HOW TO BUILD A MORE DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFECTIVE POLICY SECTOR

A Toolkit for Think Tanks, Policy Nonprofits, and Governments

Next 100

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ABOUT NEXT100

Next100 is a new kind of think tank and policy leadership development program created for—and by—the next generation of policy leaders, to address the systematic exclusion in the public policy sector of the communities most directly impacted by policy. We envision a future in which the policy space is inclusive of and driven by a diverse set of the next generation's thinkers and doers, who are developing creative, rigorous, and relevant policy ideas, with a focus on translating these ideas into tangible change. We're changing the face and future of progressive policy. Next100 is powered by The Century Foundation.

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HOW TO BUILD A MORE DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFECTIVE POLICY SECTOR: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Our nation has a long history of excluding individuals and communities from the policymaking table—because of their race, ethnicity, or immigration status; their age, income, or educational level; or any number of other factors—even though they are often those who are most affected by our policy choices. For policy leaders who want to develop, influence, enact, and implement public policies to build a more just society, eliminating this systemic exclusion is crucial.

This toolkit identifies and shares best practices on inclusive talent recruitment, hiring, and talent development for public policy organizations and government agencies or offices. Below is a brief summary of the recommendations included in the toolkit. For additional context on each recommendation, please see the full toolkit here.

Transparent, Actionable Data: Collect and share data about staff diversity and inclusion internally and externally, and use this data to continuously improve organizational behavior

Strategy 1. Collect and internally and externally report on staff demographics, including reporting by tenure, job seniority, and job function

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Strategy 1. Avoid unnecessary qualifications and requirements, particularly where such qualifications and requirements are likely to disproportionately and systematically exclude individuals from impacted communities, individuals of color, and individuals from other historically excluded communities

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Livable, Fair Pay: Pay fair, livable wages to all employees, and do not create financial barriers to being successful within your organization

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Strategy 2: Do not require employees to pre-pay for work and travel expenses

Proactive Recruitment: Recruit a broad and diverse applicant pool that includes individuals from impacted communities

Strategy 1. Invest time and resources in outreach and recruitment efforts to identify new candidates

Strategy 2. Conduct proactive outreach to organizations beyond the policy sector that work with impacted communities, and use creative outreach strategies

Strategy 3: Collect and act on real-time applicant demographic data

Inclusive Selection: Develop a selection process that minimizes bias and values lived experience, proximity, and potential

Strategy 1. Explicitly value lived experience and proximity to impacted communities as a form of expertise

Strategy 2. Develop an accessible application that is not overly burdensome, but allows applicants to provide information beyond a resume

Strategy 3. Mitigate bias as much as possible upfront through training and an anti-bias cheat sheet

Strategy 4. Ensure a diverse set of individuals are involved in and have meaningful input at each stage of the hiring process

Strategy 5. Strengthen consistency (and effectiveness) in hiring practices and and decisions, and minimize bias, through developing and utilizing common tools and rubrics for each stage of the process

Strategy 6. Utilize performance tasks to evaluate ability/potential to do the job

Strategy 7. Implement a variation of the Rooney or Mansfield Rules to ensure diversity in the pool

Relevant Professional Development: Develop new skills and knowledge in employees as part of your organization's core work

Strategy 1: Identify and articulate the skills and knowledge needed for staff at various stages/in various roles, and provide professional development to build those skills

Strategy 2: Support staff to identify additional external training opportunities that will strengthen their effectiveness (and pay for those opportunities)

Strategy 3: Learn from new hires, and empower them to share their knowledge

Empowered, Supported Employees: Empower and support individuals on staff who bring identities, backgrounds, and experiences that improve organizational diversity

Strategy 1. Empower individuals at all levels to use a portion of their time to develop and drive their own policy agenda

Strategy 2. Train managers as managers, and recognize management as a valuable skill

Strategy 3. Create organization-wide opportunities for employees to provide feedback to organizational leadership, including anonymous feedback

Strategy 4. Invest in mentorship within the organization, and facilitate and encourage the building of employees' networks outside the organization

Strategy 5. Create internal career ladders as opportunities for people to progress within the organization

Strategy 6. Support staff who have trauma connected to their work

> **"How do you create a policy that is geared towards the alleged betterment of the people, and the people are not present to help shape the policy?"**
>
> — **ZAKI SMITH,** NEXT100 ALUMNI POLICY ENTREPRENEUR

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many of our nation's toughest policy challenges have gotten worse, not better. What's more, the impacts of these challenges are not felt equally. The COVID-19 pandemic shone a spotlight on and exacerbated pre-existing inequities and failures in our public policies that are meant to protect and support marginalized communities. Unfortunately, our nation has a long history of excluding individuals and communities from the policymaking table—because of their race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, or disability status; due to their age, income, or educational level; or any number of other factors, even though they are often those who are most affected by our policy choices.

For policy leaders who want to develop, research, influence, enact, and implement public policies to build a more just society, addressing this systemic exclusion from the policy sector is crucial. Public policy determines the quality of our lives, the opportunities we can access, and the rules we live by.

FIGURE 1

In 2020:

42% of the US population were people of color.

53% of young people (under the age of 18) were people of color.

22% of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate were people of color.

9% of U.S. Senators' Chiefs of Staff were people of color.

Yet, our policy leaders do not represent the diversity of our country. In the United States, 42 percent of the population identify as people of color, and the country is growing more diverse: people of color represent more than half of the country's youth.[1] Meanwhile, the country's policymakers do not reflect this diversity. Members of Congress and top Senate Committee staff are overwhelmingly white[2] (77 percent and 89 percent, respectively) and members of Congress and state legislators are overwhelmingly male (73 percent and 69 percent, respectively). A 2018 report found that of the 421 chiefs of staff in Congress, 354 (84 percent) were white, and a 2020 report found that only an incredibly low 9 percent of U.S. Senator's chiefs of staff were people of color. (See Figure 1.) Even Congressional internships—a common entry point to Capitol Hill—are disproportionately held by white people. Members of Congress are also wealthier than the average American. While data on the demographic makeup of policy staff across government, think tanks, and other public policy organizations is even more limited, available data and anecdotal information suggests there are similar challenges. (See the section "Current State of the Policy Sector" for more on the demographics of the sector, including on the federal executive branch, as well as data from an original survey of the practices of nineteen leading think tanks.)

Across the public policy sector, there are pockets of progress in terms of organizations working to build a more inclusive sector—from the movement, led by Pay Our Interns and others, to ensure that policy internships become paid; to The Policy Academies, an organization aiming to cultivate a diverse next generation of public policy researchers.

> *"Policies end up missing the mark on who they impact, how they impact, and what they're designed to do when you don't have voices in the conversation who understand all the small nuances of the problem or issue."*
>
> —**ISABEL CORONADO**, NEXT100 ALUMNI POLICY ENTREPRENEUR

This toolkit aims to pull together best and promising practices and examples from within and beyond the public policy sector, to lay out a menu of actionable steps that public policy organizations can take to improve diversity in the policy sector, and to address the systemic exclusion of the most impacted communities and individuals from the policy table. It identifies and shares best and promising practices on inclusive talent recruitment, hiring, and talent development that are relevant for public policy organizations and government agencies or offices. Our hope is that, by implementing these recommendations, think tanks, advocacy organizations, and government agencies and offices can recruit, hire, develop, promote, and empower more individuals who bring diversity and lived experience, and who are from and proximate to the communities most heavily impacted by public policy challenges, to drive policy change—leading to more effective and inclusive public policies.

Who is this toolkit for?

If you work at an organization that aims to develop, research, influence, enact and/or implement public policy, this toolkit is for you—whether you work in an early career or leadership position in policy, research, communications, or human resources. Each of us has a role to play in improving our own practices and policies that serve as widespread barriers to entry for the sector, if we hope to build a more diverse and inclusive sector that reflects the communities public policies seek to serve.

> *"It's important that there be a mass of different voices, not just a single voice here or there. That puts too much weight on a single person, and it's very easy for an organization to say the single person is wrong rather than there are practices we need to change."*
>
> — NEXT100 ALUMNI POLICY ENTREPRENEUR

When discussing the "policy sector" as the audience for this toolkit, we are including nongovernmental organizations that seek to influence policy, such as think tanks, policy research, and advocacy organizations, and others; as well as all levels and branches of government. Each of these organizations faces different challenges and opportunities in implementing some of these practices; but overall, we believe that across the sector, there are substantial opportunities for improvement.

Why does this matter?

Why should the public policy sector seek to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and empower individuals who reflect a wider variety of racial and ethnic identities, gender identities, disability status, and other forms of demographic diversity, and who have lived experience and proximity to the communities most impacted by public policy? As discussed above, policymakers are too infrequently representative of the people whom their decisions most impact. This means not just that these agenda-setters and their communities are less likely to have experienced the consequences of their policy choices, or lived through how policy and program implementation works in practice; but also that their priorities are less likely to align with those of impacted communities. They may be less likely to have directly impacted individuals in their personal and professional networks. Lived experience is its own legitimate form of expertise, one that is necessary to inform effective policy development, prioritization, and implementation. Having policymakers who are from and intimately connected to impacted communities at the table influences the policies they develop, research, enact, and implement.

More broadly, there is a substantial body of research that demonstrates the benefits and impact of diversity in the workplace, including racial and ethnic diversity and gender diversity, across private sector organizations and a multitude of social science experiments. Building diverse and inclusive organizations is critical in all sectors; but perhaps even most so for those developing public policies that set the terms by which we all live.

What's in this toolkit?

