeds of possibility.

The world will be radically different in 2033 due to climate change, mass migration, the rise of automation and the precarious “future of work,” increasing economic inequality, the rise of countervailing power to U.S. dominance on the international stage, accelerating changes in technology and media, the rise of ethnic and racialized nationalism throughout the world. Forces like these are reshaping the economy, politics, and culture of the United States.

The social justice sector in the United States is weak, vulnerable, and disorganized. Right wing forces hostile to equity hold all federal branches of government and most state governments – and they are enacting dramatic and painful reversals of hard-won gains.

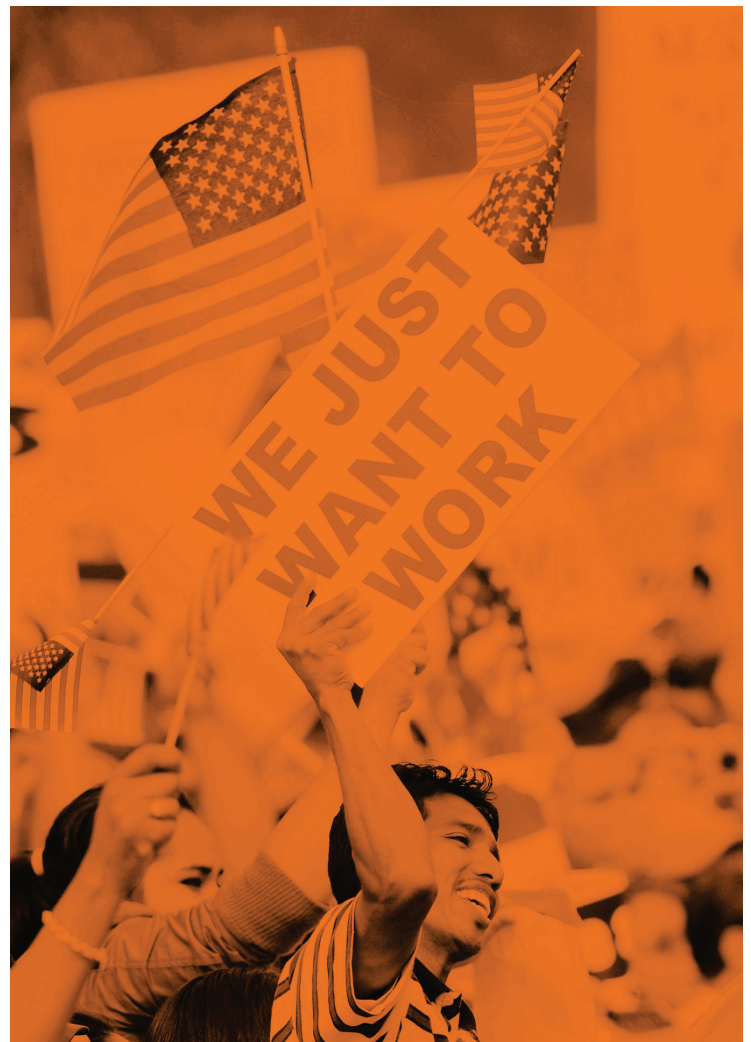
- Every pillar of the social justice coalition is facing its own crisis: relentless attacks on organized labor; declining membership in mainline churches; and new times challenging legacy civil rights organizations to retool. At the grassroots level, while new forms of digital activism and mobilization are flourishing, Black organizations on the ground have been disinvested and dramatically weakened. Although the exponential growth of the immigrant rights movement over the last 15 years is a bright spot, a series of long campaigns and relentless, brutal attacks are testing the movement's resiliency as never before.
- For all of the positive changes in the field over the last 20 years, community groups reach too few people and the most robust groups are like islands of strength in a vast unorganized ocean. The field is making insufficient use of new technology to recruit volunteer member-leaders, and it depends on funding that is appallingly inadequate, risk-averse, badly deployed, and fickle.
- Despite the proliferation of think tanks and policy shops, we lack the framework for broad, transformational change. We cannot answer the big questions that confront us, and we are paying the price for the lack of compelling alternatives. What is our affirmative 21st century immigration vision that explains who should come to the United States, under what circumstances and conditions, and in what numbers? What is the unifying economic agenda and narrative that threads discrete policies into a coherent whole and inspires a broad-based coalition? Fifty years after the Kerner Commission report, what are the transformative solutions to end racialized poverty rather than deal with its pernicious downstream effects?

