



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2022

Redefining
What is
Possible from
the Ground Up

BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION

Local Progress is a movement of local elected officials advancing a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of local government. We are elected leaders who build power with underrepresented communities, share bold ideas and policy among our network, and fight to reshape what is possible in our localities all across the country.

Local Progress was founded in 2012 by a small group of elected leaders who saw the promise and potential of coordinating local policy learning, action and power building across jurisdictions, to build a national movement from our communities. Local Progress was founded as a project of the Center for Popular Democracy, which served as its organizational home for its first decade

In our first ten years, Local Progress has:

- Grown to a network of more than 1,300 elected leaders in cities, counties, school boards and other local jurisdictions in 48 states.
- Developed a comprehensive, intersectional policy library cataloging best practices in local policy that has inspired hundreds of elected officials towards policy change.
- Launched the Progressive Governance Academy in partnership with the State Innovation Exchange and re:power, and trained nearly 1,000 state and local officials in how to approach governing as an organizer.
- Catalyzed state level campaigns with tangible results, including mobilizing local governments to sue the state of Florida for punitive and racially driven preemptive measures, building popular support for earned sick time and defeating anti-worker preemption bills in Texas, passing local non-discrimination ordinances in a dozen localities across North Carolina, and helping protect tenants in New York through coordinated trans-local work to pass Good Cause eviction laws and help localities opt into emergency tenant protections.
- Organized hundreds of elected officials in collective action to support collective bargaining, unionization efforts and worker power, and to work together across jurisdictions to fight against “race to the bottom” corporate driven economic development models like Amazon HQ2.
- Coordinated national collaboration across local governments working to raise wages and protect workers, protect immigrant communities, protect tenants and create new affordable housing, and redefine public safety. These efforts have had significant impact in dozens of local jurisdictions across the country.
- As we celebrate our 10th anniversary and transition from a project of the Center for Popular Democracy to an independent organization, this document – ratified by the Local Progress Board in 2022 – outlines our theory of change and how our organization is working towards our collective vision. It will orient and guide our staff and member leaders in their work to steward the growth and development of our network, initiate new work and respond to opportunities that emerge.

We live in unprecedented and often unpredictable times. This document was developed in a year of significant threats to both the institution of government and the practice of democracy. Our affirmation of the promise of governing together towards more just and equitable outcomes both responds to

and transcends the urgency of this particular moment. This framework provides us with a long term vision, a roadmap towards how we intend to realize that vision, and values based principles for making strategic decisions.



Local Progress and the Local Progress Impact Lab work collectively to advance a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of government.

OUR STORY OF CHANGE



At Local Progress, we build power with communities to reshape what is possible in our localities. Here's how.

We work to create the path toward government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Local government is where our aspirations and vision for our communities' needs become reality: An economy where working people have dignity and organized power. Thriving communities where everyone has access to safety and care. Neighborhoods that support the vitality of our planet for generations to come, with safe and stable housing and equitable and inclusive planning. A democracy that brings people historically marginalized into authentic partnership and power.

Widespread wins to advance this vision have taken root in hundreds of local communities, improving millions of people's lives. Our success across cities, towns, counties and school districts changes our own understanding of what is possible, rebuilding public faith in government and making the aspirational pragmatic.

Governance is a uniquely powerful tool for achieving justice and equity at scale. At the same time, governance is just as easily distorted, captured, and shaped to undermine democracy and justice. This has been the case for the entire history of our nation, which has been deeply rooted in white supremacy, misogyny and racial capitalism. In our more recent history, conservative reforms have further eroded faith in government, gutting its capacity through a coordinated effort to entrench inequality through deregulation, privatization, and the preemption and defunding of local governments.

Achieving our vision requires building and effectively wielding the power necessary to remake our governing outcomes and practices in line with our values and vision. Through collaborative governance — the continued practice and shared ownership of governing — we pair workplace and community organizing that builds power for our vision with work to manifest that vision into policy, structural and programmatic changes within the institution of government. Collaboration and coordination between many different strategies and many leaders is needed to build governing power. At Local Progress, we are focused on the people elected to lead at the local level.