This toolkit presents a series of strategies to enhance diversity and inclusion in the policy sector, with a focus on increasing representation and empowerment of those who will bring diversity to the sector, as well as those from impacted communities. Our recommendations include:

- **Transparent, Actionable Data:** Collect and share data about staff diversity and inclusion internally and externally, and use this data to continuously improve organizational behavior
- **Inclusive Roles and Job Descriptions:** Develop roles and job descriptions to be as inclusive and accessible as possible
- **Livable, Fair Pay:** Pay fair, livable wages to all employees, and do not create financial barriers to being successful in your organization
- **Proactive Recruitment:** Recruit a broad and diverse applicant pool that reflects impacted communities
- **Inclusive Selection:** Develop a selection process that minimizes bias and values lived experience, proximity, and potential
- **Relevant Professional Development:** Develop new skills and knowledge in employees as part of your organization's core work
- **Empowered, Supported Employees:** Empower and support individuals on staff who bring diversity in identities, backgrounds, and experiences that improve organizational diversity

There are several examples of promising efforts within the policy sector highlighted throughout, as well as targeted sets of recommendations on how to better support recruit, hire, and support immigrant applicants and employees and people with disabilities.

This toolkit is not an exhaustive resource on everything an organization can do to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Specifically, it focuses more on talent recruitment, hiring, and development, and less on the ongoing, critical work of building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive organizational culture. This is not to minimize the importance of that critical work, but rather to give it the deference it deserves. There are numerous other organizations detailing the work needed to create an inclusive culture and excellent resources on each of these topics; we list some resources that go into more depth in the section "Building an Organization-Wide Culture of and Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging."

OUR EARLY EFFORTS: REFLECTIONS FROM NEXT100 AND THE CENTURY FOUNDATION

The authors of this resource are all team members at Next100, a new public policy think tank founded in 2019 with a mission to change the face and future of progressive policy. Next100 was created by, and is a part of, The Century Foundation (TCF), a public policy think tank that has wrestled with many of the challenges we seek to overcome with this resource. In 2019, TCF marked its 100th anniversary by launching Next100 as a one-of-a-kind, independent public policy think tank as part of an effort to diversify the policy talent pipeline.

Next100 is a new kind of think tank and policy leadership development program. We believe changing who makes policy and how policies are developed, prioritized, enacted, and implemented will lead to a more inclusive, democratic, and just America. We kickstart the careers of diverse cohorts of policy leaders—who are from and/or proximate to the communities most impacted by policy—and invest in their individual and collective capacity to influence policy today and for years to come.

Our team at Next100 has built a recruitment, selection, training, and support model for developing leaders who are from and/or connected to the communities most impacted by public policy. We recruit, select, and hire policy entrepreneurs (PEs) with diverse backgrounds, lived experience, and proximity to impacted communities into two-year, full-time roles where, with support, they learn the issues, data, partners, and opportunities for change in their chosen desired focus area; and receive development in critical policy changemaking skills (policy skills, such as policy analysis, development, and research; communications and advocacy skills, such as storytelling, writing for change, advocacy, and public speaking; and organizational skills, such as project management). PEs then develop and execute their own independent projects and partnerships to achieve specific policy goals, centering impacted communities in their work. Today, Next100 represents 20 percent of TCF's total staff, and has become a core part of TCF's strategic framework going forward.

We haven't always gotten everything right over the past three years, but we have learned a lot about what works—and what doesn't—when it comes to identifying and supporting those traditionally excluded from public policy spaces to thrive as policy experts and leaders. From day one, we hoped that Next100 could be a model for others to learn from and committed to sharing our own learnings in ways that the public policy sector as a whole could benefit. This toolkit represents one of what we hope will be many contributions by Next100 to help reshape a sector that we believe is key to building a more inclusive, democratic, and just America. More about our vision and our work can be found in this *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article, "We Need to Reimagine the Modern Think Tank," and in Appendix B.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Transparent, Actionable Data: Collect and share data about staff diversity and inclusion internally and externally, and use this data to continuously improve organizational behavior.

As the saying goes, "what gets measured gets done." Collecting and analyzing data on staff diversity and inclusion will help an organization—and its internal and external stakeholders—better understand its current state, and how well it reflects both the country broadly and the communities it is trying to serve, as well as identify opportunities for improvement. Policy researchers and policymakers often recommend the collection and review of data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic subgroups as a check on organizations' and programs' effectiveness, and equity impact; this data also can—and should—aid in self-reflection within our own sector. It is also an increasingly common (and in our view, appropriate) practice for the philanthropic community to request and expect this information as part of the funding process.

Strategy 1. Collect and internally and externally report on staff demographics, including reporting by tenure, job seniority, and job function

As an initial step, organizations should gather on a voluntary basis and report—internally and externally—on staff demographics, against a variety of categories. These categories at a minimum should include racial and ethnic categories, gender categories, some measure of socioeconomic status/economic/educational background (for example, first-generation college status, or measures of or proxies for family or childhood socioeconomic status, such as highest parental education level, Pell grant eligibility, or eligibility for other benefits programs), and any other demographic categories that are appropriate given an organization's mission and staff, such as how many staff are or have been personally impacted by particular priority policy issues. Getting staff input on the types of data that are gathered and the specific categories of identity can be a helpful way to ensure staff understand why collecting this information is important to the organization's talent development and strategic planning vision.

FIGURE 2

In addition, doing so will provide an opportunity to confirm that staff are comfortable with the public disclosure of this information and that the data reflect their input, perspectives, and identities.

This data should be collected on a regular basis, and disaggregated by job seniority and function, to ensure staff diversity is not limited to, for example, comparatively junior staff or administrative staff. Moreover, data on retention, promotions, and staff satisfaction should be collected and disaggregated, in order to review whether certain groups of staff members are more likely to leave or less likely to be promoted. Data should be shared in a way that protects individual privacy and; demographic data should be collected on a voluntary basis.

In addition to staff diversity and retention, gathering—again, on a voluntary basis—demographic information about applicant pools for positions can also help and organization understand whether it is recruiting diverse pools of candidates, and improve recruitment strategies to improve diversity in applicant pools. (More on this in the section "Proactive Recruitment.")

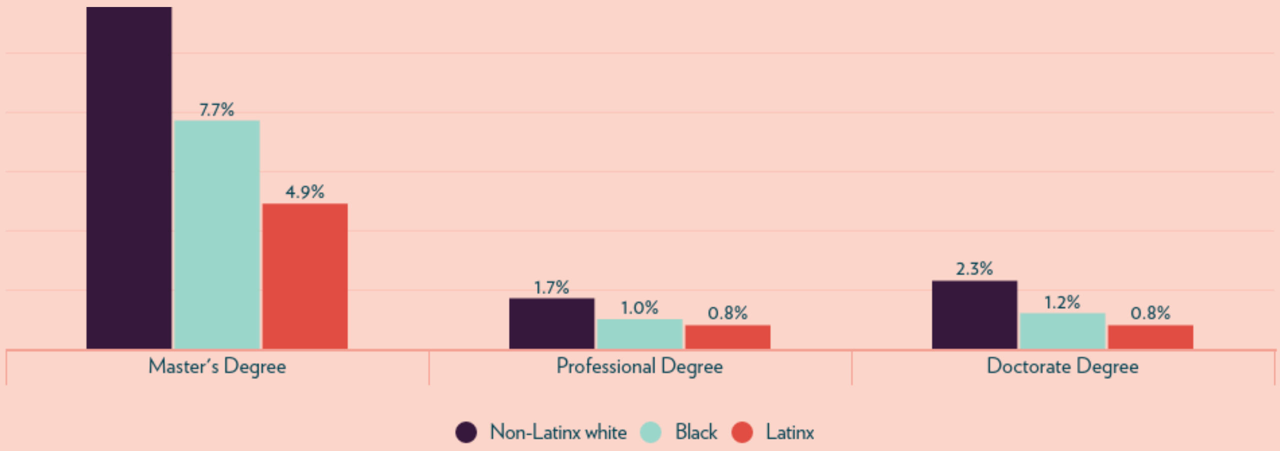
The Center for American Progress (CAP) models how to present staff demographic diversity data well against a number of dimensions. They share specific data on race and ethnicity rather than only using a general term like "person of color," which can obscure nuances in the demographics of an organization. They also report on LGBTQIA+ status, and create space for employees to identify as nonbinary, allowing employees to self-identify as they see fit. They disaggregate their racial demographics for the policy and non-policy teams, critical to seeing whether diversity on administrative/support teams are masking lack of diversity on policy teams; and by the leadership team versus the entire staff. Finally, they track and share hiring trends by race, giving better insight into the pipeline over time. CAP also allows for employees to offer other terms that describe their identity, which allows people to offer additional descriptors with which they identify.

Next100 Insight: Sharing Demographic Data

At Next100, we have a relatively small team (currently eleven FTEs total) and we are quite racially and ethnically diverse, in that most individual team members self-identify differently from one another. This presented a particular challenge for us in collecting and disaggregating team demographic data while maintaining anonymity—one that other small organizations, or large organizations with small pockets of diversity on their teams, may face. Anticipating this situation, we spoke as a team about data the team was comfortable sharing publicly, and as we shaped survey questions to gather the data. We were able to share data in a way that maintains our goal of transparency, while ensuring the team was comfortable with the information and the level of privacy.

FIGURE 3

Graduate Degree Attainment by Race/Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2020"

Recommendation 2. Inclusive Roles and Job Descriptions: Develop roles and job descriptions to be as inclusive and accessible as possible

Intentionally developing and describing roles (including prerequisites for those roles) that do not systematically exclude people who could excel at making policy change, but lack traditional credentials, skills, or pre-existing policy experience, are key steps to bringing more individuals with diverse backgrounds and lived experience into the policy sector. Ensuring job descriptions are comprehensible to those who are not already in the policy sector can eliminate another barrier to entry.