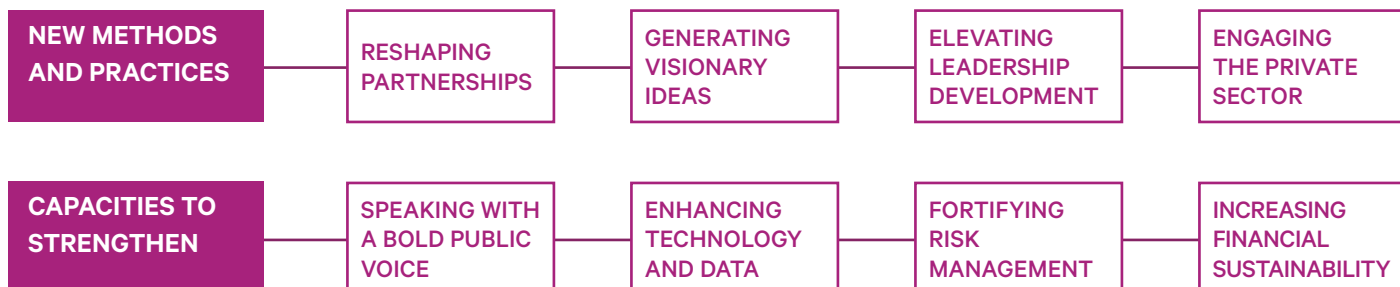
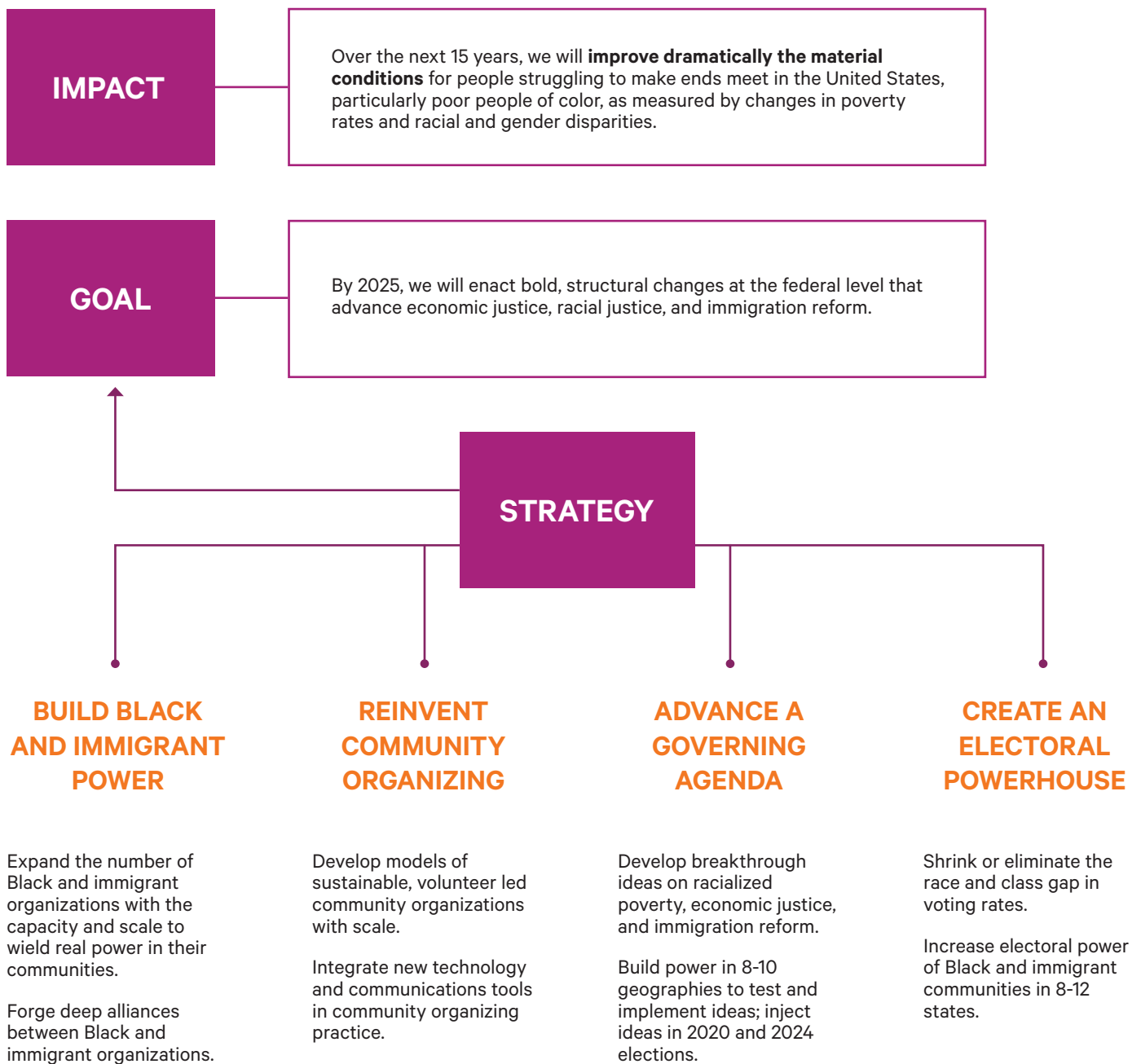