This framework was developed over the course of a year with support from Rebecca Subar and Allison Budschalow. of Dragonfly Partners. It reflects input through a series of surveys, meetings and in-depth discussions and focus groups including the full LP staff as well as over 100 local elected officials from across the membership. It was ratified by LP's board of directors in February of 2022, following in-depth discussion at LP's first member leadership gathering.

Our role is to build a network that catalyzes and unlocks the collective power of elected officials to advance this shared vision across our places, and to bring people — particularly those historically marginalized — into the center of government and governing. We use the power created through this dynamic partnership to advance change that improves the lives of people and reshapes the relationship between government and communities.

The progress we seek is justice and liberation, organized from the ground up. We strive to be an example of a multi-racial organization and network led by the experiences and needs of the people who are closest to the lived realities of public policy. We are primarily led and staffed by women and people of color. We work closely with people who are organized in their communities and workplaces to fight for these changes.

FOUR PILLARS OF TRANSFORMATION

Local Progress' story of change is grounded in four pillars that uphold our approach to the work of local policy transformation. None of the pillars stands on its own; each informs and builds on the others. These pillars are:

1. **Racial justice** as the beacon of justice for all
2. **Collaborative governing** to build, shift, and maintain the balance of power to benefit those historically marginalized by our laws, our institutions, and our culture
3. Values-aligned **elected officials as an organized force**
4. **Adaptive change from the ground up**

Racial justice as the beacon of justice for all

In our work, we know that equality and justice are possible. And centering racial justice is how we get there. To do so, our work must be intentional to repair centuries of harm inflicted on communities of color. Five hundred years of the genocide, land theft, and ongoing erasure of Indigenous people, the enslavement of Black people, the Jim Crow laws and practices that followed, and residential segregation, mass incarceration and other forms of enduring, traumatizing, and lethal forms of contemporary American racism persist in the institutions of local government and in the hearts and minds of many.

We center racial justice in the struggle for justice for all, because racial injustice is the primary indicator of negative social and

economic outcomes in our country. Liberatory local policy that addresses all injustice requires the vision and leadership of values-aligned leaders and elected officials from Black, Indigenous and other communities of color working alongside multi-racial coalitions organizing for just policies. Emerging conditions for change can catalyze, and be catalyzed by, new processes and structures that bring people from historically marginalized and excluded communities to the center of government and provide redress for past harm. Recognizing and maintaining racial justice as the beacon for justice requires building a truly inclusive multi-racial democracy and extends to all facets of governing — from major policy development to the day-to-day work of our institutions.

Collaborative governing to build power

At the center of our work is people power — the power of people coming together to advance an agenda that centers the needs of people and the planet. When progressive elected officials step fully into their power and use their power to govern with and for those who have been purposefully disconnected from power, policy victories reflect the needs and interests of the most impacted people within communities, have

greater durability, and build more long-term power for future wins.

Through collaborative governing we pair workplace, community and issue advocacy organizing that builds power for our vision with work to manifest that vision into policy, structural and programmatic changes within the institution of government. Collaborative governing requires trust and relationship

building. It requires elected officials to share power, information, and strategy. Similarly, it invites community members to locate and practice stepping into their power alongside local elected officials. It requires both elected officials and community advocates to treat government as an arena in which to build, own and share power, rather than as a target. When our communities and elected officials

shift from ongoing opposition to an aligned strategic governing coalition, longer-lasting, higher-impact outcomes become possible. When power-building leads to progressive control of governing bodies, values-aligned elected officials must use that power to reshape the very institutions, processes, and structures of our democracy to bring changes that bring people to the center.

Adaptive change from the ground up

We believe that our work starts with the people in the communities where we live. Making change in government in order to build power requires listening, learning, and practice. It requires collaboration across diverse geographies, lived experiences, and demographics. This work starts at the local level.