Inclusively developing a role requires stepping back from assumptions—and existing job descriptions—and identifying the main objectives and outcomes of a position, and what duties and responsibilities will be necessary to achieve those objectives and outcomes. What skills, knowledge, and experiences are actually necessary to be able to effectively complete those duties and responsibilities? And of those skills, knowledge, and experiences, which can be developed in the role with intentional effort and support, versus those that are actually necessary as prerequisites for the role?

Unnecessary prerequisites can serve as yet another barrier for individuals looking to enter the policy space. While some positions, particularly quantitative ones, may require specific types of graduate degrees, listing a graduate degree as a requirement or preferred qualification when it is not actually needed to excel in a position—or automatically requiring a bachelor's degree for all early career positions, without considering its specific necessity—can systematically exclude Black and Latinx candidates, who are less likely to have these qualifications, due to systemic inequities in our educational systems, and/or other barriers. As the 2020 Census shows, the racial/ethnic disparities in who attains graduate degrees are particularly severe: while 11.7 percent of non-Latinx white individuals have a master's degree, and an additional 1.7 percent have a professional degree and 2.3 percent have a doctorate degree, the respective numbers for Black individuals are 7.7 percent, 1.0 percent, and 1.2 percent, and for Latinx individuals of any race are 4.9 percent, 0.8 percent,

> *"We've given lots of thought to the unnecessary job and education requirements that keep out some people. For example, we've eliminated the requirement for a master's degree. We are investing in management and professional development skills for individuals that we hope will extend far beyond their time in the fellowship and far into their careers."*
>
> —**ERIC FIGUEROA,** CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES

and 0.8 percent. Employers should also recognize educational credentials and professional experience earned in places outside the United States, to ensure immigrant applicants are not disadvantaged in the application process.

To get a better sense of educational qualification requirements in the policy sector, in late 2021, Next100 conducted a review of job openings at nineteen leading think tanks (Appendix A) and found that sixteen of the nineteen think tanks surveyed had open policy positions. Eight of these think tanks—50 percent—required a bachelor's degree for all job openings, for both policy and non-policy jobs. Nine required or preferred a bachelor's degree or higher for all of their policy roles, and twelve required or preferred a graduate degree for the vast majority of upper-level policy roles. Of the seven think tanks that did not require or prefer a bachelor's degree for all policy positions, four required a bachelor's degree for some policy positions, but not others that appeared to have similar responsibilities. (This inconsistency suggests that hiring managers or specific departments within the same organizations are making different decisions about degree requirements for similar roles.)

Once an organization has conducted a more inclusive role-scoping for a position, this can then form the basis of a written job description, which should be written in language that is as accessible as possible. There are multiple guides available on how to use inclusive language in job descriptions. There is also plenty of evidence that job descriptions often carry significantly biased language that may reduce the number of qualified applicants who are women as gendered language (for example, "fireman" rather than "firefighter") and the inclusion of traits that may be stereotypically associated with men (for example, "calm demeanor") are commonplace. There is also evidence that affirmative statements about valuing diversity can make Black people in particular consider job listings more carefully than those that do not contain such statements.

Strategy 1. Avoid unnecessary qualifications and requirements, particularly where such qualifications and requirements are likely to disproportionately and systematically exclude individuals from impacted communities, individuals of color, and individuals from other historically excluded communities

> *"If we encourage the sector to get overly specific in what is deemed necessary for a role, you can end up with requirements that are simply proxies of what you already have in the space. We'll find ourselves holding onto traditions, like years of experience and level of education, that don't always transfer to success in the role, and definitely do not aid in diversifying the field. We have to imagine the future of the workforce"*
>
> —**TAMARA OSIVWEMU,** MANAGING PARTNER, THE MANAGEMENT CENTER AND RACIAL EQUITY CONSULTANT

It can be tempting, when developing prerequisites for roles, to include requirements that will "narrow the pool," even if they are not clearly needed. However, these unnecessary requirements can serve as filters that have the effect of locking out many sufficiently qualified candidates. Job qualifications and requirements should only be included if they:

1. *Are necessary to succeed in the job.* Job requirements and qualifications that will systematically exclude individuals of color, individuals from low-income backgrounds, or other groups who have been traditionally excluded from the policy sector—such as educational degree requirements, previous experience in elite policy circles (for example, Capitol Hill)—should be especially closely scrutinized.

2. *Cannot be developed on the job, through intentional development.* Organizations should consider whether specific skill- and knowledge-based requirements can be intentionally developed in the role, rather than serve as a prerequisite and barrier. (See the section "Relevant, Professional Development" for more.)

For example, a requirement that a candidate possess pre-existing strong writing skills is a common prerequisite that can act as a de facto employment barrier to individuals from communities historically excluded from the policy sector. The nation's inequitable education system means that students of color and students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to be taught strong writing skills, as reflected in the scores for the reading and writing portion of the SAT and the writing portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). If being a strong writer is required to thrive in a role, the goal-oriented writing skills necessary to advance in the policy sector can be intentionally developed on the job with the

"When everyone submits their applications [to be part of our fellowship], there is a ranking system. A lot of organizations give high ranks to those with a college degree or who went to a certain university. We don't do this. What we do is ask, 'how have you served your community and are you on the cusp of transformational leadership?'"

—**CLARE BRESNAHAN ENGLISH**, NEW LEADERS COUNCIL

right professional development and support (for example, an individual writing tutor, consistent mentoring from colleagues, and a well-structured course of introduction to the standard formats of policy writing.) Furthermore, in today's policy environment, there are many jobs for which a strong writing ability is not required, and in fact is trumped by other skills, such as other communications skills, data analysis, or policy problem solving, and so strong writing skills should only be mentioned if actually necessary to thrive in the role.

Another example of a job qualification that can act as a de facto employment barrier for individuals from historically excluded communities is the requirement to have work experience in a similar role in the policy field, or in a specific governmental entity. While there are jobs for which this is likely a legitimate prerequisite, given the lack of diversity in the policy space, this requirement will continue to limit who is able to access jobs in the field and replicate the systemic exclusion of individuals from communities which are already excluded.

This recommendation should not be viewed as implying there are not highly qualified candidates with diverse backgrounds, including candidates of color, for all roles; or that individuals from directly impacted communities do not have the necessary skills to work in the policy sector. On the contrary, we believe there are many individuals from communities that have been historically and systemically denied opportunities who, despite the inequities they face, develop the skills required to fill these roles. This recommendation is just one of many ways policy sector organizations can proactively broaden their pool of candidates from diverse backgrounds.

"It is [almost] impossible to move laterally [into the policy sector]—you have to start at the bottom [as an unpaid intern]... And unpaid internships privilege just a select few types of people."

—**TRAVIS MOORE**, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TECHCONGRESS

Strategy 2. Intentionally develop some non-entry-level roles that do not require previous policy experience

One of the challenges in building a more diverse policy sector is how often individuals must "work their way up" within the sector to find their way to agenda-influencing jobs. Previous policy experience is often viewed as a necessary prerequisite to more senior positions; this is understandable in some cases, as such experience is helpful in ensuring individuals can hit the ground running, but also serves as yet another barrier to entry for individuals who have not already found a path into the policy space, but who may bring extensive lived experience and professional experience that would be of value to the policy sector.

Organizations can expand pathways into the sector and diversity within the sector by aiming to develop and scope at least some mid-level roles that are designed in a way that does not require previous policy experience, but instead allows for individuals to learn on the job while bringing other critical skills, knowledge, and experiences. This does not need to be the case for every single role in an organization; instead a portion of roles, a few critical roles, or intentional (paid) fellowships can be developed in this way, with alternative selection processes and additional onramps, training, and supports.

Strategy 3. Avoid inaccessible language and jargon in job descriptions—and make job listings easy to find and learn about

Job descriptions and any communications advertising them should be intentionally developed to be accessible—and compelling—to a broad range of individuals, not only those already in the policy sector. Job descriptions should be free of jargon that intimidates, obfuscates, or limits who will understand the work and the role, and scrubbed of words or phrases that are not likely to be understood without substantial pre-existing policy experience or academic background in policy language.

In addition to making job descriptions linguistically accessible, organizations can make sure they are actually accessible—that is, easy to learn about on platforms such as social media, easy

THE POLICY ACADEMIES

SPOTLIGHT

THE POLICY ACADEMIES: CHANGING WHO CONDUCTS POLICY RESEARCH

The Policy Academies' (TPA) mission is to train and cultivate a new and diverse generation of racial equity– and economic justice–focused researchers and policy leaders from historically exploited communities to shape policy solutions that serve their communities. TPA works to carve new career pathways and create opportunities for these emerging policy experts to become integral parts of policy leadership and discourse, and to shape powerful policy solutions that serve their communities.

TPA was founded and is run by Dr. Lynette Rawlings, a researcher who has held positions at the Urban Institute, The Brookings Institution, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. What is now TPA began as a pilot at The Urban Institute in 2007. Rawlings experienced first-hand the barriers young scholars of color faced in the policy research field and created a program to specifically help them succeed. Now an independent nonprofit, TPA runs several programs for diverse cohorts of undergraduate and graduate students that provide training, mentoring, networks, and exposure.

TPA's flagship program, the Academy for Public Policy Analysis and Research, selects rising seniors in college to become academy fellows, and provides them in-depth technical training, research mentoring, career exposure, and opportunities to publish and present at conferences. Another of TPA's career acceleration programs is its Alumni Research and Innovation Grants program, which awards grants to TPA alumni to develop targeted research and community action projects that address pressing needs in communities of color.

to discover when searching for employment, and easy to find from the organization's homepage. Widely publicized and open information sessions, in which potential applicants can learn more about an organization's mission and work, as well as roles at the organization, can help more applicants understand whether a specific role and organization are a good fit for them.