Bright spots point the way forward.

We must focus on what is working and nurture these seeds of possibility:

- Periods of turmoil and change—and existential threats like the climate crisis and the effects of automation—create opportunities to reimagine the rules of the economy and advance new solutions that foreground equity in areas such as income supports, care work, job creation, and a new clean energy economy. At the local level, a wave of innovation is planting the seeds of possibility, reflected in the progress of our own work with partners achieving breakthroughs at the city and state level on jobs, child care, and housing in recent years. New technologies and a spirit of experimentation in parts of the field and in other sectors may offer solutions to reaching organizational scale, solving longstanding financing challenges and changing consciousness by reshaping narrative.
- Demographics are not destiny, but they create the possibility of a progressive multi-racial coalition, and extraordinary leaders – especially young leaders, most of whom are women of color—are emerging from social movements such as the immigrant rights movement and the upsurge of activism in Black communities.
- An alternative approach to electoral politics is emerging through the innovation and iteration of many players at the local, state and national levels. This paradigm increasingly provides a roadmap to changing the electorate, turning infrequent voters of color into frequent voters, and altering the political math of the country.





Community Change Strategy

Our long-term vision is a just, equitable, and inclusive economy and democracy where all people and communities thrive. As part of a wider ecosystem of groups and leaders working for social justice, Community Change and Community Change Action aim to define and win a governing agenda by 2025 that would set us on a path to confront structural, generational, racialized poverty. It may include policies, for example, that:

- Increase access to good jobs and income supports;
- Reduce racial and gender income and wealth disparities;
- Increase access to affordable housing; and
- Include vulnerable populations in our economic and political systems through major reforms to the immigration and criminal justice systems.

Our vision of change requires more than incremental progress or a general improvement in the economy. In past periods of dramatic poverty reduction – such as that brought about by the War on Poverty in the 1960s—changes to policies and institutions were profound and far-reaching.

Our strategy is rooted in our analysis of the conditions required to elicit periods of bold, structural change: a confluence of big ideas, strategic leadership, grassroots power, and political opportunity. Although our strategic direction aligns deeply with our mission, vision, and values, this plan puts forth a significant shift in strategy, built on four core pillars, each deeply related to and requiring the others.