We are building a collective vision for governance that is driven by and grounded in the experiences, stories, and needs of local communities. That means navigating across

an array of different types of government and political contexts, with a strong focus on being led by our vision and values and adapting solutions to local contexts and conditions. It means that no matter how local our work or how small our jurisdiction, we believe it can propel change at all levels of government. It also means building structures and systems for people in our neighborhoods and districts to engage more, and more directly, with their local elected officials. It means providing ourselves as examples for how to listen and how to lead.

Elected officials as an organized force

We believe that elected officials, like any other people in our society, are more effective and powerful when they work together. In a political environment characterized by high levels of ego and low levels of trust, Local Progress members see governing as a team sport. We come together to share policy knowledge and strategies, develop enduring and trusting relationships of support, and build our collective capacity and courage to govern together in line with our vision.

By organizing together, we can impact state and federal policy, challenge the overwhelming amount of economic and political power concentrated in corporations, and overcome systemic barriers such as a lack of funding

by the federal government and preemption by state governments. In collaborating and organizing together, we practice humanizing our work. By building on and replicating our work across jurisdictions, we can reshape our own ideas of what is possible and the public's perception of what is pragmatic. We can create new, sustainable ways of doing the work.



OUR STRATEGY



The work of the LP network is grounded in the four pillars and manifests in a number of different organizing, campaign, policy and narrative strategies. This list articulates how we do our work, who we do it with, where we focus our efforts and what types of strategies and tactics we pursue.

The **who** of Local Progress' strategy

5. **We build an open network of values-aligned members** who share a Local Progress identity and community, and a smaller core of member leaders who drive network strategy.
6. **We work in partnership with groups of organized people** — community groups, labor unions, and advocacy organizations — who share our values, goals, and story of change.
7. **We work in partnership with groups with organized expertise and capacity** — legal, policy and implementation - in line with our policy agenda.
8. **We engage selectively with allied state and federal officials** around campaigns and initiatives.

The **where** of Local Progress' strategy

9. **Local Progress members serve municipalities and jurisdictions of every size and type** — big cities and counties to small, mid-size, and rural jurisdictions.
10. **Staff determine strategically the states on which to focus**, based on the interests of member leaders and movement partners and on our criteria for strategic decision-making.

The **how** of Local Progress' strategy

11. **We build the capacity of local elected officials** to advance racial and economic justice, resulting in more equitable local policy outcomes and a foundation for more powerful wins in the future. We do this by developing a broad, intersectional policy agenda, providing training that helps members govern effectively, and promoting learning and sharing across our network.
12. **We organize members for collective impact** by connecting local work across jurisdictions, building trans-local organizing and campaign strategies, and advocating for change at the state and national levels.
13. **We support collaborative governance**, helping members develop the skills and practices to support deepening trust and collaboration among values-aligned elected officials and between elected officials and movement groups.
14. **We aim to shift the public narrative** in a way that moves us closer to the consensus and shared understanding that fosters widespread policy change and implementation. Through strategic communications that supports policy wins, our work helps build a broader understanding of governance as a collective power that the people share and own.
15. **We target structural problems that impede progress.** These include state preemption, ongoing underfunding of local government, the consolidation of economic power which distorts our democracy, undemocratic decision-making processes, and other institutional barriers to change.

How we relate to electoral work & politics

As we develop an independent c4 organization, many have asked if we will engage directly in elections and politics. Here's our response:

Local Progress members are political actors who spend significant time and energy engaging in electoral work and the electoral cycle. Governing effectively is an essential foundation for long term political success and growing our power.

Outside of our organizational work as Local Progress, many members are already forming networks of support and solidarity with political impact. As our sibling 501c4 corporate entity is further developed, its work will include exploring whether there is any benefit to formalizing and institutionalizing elements of this work. We welcome ideas and conversation with LP member leaders about whether engaging in elections may further our strategic vision, however we have no short term plans to do so.



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