Strategy 4. Be transparent about salary in job postings

Job postings should include a clear statement about salary, or a salary range, for multiple reasons. First, doing so sets clear, transparent expectations, and allows a candidate to know immediately whether they can afford to take a listed position. Less-wealthy candidates simply may not be able to live securely on lower pay (see the section "Livable, Fair Pay"). Second, making salaries public reduces the likelihood of disparities in pay, which are partially created because men are more likely to engage in negotiations than women, white people are more likely to successfully negotiate their pay than people of color, and women and people of color are more likely to be lowballed by an employer. (Some organizations have banned salary negotiations as an equity measure.) Standardizing salary criteria based on years of work experience and depth and type of experience, or other measurable and relevant criteria, and ensuring these criteria are transparent, can also help overcome inequities and biases in the salary-setting and negotiating process.

Next100's survey of nineteen other think tanks (Appendix A) found that only eight of the sixteen think tanks with open positions listed any salary information for any policy roles; only six listed and salary information for all roles. Of those six, two posted only a salary minimum for multiple positions, rather than a range.

Strategy 5. Post openings publicly and fairly consider all applicants

Implicit in the above recommendations is that organizations should actually formally develop job descriptions and post roles publicly, with a fair, open process to fill them. Without those basic steps, it is impossible for those not already in the sector to access

> *"The intense over-reliance on connections when hiring all the people is a problem. No one gets paid to do outreach/collection in any meaningful way... There is this scarcity mindset in the larger progressive sector, that there is so much to do and so little time. We need to invest time and resources into inclusive and equitable hiring practices—that includes recruiting strong candidate pools."*
>
> —**TAMARA OSIVWEMU,** MANAGING PARTNER, THE MANAGEMENT CENTER AND RACIAL EQUITY CONSULTANT

roles—or even be aware of them. Too often, policy organizations and government agencies will have closed searches for job openings that only consider applicants from organizations' existing networks; or they will not post opportunites at all, and will simply hire based on word of mouth and networks. Instead, openings should be posted publicly with at least two weeks of time to submit applications. If applications will be considered during a short window of time with a specific end date, that should be included in the listing. A fair process should be used to evaluate all applications received. (More on this in the section "Inclusive Selection.")

Recommendation 3. Livable, Fair Pay: Pay fair, livable wages to all employees, and do not create financial barriers to being successful within your organization

If livable wages are not being paid by an organization, it will limit the organization's talent pool to those who are more financially secure—such as those with more significant family resources—further excluding more directly impacted individuals from the policy sector. But at a more basic level, if an organization's mission is oriented toward a fairer, more progressive society, paying its own staff livable wages and benefits, and dismantling other financial barriers to success are required—not optional.

The policy sector has been making progress in the area of internships through the move to paid internships, thanks to the work of organizations such as Pay Our Interns. But this progress often does not extend to the wages of junior-level positions in policy and politics, including in the U.S. Congress and state legislatures, where some aides are paid less than or just barely above a living wage for extremely demanding jobs.

Strategy 1. Provide a livable wage and benefits package that is as competitive as possible with other industries, including at the entry level

Pay and benefits that do not lock out people who lack family resources or who carry significant debt—for example, student loan debt—is a prerequisite to making positions available to individuals from low-income backgrounds, who are disproportionately people of color and are more likely to have lived experience with the impacts of public policy. According to Zip Recruiter's internal data, entry-level policy analyst jobs in Washington, D.C. pay an average of about $43,000 a year, just a bit over the living wage of about $40,000 for a single person with no children, and junior-level policy jobs, such as those in Congress, pay even less. And even though the movement to ensure policy internships are paid has gained some victories, unpaid or low-paid internships are still offered by some policy organizations and government agencies and offices, limiting who can afford to take these entry-level positions that serve as gateways into policy careers. We have also seen examples of organizations developing junior-level, time-limited positions dubbed fellowships or similar, which are technically paid but lack necessary benefits.

Strategy 2. Do not require employees to pre-pay for work and travel expenses

While it may feel most efficient for the organization, asking employees to cover work-related expenses (such as purchasing needed items or paying for travel) upfront with the expectation that they can afford to pay out of pocket and be reimbursed later assumes doing so is viable for all employees. In reality, it might not be, depending on an individual's resources and other financial obligations. This practice can create inappropriate financial stress for some staff, especially lower-paid staff. The onus should not be on employees to request that the organization pre-pay for necessary expenses; it should be a standard practice.

> *"The intense over-reliance on connections when hiring all the people is a problem. No one gets paid to do outreach/collection in any meaningful way... There is this scarcity mindset in the larger progressive sector, that there is so much to do and so little time. We need to invest time and resources into inclusive and equitable hiring practices—that includes recruiting strong candidate pools."*
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> —**TAMARA OSIVWEMU,** MANAGING PARTNER, THE MANAGEMENT CENTER AND RACIAL EQUITY CONSULTANT

A NOTE ON PHILANTHROPY

There is no denying that embracing the talent practice recommendations in this toolkit will require an investment of an organization's time, energy… and funding. From raising salaries to investing in outreach to providing professional development, these much-needed shifts cost money.

If we are to believe the old adage that a budget is a reflection of values, organizations can see this as an opportunity to interrogate internal budget priorities and reflect on whether their budget choices live up to the equitable values and promise of inclusive opportunity that drive their mission.

But this challenge also raises a larger question for nongovernmental policy organizations that goes beyond these organizations to their funders. Since most revenue for these organizations comes from individual and institutional fundraising, funders' willingness—or lack thereof—to provide adequate funds for these investments can be a part of the challenge. Furthermore, most policy funders do not tend to budget for leadership development and training as a part of their giving.

Most policy funders do not tend to budget for many of these practices—from investments to outreach, to leadership development and training—as part of their giving. Moreover, there are other ways in which philanthropy, intentionally or unintentionally, makes it more difficult to implement some of the changes recommended in this toolkit. For example, when funding policy organizations, philanthropy tends to incentivize and replicate the exclusionary tendencies that exist in the policy sector, valuing the same experiences and backgrounds such as academic credentials, policy and government experience, and so on, in addition to being more likely to fund individuals with whom they have pre-existing relationships, or who already sit within their networks. These realities mean the incentives often placed on policy organizations by their funders are to replicate, not shift, the status quo of who does policy work.

And yet many funders are increasingly—and in our view, appropriately—asking grantees to improve demographic diversity within their boards, leadership, and staff, even if they are not yet fully focused on diversity of experience and background. We believe this creates an opportunity to make the connection between many of the recommendations in this toolkit that cost money—from increasing salaries, to improving outreach for new roles, to on-the-job professional development—and the historical exclusion of individuals from underserved communities in the policy sector. Funders can and should ask organizations about the story behind their demographic data—and encourage open conversation about how recruiting, hiring, retention, and promotion strategies are helping attract and retain talent; and where they are not, what is getting in the way from a resources perspective. It's essential that philanthropy support organizations to try new approaches to increase their diversity. In turn, nongovernmental policy organizations must collectively make the case—both through our internal budgetary decisions and to funders—that the additional resources needed to make these jobs accessible for all are worth prioritization and increased investment by philanthropy.

Recommendation 4. Proactive Recruitment: Recruit a broad and diverse applicant pool that includes individuals from impacted communities

In the policy sector, hiring too often occurs solely through networks. This may stem both from the fact that hiring someone who did good work in a familiar context with a friend or former colleague can seem less risky than hiring someone outside of one's network; and that the sector historically underinvests in human resources functions, such as recruitment, selection, and professional development, that can help hiring managers identify new candidates and make informed decisions. But in practice, because people's networks tend to mirror their own demographic

TECHCONGRESS
21ST CENTURY GOVERNMENT

SPOTLIGHT

TECHCONGRESS: INTENTIONALLY INCREASING APPLICANT DIVERSITY AND TRANSPARENCY

TechCongress recruits fellows with technology backgrounds and then places them in one-year roles in Capitol Hill offices, with the goal that these fellows stay on and have longer-term policy careers, in order to ensure federal policy—especially, but not only technology policy—is better informed by technology expertise.

Because the tech sector is disproportionately white and male, TechCongress has made a conscious effort to increase the diversity of its fellows through intentional recruitment and hiring strategies that rely on the collection and use of demographic data. TechCongress intentionally includes organizations representing underrepresented communities in its outreach, uses the "Rooney Rule" (see more on this in Proactive Recruitment), and offers a diversity referral bonus.

In addition, TechCongress has made a commitment to transparency around the demographic data of their applicants and fellows, publishing the demographic information of all applicants to the program as well as all of those awarded fellowships. The demographic information for its 2016–21 fellowship classes is as follows: the gender breakdown is 36 percent female, 58 percent male, and 5 percent nonbinary; the racial breakdown is 57 percent non-Latinx white, 15 percent African American, 13 percent Asian, 9 percent Latinx, 4 percent Middle Eastern, North African, or Southwest Asian, and 2 percent Pacific Islander. TechCongress's 2022 fellowship cohort is even more diverse, with 50 percent of fellows identifying as people of color. These numbers are significantly more diverse than the overall tech sector, which is 68.5 percent non-Latinx white, 14 percent Asian, 8 percent Latinx, and 7 percent Black, according to a 2014 government report (with almost no meaningful racial demographic change since). Organizations that are serious about their commitment to creating a more diverse organization understand that regardless of current demographic breakdown, the only way to create accountability around achieving a more diverse organization is to be transparent about demographic data to benchmark progress.

backgrounds and academic and professional experiences, this ends up having an exclusionary impact: the disproportionately white, elite policy sector ends up recruiting and hiring from its networks, which just replicate the existing sector. In addition, these practices increase the importance of entering the policy sector at a junior level—in roles that are often underpaid and inaccessible—in order to benefit from these connections and recommendations. For this reason, recruiting beyond existing networks is key to increasing the diversity of an applicant pool and, in turn, diversity on an organization's staff.