Our long-term vision is a just, equitable, and inclusive economy and democracy where all people and communities thrive.

1. **Build Black and Immigrant Power:** We will strengthen Black and immigrant organizing infrastructure on the ground so that these communities have substantial power in key geographies, are networked nationally, have shared vision, have strong relationships with each other, and can play a leadership role in a broader multi-racial movement for economic and social justice.
2. **Reinvent Community Organizing:** We will innovate modes of community organization that have scale, soul and sustainability. We simply cannot achieve our goals for the next 15 years without vibrant organizing at scale in low-income communities and communities of color – and we see the seeds of a new path forward emerging.
3. **Advance a Governing Agenda:** We will generate big ideas to reduce poverty and advance racial justice and immigrant rights using a unique methodology of cross-sectoral dialogue, build power to test them at the local and state level, and win campaigns that point towards the long-term vision and build the broad-based coalition required to win it.
4. **Create an Electoral Powerhouse:** We cannot conceive a path to our goal without an electorate that looks more like the country, so we will build a large-scale political operation housed within the appropriate legal entities that increases voter participation– and builds permanent political organization in communities of color.



1. Build Black & Immigrant Power

PREMISE

The movement for social justice requires multi-racial coalitions that build common purpose across race, but this source of power has historically been their place of vulnerability. This is the tragic paradox of social justice history in the United States: our coalitions fail because of racialized attacks from without and the legacy of racialized disinvestment in organizing infrastructure from within.

To realize the disruptive potential of multi-racial coalitions, we must dramatically strengthen organizing infrastructure and build long-term power in Black and immigrant communities. In partnership with organizations grounded in the multi-issue lived experience of communities of color, Community Change and Community Change Action aim to build real power in key geographies, network groups nationally, co-create a shared vision, nurture strong relationships among groups, and position them to lead a multi-racial movement for social and economic justice.

Our plan builds on Community Change and Community Change Action's distinctive assets. We have been a national home for the immigrant rights movement for nearly 20 years. The field is now facing unprecedented threats, and with our partners in the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), we have begun to chart a path to a long-term response. We are returning to fundamentals:

- Building long term organizing infrastructure and leadership on the ground, including in key geographies;
- Reinvesting in leadership development and capacity building;
- Developing a long term vision for immigration policy in the context of the larger social justice agenda;
- Coordinating state and local campaigns that defend our communities while pointing towards our affirmative vision; and
- Tripling down on civic engagement strategies that leverage changing demographics.

Our Black Freedom partners repeatedly shared their experience of a dearth of resources and capacity building for “on the ground” organizing infrastructure— in contrast to digital only, electoral only, or mobilization only approaches—to win, sustain, and protect gains for Black communities. We have a key role to play, supporting Black-led organizing efforts on the ground and positioning Black leaders and groups to shape strategies and direction in multi-racial coalitions the state and national level.

PLAN

Black and immigrant communities are on the front lines of racialized attacks, and their experience positions them to lead a broad based coalition for social and economic justice. Community Change and Community Change Action will advance that goal by building organizational capacity and investing in the leadership of both staff and grassroots leaders; strengthening electoral capacity; and engaging leaders in co-creating bold, imaginative strategies. We will:

- Increase the number of Black and immigrant organizations with the capacity and scale to win state and local change, lead multi-racial coalitions at the state and local level, and invest particularly in the leadership of women of color.
- Position Black and immigrant leaders and their constituencies in FIRM and our Black Freedom partners as a dynamic center of a national multi-racial movement for economic justice, racial equity, and immigrant rights.
- Forge deep alliances, common cause, and aligned strategies between Black and immigrant organizations, confronting the role of racism and anti-Blackness as impediments to the solidarity we seek to engender.

“These are terrible times for new Americans, and Community Change has a major role to play supporting the leaders and movement that will turn this around. Community Change played a vital role in building the modern immigrant rights movement in the United States and making it stronger—helping to develop new leaders, nurture up and coming organizations, create a fabric of trust among state based organizations through the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, and pioneering new strategies such as digital and electoral techniques. CHIRLA has grown exponentially over the past decade, and this partnership played a major role in our development.”