The fact that investing in recruitment enhances the quality of talent is more broadly understood in the private sector. According to one study, private firms in the United States spend on average over $4,000 in recruiting per hire; organizations like consulting, finance, and tech firms notoriously invest heavily in recruiting on university campuses.

While we only have anecdotal evidence for the policy sector, that evidence indicates that government agencies and public policy organizations often do little recruitment beyond posting a job on an official website, of which many individuals not already in the sector will be unaware; and potentially share the listing on LinkedIn, public-service oriented websites, or possibly with direct networks. But anecdotally, it is rare for policy organizations to invest substantial time and energy in outreach and recruitment. In our conversations with a variety of public policy organizations, we did not come across a public policy organization with a dedicated recruitment team or even individual.

SPOTLIGHT

THE CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES STATE POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM: FOCUSED RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE FOR NEW LEADERS WITH PROXIMITY TO LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES, COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' State Policy Fellowship program is a two-year, research-oriented fellowship focused on making change through research, advocacy, and partnerships in a state policy context. Fellows tackle domestic policy challenges in areas such as health care, taxes, anti-poverty policy, education, and criminal justice. Working in independent policy organizations located across the country, fellows analyze the impact of state budget and tax policy choices on low-income residents and promote positive reforms.

The program identifies candidates—with particular attention to candidates who have experience working with communities that are underrepresented in public policy debates—who have a demonstrated interest in working on public policies that affect low-income communities, communities of color, and tribal communities. Fellows spend two years with an influential state-based policy organization or the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Fellows research and write analyses on current policy issues; brief policymakers, journalists, and civic leaders; and engage with advocates and community groups.

"The goal of the [fellowship] program is to create a diverse pipeline for people who are underrepresented in policy development, to make sure there is diversity of race, life experience, and so on. We are trying to be thoughtful about how we bring folks into this program. We have dropped the graduate degree requirement. We have baked in leadership development. We want folks to be successful within the organization and to become leaders within the progressive policy space."

—**BRANDON MCKOY**, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES

Strategy 1. Invest time and resources in outreach and recruitment efforts to identify new candidates

If time and resources are not dedicated to outreach and recruitment, organizations are likely to continue the cycle of simply hiring those already in their networks. Hiring managers should be provided the time to conduct outreach to individuals and organizations that may recommend candidates from diverse backgrounds. Getting outside of their pre-existing networks will bring in additional candidates who are less connected to the policy space, but who bring lived experience and proximity to impacted communities, and potential for policy impact. A robust plan for recruiting and hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds should be viewed as a defined, intentional part of an individual's job when they are the hiring manager for an open role, not simply an add-on to everything else. In addition to giving individuals time to conduct outreach, organizations can invest in recruitment through expanding their human resources or talent function, hiring an individual to work on developing relationships and trust with organizations and individuals who can recommend candidates who will bring diversity, proximity and lived experience.

Strategy 2. Conduct proactive outreach to organizations beyond the policy sector that work with impacted communities, and use creative outreach strategies

Prior to launching a search, hiring managers and organizations should develop a list of outreach targets who may have ideas of strong candidates who bring lived experience, proximity to impacted communities, and diversity—but who may not already be in the policy space. Conducting intentional outreach to new organizations, institutions, and communities, with adequate time for engagement, can help cultivate a broader and more diverse pool. These organizations could include those who work with historically excluded groups (for example, Historically Black Colleges and Universities) as well as those that work with impacted communities (for example, grassroots and community-based organizations in communities impacted by/connected to the focus area of the position). Over time, building trust and relationships with these groups not only during hiring processes but also as part of an organization's core policy work will increase the diversity of an organization's pipeline for new roles. This can be helpful in terms of building the pipeline of candidates from new geographies as well—for example, developing pools that include more applicants who are not based on the coasts. Whether at the individual or organizational level, a component of this effort is building relationships and trust with organizations and individuals from diverse backgrounds, to ensure they understand the hiring organization's vision, mission, priorities, and culture, and are comfortable recommending candidates for an organization's roles.

In addition to traditional outreach through word of mouth, emails, and job boards, organizations can use social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and other strategies that might reach a broad pool of applicants who are not already in the policy sector.

To recruit applicants for its second cohort of full-time fellows, the Gainesville, Florida-based economic justice organization Community Spring asked service providers (including shelters for people experiencing homelessness), advocacy partners, and previous fellows to spread the word about the position. They also recruited community members who had participated in or been connected with the campaigns that came out of their first cohort of fellows. Because they were recruiting for people who might not check websites such as idealist.org for job listings, they also paid for a Facebook advertisement to bring in some applicants. All applicants had to be directly impacted by poverty to be eligible for the fellowship, and, suggesting that these efforts paid off, the applicant pool exhibited significant diversity in terms of their highest education level attained (the only statistic collected for all applicants). Out of thirty-one total applicants, the majority reported their highest level of education was completing high school.

Strategy 3. Collect and act on real-time applicant demographic data

Above, we have recommended that organizations collect and share data on the demographic diversity of their existing staff. In addition, to ensure diversity in applicant pools, organizations can collect demographic data from applicants as a part of the application process, on a voluntary basis, to understand the demographics of the pool, and adjust outreach strategies as needed. Collected data, while optional, can include gender and/or pronouns, race/ethnicity, disability status, LGBTQ+ self-identification and geography. This data can be used to adjust recruitment strategies, conduct additional targeted outreach, and leave the hiring process open for additional recruitment time if groups are underrepresented in an applicant pool. In addition, this applicant data should be regularly reviewed at the organizational level to ensure that an organization's searches, collectively and individually, are resulting in a diverse pool of applicants; and if not, the organization should invest additional resources in recruitment efforts.

Next100 Insight: Proactive Outreach

When Next100 launched its first recruitment drive, we were a new, unknown organization with a full-time staff of one executive director and two fantastic (paid) interns. But by conducting intentional outreach to groups and networks, making it clear in our messaging that we were actively seeking applicants from and connected to impacted communities, and decreasing the barriers to entry for applicants not already in the policy space, we were able to attract over 700 applicants. Of that applicant pool, 52 percent self-identified their race, with 78 percent of those identifying as a person of color; 59 percent of applicants were women, 38 percent were men, and 3 percent were nonbinary.

"My background [as a formerly Undocumented individual] is usually a barrier, but Next100 embraced it and they celebrated it, and they make sure that I have the tools, the support, the resources that I need to create change."

—**DIANA MARTINEZ QUINTANA**, NEXT100 POLICY ENTREPRENEUR

SPOTLIGHT

CENTER for NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH
aspen institute

CREATING AN ECOSYSTEM OF ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP NATIVE YOUTH LEADER

A network of organizations have programs that seek to develop the political and policy skills and experiences of Native youth, including The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), The National Indian Health Board, The Native American Political Leadership Program at The George Washington University, and The Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute. We spoke to CNAY's executive director, Nikki Pitre, while developing this toolkit.

CNAY shared several steps they take to be inclusive in their recruitment, hiring, and talent development. They reported taking a comprehensive look at job applicants' qualifications, recognizing that many Native youth may have lacked economic and educational opportunities, but bring indigenous knowledge and lived experience, which CNAY values as equal to formal educational credentials. Nikki also reported that several staff members do not have college degrees and successfully manage people and lead initiatives, and their recruitment and hiring is no accident. CNAY gives applicants different ways to make a positive impression during the interview process, asking holistic questions to get at people's abilities, values, and why they're driven to do the work. CNAY also invites diverse perspectives to participate in some interviews, including members of their youth advisory board.

In order to allow those with less formal education or policy experience to thrive, CNAY recommended that employers offer substantial flexible professional development opportunities, in part to set employees up for success in their careers in organizations that might view hiring people without formal credentials as inherently risky. These opportunities must include the management of significant initiatives, as well as people, to help employees build a track record of professional success.

Applicants applied from forty-two states and the District of Columbia, as well as eight countries outside of the United States. In our case, we dedicated roughly seven weeks to actively promoting these positions through intentional and dedicated outreach, as well as job listings, social media advertising, and other less-traditional outreach strategies.

Recommendation 5. Inclusive Selection: Develop a selection process that minimizes bias and values lived experience, proximity, and potential

Without an intentional effort to revisit and revise hiring and selection processes, existing processes often favor individuals who closely reflect those already in the roles—which in turn makes it harder for those who are members of groups historically underrepresented in the sector to get their foot in the door. Selection processes and criteria should be intentionally developed to overcome these tendencies, creating fair opportunities for people from historically underrepresented groups, people with lived experience, and people who are not already in the sector but show potential to thrive in the position given adequate support.

Hiring processes that are informal, or are formal but not intentionally constructed to both minimize bias and create a level playing field for all candidates, will continue to replicate inequities instead of giving all candidates a chance to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and potential.

Strategy 1. Explicitly value lived experience and proximity to impacted communities as a form of expertise

SUPPORT IMMIGRANT APPLICANTS AND EMPLOYEES

Due to the lack of a clear and quick path to citizenship, many immigrants rely on a patchwork of temporary policy solutions—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and so on—to live and work in the United States. In addition, the aggressive actions of certain law enforcement agencies in recent years may have had a chilling effect on both employers and employees that could make them uneasy about having immigrants directly engage in, let alone lead, policy work; this is on top of traditional biases against immigrants. However, for public policy organizations interested in ensuring that their staff reflect impacted communities, immigrant representation is critical. In addition to the other recommendations in this toolkit, there are several tailored steps organizations can take to support immigrant applicants and employees:

1. Identify and challenge biases about immigrants in the hiring process—and make sure immigrants are not implicitly disadvantaged. As noted in Inclusive Selection, it's critical to proactively identify and address potential biases in the hiring process. Immigrant applicants may face some specific biases due to an accent, lack of mastery of academic or policy language, or foreign educational credential (if from an institution outside of the United States).