—Angelica Salas, President of CHIRLA and Co-Chair of FIRM

2. Reinvent Community Organizing

PREMISE

The core of our theory of change is that low-income people, especially people of color, must be the agents of change in their own lives, and community organizing is the tool by which organized people can counter organized money. **If we continue to rely on traditional forms and structures of organizing, however, we will never build the scale of power we need.** The field is currently too dependent on a narrow range of external funding sources, too reliant on paid staff in a way that limits scalability, and too insulated from the potential of technology to recruit a mass base and reach a mass audience.

Our field requires radical innovation from the ground up. To solve the broad and structural problems we face, community organizing must evolve in a way that reaches significantly more people and operates with much greater sustainability while retaining its soulful and distinctive commitment to the development of grassroots community leaders. Many groups see this and are responding, particularly in three areas:

- **Leadership:** Some community organizations and groups in other sectors are reinventing their staff and leadership models, including promising experiments with volunteer-driven organizing models.
- **Fundraising:** The field needs new funding models, and some groups are demonstrating significant potential with pioneering projects to test new methods of fundraising, finding new sources of revenue, and creative financing approaches.
- **Technology:** Start-up groups, including those Community Change incubated, are experimenting with new approaches to build scale, enable grassroots leaders to mobilize their social networks, and to create compelling content that shapes narrative – as our communications fellows are currently doing with impressive results.

Our sector has the imagination and appetite for reinvention, but we need mechanisms to gather the emerging ideas, hone them through experimentation, and share what we learn across the sector.

“Now more than ever, we need the kinds of national collaborations and strategies that we have with Community Change. They understand, like we understand, that building local and state power is central to winning our national agenda. Community Change has supported our breakthrough local work on job creation for low-income people in LA through policy, research, communications and opportunities to learn with peers around the country, and they’ve created platforms for me as a leader – and for SCOPE – to have a voice and make connections on the national stage.”

—Gloria Walton, President/CEO, SCOPE
(Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education)

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Community Change and Community Change Action is well positioned to lead this inquiry in partnership with organizations that are already experimenting with new approaches to build power in communities. We bring deep ties to innovators in the field and in other sectors, an ecumenical position in the organizing field, and a track record of experimentation and incubation over the last decade. With our partners, we will:

- Become a hub for original practices, strategies, and models that can break through the current barriers to scale and influence. We will support two methods: (a) cross-sector learning that engages unexpected voices from spaces like the private sector; and (b) experiments driven primarily by and with grassroots groups.
- Develop models of sustainable community organizations that rely on volunteer leaders to engage millions of new people and adopt new approaches to financing.
- Integrate new technology, social media, and data into community organizing practice.

“The combination of discipline, courage and imagination needed to win big are rare – and Community Change’s plans to change to meet this moment in history give me hope. They have been leaders in innovating in community organizing – and helping us build bridges in the progressive movement across siloes and sectors to build power. SEIU relies on Community Change as a key partner to build power for working people and end poverty wages in America.”
—Mary Kay Henry, President, Service Employees International Union

3. Advance a Governing Agenda

PREMISE

History teaches us that opportunities for bold, structural change are fleeting moments —the New Deal and the Great Society each changed paradigms in a few brief years. They also built on years of behind-the-scenes work to generate, test, and build momentum for bold ideas and political resonance for structural change.

We cannot enact a governing agenda until we define one. If the national climate changes, and if we can create the conditions to enact a new economic and political paradigm, today's social justice sector is not yet positioned to put forth a vision for bold, structural change.

Community Change and Community Change Action have a unique and strategic role to play in this space in three seemingly intractable areas that are core to our work:

- Ending entrenched, racialized poverty in America;
- Defining the contours of an equitable, sustainable economy and a modernized social contract in a radically changing world of work; and
- Creating a framework for a humane, modernized 21st century immigration and citizenship policy.

Generative conversation at the intersection of ideas, organizing, social movements, and electoral politics is the first step to answering these questions. Too often, grassroots leaders, academics, public officials, and private sector actors work in isolation. Community Change and Community Change Action are institutionalizing an iterative process of idea generation that is deeply grounded in communities and that curates dialogue across lines of difference. In January 2017, for example, we convened a conversation of leading Black organizers with academics and other thinkers. Many new strategies and feedback loops emerged from this conversation, including the resonant concept of “Freedom Cities” as a positive vision for safety in racially marginalized communities. In addition to implicating policy shifts around mass incarceration, policing, and immigration, the concept gained momentum as a platform for organizers to test in campaigns around elected officials in the criminal justice system, including District Attorneys and prosecutors.

“I’ve had a unique view into Community Change from multiple vantage points—as a leader of a grassroots partner organization, as part of Community Change through a Distinguished Taconic Fellowship, and now as a member of Congress. Their ability to connect the dots between inside and outside strategies for social change, to create a bridge for grassroots leaders to have real impact in the corridors of power, and to work on the crises of today while fostering the space to imagine bold solutions for the future are more needed now than ever before.”

—Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Member of Congress (D-WA)

PLAN

Our plan positions our ideas work within Community Change and Community Change Action's existing anti-poverty, racial justice, and immigration work in partnership with cohorts of grassroots partners. Our organizing campaigns will offer laboratories to test the effectiveness of our ideas and sources for imaginative thinking. Our work to shape public opinion and engage millions of people through electoral work will provide a window to what ordinary people and political elites find compelling. Throughout this process, we will build momentum so that we are ready when the opportunity arrives. We will:

- Develop breakthrough ideas on mission critical issues using an innovative, collaborative method that bridges grassroots leaders, academics, private sector leaders, and other thinkers.
- Test these ideas in communities to assess and hone their effectiveness as policies and their resonance in the public imagination.
- Win campaigns for changes in public policy and private sector behavior that reflect and advance our long-term agenda.
- Bring ripe ideas to the national level at key moments such as the 2020 and 2024 election cycles, and build a broad coalition behind them.

“Community Change has assisted many non-profits, including helping me when I started the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) over 35 years ago. And over the years, CBPP and Community Change have collaborated on a range of issues in national and state policy debates, blending our respective strengths in policy analysis and development and grassroots organizing to defend people with low or modest incomes and secure better polices for them. We appreciate Community Change’s dedication to those who are most in need of a voice in our society, especially in the tough times that we now face.”

—Bob Greenstein, President, The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

4. Create an Electoral Powerhouse in Communities of Color

PREMISE

To enact policies that favor poor people and people of color—that move us toward economic justice and racial equity—the American electorate must look more like the country’s composition and reflects the New American Majority’s political interests and preferences. **Although it is not a panacea, we cannot succeed without voter participation as one dimension of power.** Changing the electoral reality requires better mechanisms of civic engagement that disrupt the typical last-minute, under-funded efforts to turn out poor communities and communities of color.

Community Change Action and Community Change Voters, its affiliated PAC, built our model of civic engagement in 2016, running the largest national independent turnout program targeting low-propensity Latino and immigrant voters—and it produced a different reality. Working with trusted local partners and using values-driven messaging, we dramatically increased turnout in our targeted universe, beating the pre-election model numbers in each of our program states—Colorado, Florida, and Nevada.

In the 2018 election cycle, this kind of “integrated voter engagement” was in vogue, but it was not new to Community Change Action. We have been developing this model alongside our local partners over the past 14 years. In Ohio, for example, we provided training, resources, and on-the-ground coaching to support our partner’s first electoral program in 2007, which focused on registering and turning out low-propensity Black voters in Cincinnati. In 2016, they registered 184,000 voters and knocked on more than 475,000 doors — capacity catalyzed by the investment we made ten years earlier and the thinking we did together about how we build state-based power.