2. Be sensitive to an applicant or employee's immigration status. There can be real safety implications for individuals and their families regarding their immigration status. Individuals will have different levels of comfort with being public about their immigration status, so be conscious and sensitive. Never "out" someone or speak about someone's immigration status with others unless it has been made explicitly clear that they consent to this information being shared.

3. Create workplace policies that protect immigrants. Establish, communicate, and implement workplace policies to protect employee rights should immigration enforcement visit the workplace or request employee information from managers. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest has additional resources and sample policies. Host know-your-rights trainings during work hours so all employees are trained on their rights if they interact with law or immigration enforcement.

4. Provide additional flexibility and support for people who face barriers or restrictions because of their immigration status. There are a number of situations that may arise for immigrant employees through which organizations should be prepared to support them, such as:

- navigating an inability to travel safely with certain immigration statuses (for example, by plane, within 100 miles of a border, to certain geographies), which requires conscientiousness about what travel is required of employees and where organizational events are located; and

- identifying and paying or helping pay for a lawyer to help with immigration matters, such as DACA renewals or applications for citizenship

5. Be prepared to support employees facing the expiration of work permits and authorizations, including TPS or DACA. TPS recipients, DACA recipients, and any employee with a temporary work permit face an uncertain future, but there are concrete things organizations can do to support such employees. Providing financial assistance for the renewal request processes can help remove one barrier for employees. Employers can also explore existing avenues to sponsor the employee for lawful immigration status, whether on a temporary (for example, via the H-1B program) or long-term basis (employment-based petition for lawful permanent residence). If an employee is unable to renew their work permit and is forced to leave the workplace, consider arranging an offboarding program that includes a healthy severance package or other lawful assistance, such as the payout of accrued sick leave and vacation leave balances, which can provide an important safety net to individuals who have a lapse in work authorization. Also, employers should affirm that employees forced to leave work temporarily due to a lapse in their work authorization won't be punished or disadvantaged from a career standpoint, should they regain work authorization and return. For TPS recipients, employers should recognize that the employee might be able to legally work past the expiration date on their work permit if there is a TPS extension for their country. The employer can access updated information on the TPS page of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website for any updated deadlines and dates of possible re-extension.

6. Consider additional ways to engage immigrants in the work. Consider whether the organization can proactively offer to contract with immigrants and immigrant-owned businesses, or create fellowships and/or internships with stipends for immigrant students (which should still pay a living wage, consistent with the principles in Livable, Fair Pay).

Some of these suggestions come via ImmSchools, an organization that works to make schools and their communities fully supportive of undocumented students and mixed-status families. With a staff comprised of immigrants and people who work and live in immigrant communities, ImmSchools takes steps to be welcoming to immigrant applicants and employees. Additional information on how to navigate payment to people of different citizenship statuses can be found in a guide to which ImmSchools contributed, as well as resources from the New York State Youth Leadership Council and Immigrants Rising, which we encourage readers to review in full. You can find a comprehensive guide to supporting DACA team members at FWD.US.

a particular set of experiences and qualifications: academic pedigree, policy sector and government experience, and connection to an existing power network. But there has been little value placed in any systematic way on proximity to the policies being worked on, or an effort to treat that proximity—experience with the issues at hand, experience working and living with the communities facing those issues—as a form of critical expertise in policy work. The lack of value placed on this expertise and the insight it can provide must be changed across the sector, but this can only be done intentionally. Organizations can proactively note that lived experience and proximity will be valued in job postings, and can include opportunities in the hiring process for individuals to share how they and their communities have been impacted by the policy challenges the role would work on, as well as how this experience has shaped their thinking about both the challenges at hand and potential solutions. Such questions can be included as part of an initial application or at the interview stage.

Strategy 2. Develop an accessible application that is not overly burdensome, but allows applicants to provide information beyond a resume

Like a job description, a job application should be written in accessible language and free of jargon. The application itself should not be overly burdensome or require too much time from applicants, which can be challenging for applicants of any background who have significant professional or other responsibilities. At the same time, it should be more comprehensive than simply a resume drop, as resumes limit what an applicant is able to share, and thus what a hiring manager can know. Ideally, an application process should allow all applicants, including those from underrepresented backgrounds, an opportunity to make their case and explain their connection to the work by, for example, responding to a small number of targeted short answer questions, and thus presenting the chance for a slightly more holistic review of each candidate at the start. The application should be rigorous and meaningful enough to help select candidates that will make it to the interview and performance task stages of the application process; all of the evaluation of candidates does not need to happen up front.

Strategy 3. Mitigate bias as much as possible upfront through training and an anti-bias cheat sheet

Research and practices in other sectors show that there are effective ways to limit bias while still attracting strong candidates, but they require acknowledging and attempting to mitigate bias through training and consistent systems and processes. Each individual involved in any hiring process should be made aware of common hiring biases and practices and given an opportunity to overcome or mitigate them in a simple, accessible way. This should ideally be done through training about common hiring biases, provided to anyone engaged in hiring; if that is not possible, participants should still be provided with a brief, accessible "cheat sheet" about common biases. All members of a hiring committee—including but not limited to the final decisionmaker—should receive this training and/or cheat sheet prior to their participation. A cheat sheet does not need to be long—Next100 crafted its own that is on the shorter end, at about half a page—and there are examples online that provide more detail that may be helpful.

Strategy 4. Ensure a diverse set of individuals are involved in and have meaningful input at each stage of the hiring process

To minimize bias and ensure multiple perspectives are taken into account in the hiring process, participation in selection for all roles should include a diverse group of individuals—in terms of demographic background, seniority, and functional responsibility. These individuals should have meaningful input at each stage of the process, from application review to interviews. This will ensure diverse perspectives are informing decisions, and help check biases throughout the process. These multiple perspectives can and should be cultivated and taken into account even when there is a single final decision maker who ultimately chooses the new hire.

Strategy 5. Strengthen consistency (and effictveness) in hiring practices and decisions, and minimize bias, through developing and utilizing common tools and rubrics for each stage of the process

Ad hoc or informal hiring processes can feel more efficient, but can result in inequitable processes that tend to advantage those candidates who appear most similar to those in the organization, thus replicating existing inequities. Hiring managers or committees, working with Human Resources, should develop a

SUPPORT APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

Over 60 million American adults have a disability, and increasing representation of people with disabilities in policy organizations is a necessary step in creating an inclusive organization that fully reflects the communities most impacted by public policy—the same communities that have been historically excluded from the policymaking table. Furthermore, fully including employees with disabilities may also bring additional advantages to organizations. The provision of reasonable accommodations in the workplace is required by law from employers, but building a diverse, inclusive, and accessible workplace requires being proactive about recruiting potential employees with disabilities, and allowing applicants to easily access needed supports from the moment they apply.

In addition to the other recommendations around recruitment and hiring in this toolkit that are relevant to individuals with disabilities and other historically excluded groups, there are several specific steps organizations can take to support applicants with disabilities::

1. Ensure that the organization is in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and standards concerning accommodations for people with disabilities in your recruitment and hiring processes. Other resources on how to provide accommodations for employees with disabilities exist and are relevant for applicants as well, and we encourage readers to review these or other guides in full. One critical step is to ask what accommodations may be needed to allow an applicant to engage fully in an interview, when inviting applicants in for an interview.

2. Identify and challenge biases about people with disabilities in the hiring process and more broadly, and make sure people with disabilities are not implicitly disadvantaged. As noted in Inclusive Selection, it's critical to proactively identify and address potential biases in the hiring process. This is especially true when it comes to people with disabilities, as many biases continue and a limited understanding of accommodations persists. Organizations can provide a required training—particularly for managers and anyone else involved with hiring processes, but ideally for all staff—that covers the accommodations and tools available for people with disabilities, and that seeks to promote understanding and reduce stigma regarding disabled employees as a first step toward more inclusive practices.

3. Conduct outreach to and through organizations that specifically are led by and support people with disabilities, and strategically post open jobs where they are more likely to be seen by people with disabilities. Organizations should work to build connections and trust with policy, advocacy, and direct service organizations that work with and are run by people with disabilities throughout their broader work. They will be a critical input in strengthening policy work generally, and can be good partners to help identify potential candidates for job openings. Finally, ensuring vacancy announcements are publicized in a wide range of places is critical for so many impacted communities, including disabled individuals.

4. Include employees who are disabled at each stage of the hiring process, if they are interested. Doing so will send a clear signal to applicants about the value placed on these individuals internally, as well as ensure that their perspective is a part of the selection process. As with encouraging anyone who brings a particular perspective or identity to a task, it is vital that your actions do not make participants feel tokenized, and that participants are not asked to speak on behalf of their whole communities. Employees should be given time to participate in these activities, and relieved of other duties and/or compensated for additional time they may spend.

Articles at *Harvard Business Review*, the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion, and SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management) offer some additional details on these recommendations.

hiring rubric that matches up with the job description, and creates common questions, standards, language, and expectations for each stage of the hiring process, which can mitigate bias and result in fairer processes. The Management Center has a helpful Hiring Rubric Starter Kit that can help hiring managers determine what is most critical in a candidate, as well as an Interview Question Toolkit for developing questions directly relevant to the position. In addition, a standardized set of interview questions can help limit interviewer biases in the section process, and ensure the gathering of common information that can help consistently evaluate candidates across multiple dimensions.