“Community Change has been a vital partner to the OOC’s success, helping build new capacities and thinking together about how we are building state-based power in Ohio. Whether it’s supporting our first local electoral programs in 2007, helping to catalyze our statewide criminal justice strategy, or winning campaigns together on child care—Community Change has been a trusted, practical, strategic partner to the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. And in the next generation of our partnership, we will continue to build the people power necessary to heal and restore our communities.”

—Damareo Cooper, Executive Director, Ohio Organizing Collaborative

PLAN

Community Change Action is collaborating deeply with state and local organizations to create a large-scale, permanent political operation. Marrying the best aspects of community organizing and traditional political campaigns, we will use elections to both engage voters at scale and to build lasting organization, power, and leadership at the local level. Community Change Action will:

- Shrink or eliminate the race and class gap in voting rates.
- Increase the electoral power of Black and immigrant communities in key states, rooted in grassroots partner groups with the capacity to run hard money, data-driven, results-oriented programs that reach enough voters to swing statewide elections.
- Build permanent, grassroots capacity for political operations led by local volunteer leaders and financed by the community with a model that emerges through a process of co-creation and iteration with local partners.

“Community Change Action and Planned Parenthood Votes share a commitment to turning out people of color and women in a way that changes the electorate and builds lasting voice, organization and leadership on the ground. Our big collaboration on politics in 2018 is a first step to the paradigm shift we need to save the country.”

—Cecile Richards

New Methods and Practices

WE SEEK PARTNERS IN A SHARED PROJECT. Within the community-organizing field, affiliate networks are the prevailing mode for supporting the development of local organizations and aggregating power for national impact. Community Change has been an exception in that regard, taking a more fluid, open source approach that engages disparate partners in shared projects without a fixed affiliation structure. We have decided to double down on our historic approach to partnership. We believe that open networks grounded in shared vision and deep strategic alignment offer unique advantages, particularly in a space where other institutions effectively deliver the benefits of the affiliate network role. Our role within this ecosystem is to capture the value of open networks—multiplicity, flexibility, accelerated learning, radical experimentation—which is essential to building a multi-racial social movement that can meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the present moment. The vast scale of change means that we cannot step into this plan alone. We are actively seeking partners to explore new ways of relating and collaborating—not only in transactional ways or on specific campaigns—as we work together for a more just and equitable democracy and economy.

WE NEED TO GENERATE BOLD AND VISIONARY IDEAS. To create the conditions for structural change, we must solve the vision and ideas deficit. This is less a matter of doing original policy work and more about carefully defining strategic questions, convening the right mix of people to answer them, and curating the conversations with care and deliberation. Community Change and Community Change Action will build a new practice of idea creation and develop our capacity to bridge organizing, think tanks, and academia to solve intractable problems. We are not suited to be a traditional think tank, but we have seen the potential of bringing together academics who are eager to contribute expertise with practitioners to imagine new solutions, to what for us are mission-critical questions. This is already an informal part of our organizational practice. We have abundant talent highly skilled at moving across worlds, framing and distilling problems, and curating conversations to find answers.

WE NEED TO ELEVATE OUR APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. The movement simply needs more and better leaders, and those leaders need to be those who have the most at stake. This form of leadership development is the next critical step in building the necessary moral and strategic spine of our movement, and it is essential if we are to achieve the visionary, strategic goals laid out in this plan. We are beginning with a focus on the leadership of women of color in the field. We aim to create intentional space for learning and developing a program that includes Community Change and Community Change Action's distinctive methodological through-lines. These are: (a) Combining applied work with intensive spaces for skills-building and political education; (b) Working with leaders in cohorts united by a common concern, rather than only as individuals; and (c) Consciously bringing people together across lines of organizing network, tradition, issue and approach. This initiative builds off Community Change's long track record of leadership development initiatives, which have included: the Community Change Agents Program, focused on Executive Directors; Generation Change, focused on entry- and mid-level organizers; and Grassroots Ambassadors, focused on low-income volunteer leaders.

WE NEED TO ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR. Community Change and Community Change Action have almost exclusively targeted public sector behavior as the driver of social change. Without considering the actions of private sector actors, our analysis has missed an essential set of potential targets and partners. We have begun to correct this lapse, connecting with leaders in key sectors such as technology, clean energy and the care professions; building relationships with Silicon Valley companies and philanthropies; and exploring opportunities to engage on key problems such as immigration, income support, and jobs. We are incubating organizations that have targeted bad actors, and we are strengthening our analysis of the ways to target corporate power as another route to change.

Capacities to Strengthen

PUBLIC VOICE IS A FORM OF POWER - ONE WE MUST SEIZE. Fairly or not, as Andy Warhol said, “It’s not what you are that counts. It’s what they think you are.” Up to this point, Community Change and Community Change Action have positioned ourselves behind the scenes to move the work and elevate our partners. Clearer branding—and a stronger case for the role that organizing plays in movements for social change—is a dimension of power. We cannot achieve our goals if we continue to leave this power on the table. One of our first steps is to begin operating as Community Change and Community Change Action, names that are clearer, more memorable, and evocative of our purpose and approach. As we develop our new visual identity and brand strategy, we seek to position our organization in a way that builds power for our partners and amplifies the voices of our constituencies in the national debate.

OUR SECTOR MUST BETTER INTEGRATE DATA AND TECHNOLOGY. In addition to building community based on physical proximity, we are finding a sense of community online. Organizers need mechanisms to replace the scaffolding and infrastructure that legacy institutions once provided. Our ability to sustain grassroots energy and movements depends on a better understanding of the tools through which people build digital communities and more sophisticated systems to capture, analyze, and use data. Following an investment in our data systems and staff capacities, we aim to better integrate technology and data analysis in all areas of our work, beginning with the challenge of reinventing organizing.

OUR RISKS ARE INCREASING AND WE MUST PREPARE. As Community Change and Community Change Action take on elements of this strategic plan in a more public way, we must invest in mechanisms and operations to protect and position the organization to weather attacks – be they reputational, financial, legal, physical, and/or cyber. We will make additional investment in key areas, including c3/c4/PAC compliance, regranting and reporting, and cybersecurity, as well as expanding our capacity to support our partners’ capacity to assess their own systems and prepare for and respond to attacks.

WE NEED TO GROW. To accomplish the ambitious agenda laid out in this plan, Community Change and Community Change Action must increase our annual core operating expenses by 2020 by at least 25% per year. We must also be prepared to both raise and manage a substantial increase in annual campaign spending that will fluctuate based on opportunities and election cycles. We will build on the strong financial management practices in place and focus on efforts to: (a.) Diversify revenue sources while maintaining our commitment to gift acceptance policies that align with our values; (b.) Experiment with new approaches to individual donor cultivation; and (c.) Self-finance innovation by growing our cash operating reserve and assessing the role of our endowment.

Conclusion

In 1968, in the aftermath of assassinations and a grim election, as the civil rights and anti-poverty movements teetered precariously, the Center for Community Change became a home in the storm for leaders and organizers in the struggle for economic and social justice.

Now, 50 years later, Community Change and Community Change Action face the turbulence of this moment with the strength of hard-won experience and an unwavering belief in the fierce dignity of low-income people of color in their power to construct a different world. Even as we respond to the daily crises of the Trump Administration, our gaze is fixed on this bold, ambitious vision that we firmly believe can be made real. But we cannot accomplish it alone. Community change is only possible in partnership, and we look to the next 50 years with an invitation—to join us in the long work of building power and reshaping the policies and institutions that impact our lives.



“Community Change” is the trade name of the Center for Community Change, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and “Community Change Action” is the trade name of the Center for Community Change Action, its affiliated 501(c)(4) advocacy arm. Throughout this document, we refer to Community Change and Community Change Action as “we” in the context of shared vision, mission, and even shared staff. Although the two sister organizations share a common vision for the world, they operate independently and in compliance with applicable law.