Strategy 6. Utilize performance tasks to evaluate ability/potential to do the job

Many selection processes continue to depend solely on resume reviews and traditional interviews, each of which can supply critical information. In addition, including a performance task as part of the process, which requires candidates to demonstrate how they would actually perform an aspect of the job—with a common rubric for evaluating responses—can help evaluate, while minimizing bias, whether someone will be able to do a job. Performance tasks should be of a reasonable length to protect candidates' time, and can be limited to finalists for a position if time is a more significant concern.

Developing a performance task can be simple: identify a common task that the position will need to do, write out a clear assignment to do that task that can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time (in most cases, no more than two to three hours), and identify the key components of a successful task to develop an evaluation rubric. For example, if the position involves writing memos that include policy recommendations, pick a relevant issue that has been in the news and ask finalists to write a one-page memo on the issue that includes a policy recommendation. Ensure instructions are clear about expectations and jargon-free—this should not be a guessing game for candidates, just as doing their job well would not be. (The Management Center offers a Job Simulation Exercises toolkit to help stimulate ideas for other performance tasks.)

Strategy 7. Implement a variation of the Rooney or Mansfield Rules to ensure diversity in the pool

The Rooney Rule and the Mansfield Rule are efforts from other sectors to ensure that a hiring process truly values diversity from start to finish. The Rooney Rule originated in the National Football League in 2003 as an effort to diversify the coaching ranks. It requires that candidates of color be interviewed for head coaching and other coaching leadership positions. The Mansfield Rule originated in the legal field, and requires that law firms "have affirmatively considered at least 30 percent women, lawyers of color, LGBTQ+ lawyers, and lawyers with disabilities for leadership and governance roles, equity partner promotions, formal client pitch opportunities, and senior lateral positions."

There has been criticism recently about the effectiveness of the Rooney Rule—largely, whether it has been implemented with fidelity or done enough to increase diversity. We agree with critics who say the Rooney Rule alone is not enough. However, while neither of these rules are enough on their own, they are helpful in setting a clear benchmark for considering a diverse pool of candidates throughout the hiring process. Ensuring that interview and finalist pools include people of color, women or nonbinary individuals, LGBTQ+ people, and people with lived experience are all valuable goals to set before hiring begins.

Recommendation 6. Relevant Professional Development: Develop new skills and knowledge in employees as part of your organization's core work

"Osborne is implementing a 'Race Equity Blueprint' that includes developing leadership pathways within the organization so folks who join us in direct service, entry-level positions have real opportunities and are supported to grow into management positions or the executive team. This includes people who may not have educational credentials traditionally associated with many management roles. As part of this effort, we offer training for staff who are interested in learning about how Osborne develops, operates, and funds its programs, including program management, program evaluation, how to respond to an RFP, and budgeting. Training is offered during the workday, and people are given leave from their other duties so they can participate. Our HR team organizes the program and taps experts within the organization to facilitate each session."

—**ALLISON HOLLIHAN,** THE OSBORNE ASSOCIATION

FIGURE 4

Next100 Trainings

TEAM + CULTURE	PERSONAL MISSION/WORK AT NEXT100	RESEARCH SKILLS	POLICY SKILLS	COMMS + ADVOCACY SKILLS	GETTING STUFF DONE SKILLS	ADMIN
Welcome session + our 1st few weeks of work	Breaking down the framework	Consuming research	Reading + interpreting policy	Telling your story	Feedback	Editorial + production process training
Identity, leadership, + values	Developing your mission	Qualitative research	Analyzing policy	Writing for change	Project management	Organizational performance management
Working across lines of difference	Building knowledge + learning sprint prep	Quantitative research parts I & II	Developing policy	Advocacy pts. I & II	Building & managing relationships	
Personal working styles	Developing your plan for impact	Developing policy + research w. impacted communities	Policy memo-writing	Social media	Intro to fundraising	
			Congress 101	Media training	Intro to Excel	
			Crash course on executive actions	Creative workproduct ideas (ongoing)		

Expanding pathways into the policy sector will require investing in training and supporting employees from less typical policy backgrounds—but who bring diversity and relevant experiences, knowledge and skills—to be effective at policy work. This will require policy organizations to engage in more intentional investment in skill- and knowledge-building in these employees. Just as progressive policy experts in the workforce development field often argue that private-sector employers have a responsibility to invest in training their employees rather than putting the cost on the education system and the public sector, the policy sector should do the same.

While far from uniformly true across the private sector, in some cases, private sector organizations are ahead of policy organizations in terms of training and skills development for their employees. In 2020, private companies surveyed by *Training Magazine* invested an average of over $1,000 and 55 hours per employee in training. Yet, too often, government offices and policy organizations invest very little time and money in training their employees. While there are few evaluations of training for many of the white-collar skills that policy jobs require, there is a robust evidence base behind high-quality training programs improving employment outcomes (a strong proxy for on-the-job performance), including for advanced skills in fields such as information technology.

It is critical to recognize that there are many individuals from directly impacted communities who have already attained the skills and knowledge required to be successful in policy roles. This includes those who have the traditional markers and experiences that policy sector organizations have tended to value and prioritize, such as academic credentials. But beyond this initial group, there are many more qualified individuals who are too often overlooked by the policy sector because of a misguided search for singular, but often unessential, pre-existing credentials and experiences. This effort to develop new skills and knowledge in employees should be viewed as one of many strategies organizations can pursue in an effort to create equitable access to these job opportunities, alongside other steps recommended in this toolkit, including proactive outreach to new communities beyond pre-existing (and insular) networks to find individuals who are already prepared.

Strategy 1. Identify and articulate the skills and knowledge needed for staff at various stages/in various roles, and provide professional development to build those skills

If the critical skills and knowledge necessary for roles have not been articulated, it is challenging to identify who has them, or how to develop them in people. Organizations should identify the skills and knowledge needed to succeed for all roles across

> *"We are intentional about professional development opportunities for staff, and believe it reflects living our values. As Indigenous people, we know the best form of professional development is in our communities, and having access to culture. Additionally, if staff desire to take classes to support growth, we provide opportunities for them to do so, and pay for it."*
>
> —**NIKKI PITRE**, CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

the organization as well as for specific roles, and consider which of those skills and knowledge can be developed with intentional training. (This exercise will also help ensure that an organization develops job scopes and job descriptions that do not systematically limit who is qualified, by ensuring candidates are not being required to already possess skills they could develop on the job.)

Organizations can then develop internal training opportunities for staff to learn these skills, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of their own staff who already possess the skills; and identify external opportunities and partners for skills that cannot be developed internally. (Note: Developing and delivering thoughtful, high-quality training takes time and effort. If internal staff are taking on developing and delivering training, they should be given time and support to do this work as a core responsibility, not just have it layered on top of the rest of their job.)

Next100 insight: Intentional Professional Development Program

At Next100, we begin our time with our policy entrepreneurs with a "boot camp" of trainings on the skills we have identified as critical. We have training sequences that cover qualitative and quantitative research, interpreting, analyzing, and developing policy, and communications and advocacy skills. We also provide a variety of trainings around "getting stuff done" (for example, project management, building and maintaining relationships) and building an inclusive team culture. These trainings are delivered by a mix of internal staff and external partners. Below is a high-level outline of the trainings we offer to our policy entrepreneurs during this "boot camp" and over the course of their time with us. We also financially support policy entrepreneurs who identify external trainings that could support them in their work, where the connections to their work and growth are clear. In Appendix B, there is additional information on our full program, including our changemaking framework and our "Learning Sprint," a structured and sequenced set of questions to build knowledge and capacity to drive change in an issue area.

Strategy 2. Support and encourage staff to identify additional external professional development opportunities that will strengthen their effectiveness (and pay for those opportunities)

Subsidizing additional external training opportunities can grant employees of all levels the opportunity to grow and enhance their policy impact and effectiveness, particularly in areas in which an organization is unable to provide its own training. Organizations can create a small budget for self-identified professional development, and allow employees to identify and propose external trainings they would like to attend. Employees should be able to identify the skills and knowledge they will develop through additional external trainings, and how those trainings, and the skills and knowledge gained, will contribute to their growth and effectiveness.

Strategy 3. Learn from new hires, and empower them to share their knowledge

Hiring individuals who come from beyond the traditional policy sector, but who bring lived experience, proximity to impacted communities, and different professional experiences and skills to the work can help an organization be more effective at developing, researching, influencing, and implementing policy. This impact will be enhanced if these individuals understand that their different skills and experiences are valued and are empowered to share their experiences and learnings without being tokenized.

> *"Maintaining a diverse staff is about development. We want to create an environment where it is second nature for managers to coach and mentor their staff. We also need to create opportunities. And for people who are drawing on their lived experiences as they do policy work, we need to provide tools and support they need to translate their experience into policy analysis."*
>
> —**MELISSA M. RICKS**, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES

COMMUNITY SPRING: DEEP SUPPORT FOR THE DIRECTLY IMPACTED TO CARRY OUT COLLECTIVELY IDENTIFIED POLICY PROJECTS

SPOTLIGHT

Gainesville, Florida's Community Spring brings in local, directly impacted residents for nine-month fellowships. Fellows are paid a fair wage to learn policy, advocacy, and other changemaking skills, and to work together on a policy and advocacy project. The organization is currently hosting its second cohort, which has decided to organize around access to affordable housing; the first cohort focused on a campaign for a city-wide Ban the Box ordinance and several community initiatives at the height of the pandemic. Two alumni are also managing a guaranteed income pilot for formerly incarcerated individuals that came out of their time at Community Spring.

Community Spring seeks to be a democratic, inclusive organization. In addition to their fellows choosing where to focus their work, they offer paid training in areas that fellows identify. The organization's leadership team, who come from more traditional policy backgrounds in Washington, D.C., work to meet their fellows where they are in multiple ways. Realizing that discussing housing security was personally difficult for many of them, the organization set aside time on a monthly basis for a licensed counselor to facilitate group sessions about the emotional impact of their work. When their fellows need additional support or resources to succeed in the program, the leadership team works to provide it. For example, when multiple fellows were having trouble with transportation, they were able to solicit a donation of bicycles for fellows.

As new staff join, organizations can take the time to understand the experiences, knowledge and skills they are bringing with them, and consider whether training other employees on those knowledge and skills could be beneficial. (Note: As with above, if internal staff are taking this on, they should be given time and support to do this work as a core responsibility, not just have it layered on top of their pre-existing responsibilities.)

> *"I have been surprised by the autonomy [at Next100]; you want to do that, go! As long as you can say why it's important, how it will have impact, and have a plan about that, go. Each month I can push the boundaries a little bit more."*
>
> —**LEVI BOHANAN**, NEXT100 ALUMNI POLICY ENTREPRENEUR

Recommendation 7. Empowered, Supported Employees: Empower and support individuals on staff who bring diversity in identities, backgrounds, and experiences

As research on diversity shows, building and empowering a diverse team can help organizations be more effective. For the policy sector, bringing in individuals whose racial, ethnic, gender, and other identities and backgrounds improve organizational diversity and who are from impacted communities will make our work stronger and more responsive. But these strengths will be lost if these individuals are not included, respected, empowered, and supported within the organization to influence the direction of their work and that of the organization. To meet this challenge, organizations can create opportunities that do not follow the typical hierarchical agenda-setting that pervades the policy sector.

Like many other organizations, government offices and agencies, as well as nonprofit policy organizations, often function quite hierarchically from a strategy and substance perspective. Junior and mid-level employees often have limited influence

> *"To build fellows' networks, we do site visits to local organizations, and we bring in an external speaker once a week to talk to fellows about what they're doing around a particular issue. When we write a thank-you note to that speaker afterwards, all fellows are copied on that email with permission of the guest. Often they have side dialogues. We make every effort to make the connection but not then be the face of the work. When we go to testify at city/committee meetings, maybe [our senior staff] will say something but then fellows take the lead. It's the same with the press. Media consistently want to talk to me, but I am not the person who should be speaking on these issues. I'm constantly redirecting to our fellows."*
>
> —**LINDSAY KALLMAN,** COMMUNITY SPRING

on the direction of their own or their organization's work. By the time junior employees rise through the ranks, they have often internalized many of the same assumptions, limitations, and practices of their superiors, making their work more likely to replicate what already exists out there. With new hires, organizations have an opportunity to think about this differently.

Strategy 1. Empower individuals at all levels to use a portion of their time to develop and drive their own policy agenda

Even if part of an employee's responsibilities (and learning!) is supporting the work of more senior colleagues, a portion of their time can be carved out for them to pursue projects that they identify, develop, and drive with their communities. (Google famously has their employees spend one fifth of their time on their own personal projects—and yes, they still do so today.) This will allow them to develop and advance some of their own projects and ideas, rather than just those of their more senior peers, helping them learn on the job and encouraging more creativity in the work. It's also a good retention tool—research shows that employees who feel empowered are much more likely to be satisfied at work and survey data shows that firms with higher employee engagement, involvement, and enthusiasm have much lower absenteeism and turnover, and higher productivity.

Strategy 2. Train managers as managers, and recognize management as a valuable skill

As has recently been reported in regard to Capitol Hill staff, the management skills of managers in the policy sector—as in many sectors—vary widely. Effective management includes skills and a set of responsibilities that are separate and apart from policy skills and work, and is an area in which many policy sector leaders receive little training or support. Effective managers can help improve organizational culture and performance, and more effectively and efficiently develop the skills and enhance the performance of the individuals and teams they are managing; ineffective managers will at best, fail to cultivate the potential of their employees, and at worst, contribute to toxic workplace culture and turnover. Organizations can take this challenge on by investing in training of managers in management and its component skills, from building an inclusive culture, to giving and receiving feedback, to delegation and goal-setting; and by recognizing management as a key component of managers' roles, and effective management as a strength to be cultivated. Many organizations, such as The Management Center and the Partnership for Public Service, provide high-quality training for nonprofit and public sector managers and teams.

Strategy 3. Create organization-wide opportunities for employees to provide feedback to organizational leadership, including anonymous feedback

To continuously understand and improve organizational effectiveness and culture, organizations can create multiple touchpoints for employees to provide feedback on the organization's culture and work. For example, regular anonymous staff surveys can be a good way to gather ongoing, consistent data on staff experiences, satisfaction, views, and priorities. (If an organization—and demographic subgroups within it—are large enough to allow for anonymity while doing so, disaggregating these results by gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, or other categories can help organizational leaders identify whether different groups have different satisfaction levels, experiences, or

> *"We had a funder who supported us to provide self-care and community care support for our staff. This allows us to provide staff with stipends so they could pay for therapy or buy themselves something they enjoyed. In alignment to our values of being community-driven, we asked employees during their onboarding, 'what are things that bring you joy?' And then we provided items based on their response."*
>
> —**VANESSA LUNA,** IMMSCHOOLS

COMMUNITY CHANGE ACTION

COMMUNITY CHANGE ACTION: DEVELOPING POLICY—AND POLICYMAKERS—TO BUILD POWER

SPOTLIGHT

Community Change Action (CCA), the advocacy-focused sister organization of Community Change, works with low-income communities, and particularly communities of color, to build power and change policy and institutions. Because CCA prioritizes building power, its policy team specifically seeks out potential employees from organizing backgrounds, rather than just policy backgrounds. Sometimes candidates informally surface from the field, but staff also talk to partners to identify candidates for current or future positions. Because these candidates are less likely to come across—or, maybe, feel qualified for—policy listings when they go up, this recruitment work is viewed as ongoing, and part of the policy team's core work. While it's helpful if candidates have worked on policy at least a little, as Chirag Mehta, CCA's policy and ideas director, explained to us:

> *"People often learn policy skills on the job. We're not looking for folks with zero policy background, but some folks who have worked on organizing or policy campaigns as organizers can also be a really good fit for a policy job. Because they have worked as an organizer, they have a level of trust with communities and understand how to see policy from the lens of directly impacted people and translate policy for leaders."*

CCA has a department that focuses on recruitment, retention, and talent development, but the organization as a whole seeks to emphasize professional development. Beyond formal trainings both inside and outside the organization, hands-on management is key to teaching people core policy skills. Chirag says, "As supervisors, we're focused on supervisors trying to teach the hard skills of policy along the way."

views on the organization.) If an organization does not want to build its own staff surveys, there are multiple existing examples out there, such as Gallup's 12 questions or these sample questions from the survey research company Qualtrics.

In addition to conducting anonymous surveys, organizational leaders can hold "town hall" staff meetings at which questions can be submitted by attendees, allowing for additional opportunities for employees to ask questions and understand organizational strategies and priorities. Leaders can set up regular office hours, make clear that they are interested in hearing directly from staff, will respond to emails from anyone (and follow through!), and create other opportunities for all employees to meet with organizational leadership. These steps will make it easier to voice concerns and will help employees understand that they and their opinions are valued, as well as help leaders understand how staff are doing.

Strategy 4. Invest in mentorship within the organization, and facilitate and encourage the building of employees' networks outside the organization

Relationships and networking can be very important in the policy sector: an individual's ability to be effective in a given role, as well as access future career opportunities, can often depend on strong relationships with others in a given area. Too often, this serves to keep the policy circle small, continuing to exclude those who have previously been excluded; but with intentional effort, these same strategies can be used to elevate and accelerate the trajectories of individuals who bring diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to the work.

Organizations can be proactive by ensuring that new hires are assigned to internal mentors who are invested in their professional growth and success (and if possible, who share some common background characteristics and issue areas), beyond their immediate managers. This assignment does not need to be overly formalized, as strong mentor relationships often come

"After the murder of George Floyd, and in the heat of racial justice and Black Lives Matter, we closed the office for a week and provided resources for those struggling. It didn't feel right to operate business as usual, and our team needed to protect their energy. I do my best to prioritize the mental health of my team, we also close for a spring break, extended holiday leave, and in the summers take Fridays off. I have also created ceremonial and cultural leave for my team, so if staff want to practice their culture such as sun dance, ceremonial happenings, seasonal gatherings and social gatherings such as powwows. We afford at least ten days. I believe this also supports mental health, and supports us living our values of prioritizing our spirit."

—**NIKKI PITRE**, CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

together informally, but only employees who are enthusiastic about mentoring should become mentors.

In addition, senior staff—managers, assigned buddies/mentors, and other colleagues—should proactively offer connections to people in their networks who they think newer employees would benefit from knowing, whether for specific projects or more generally. These introductions can help advance the work and grow new employees' professional networks, as well as but can also offer mentorship and other support.

Strategy 5. Create internal career ladders as opportunities for individuals to progress within the organization

In some cases, policy organizations can intentionally or unintentionally send signals to employees that to progress internally, additional academic or external experience is needed—they have to leave and return to move up. But with scaffolding and training, organizations can proactively create career ladders

"When something traumatic is in the news, we set aside time at the weekly staff meetings to process. At the beginning of every staff meeting, the team checks in on what they are bringing to the table. It's often personal, and people can choose to share or not share. At the end of our weekly staff meeting, we ask what issues, events, or things are happening in our community that we should all be aware of. With social media, news circulates in different siloes. Our fellows often bring news that they're processing that had not crossed my radar."

—**LINDSAY KALLMAN**, COMMUNITY SPRING

or pathways internally of which employees are aware, so employees know that if they are successful in their roles, they have pathways to advance. If there is a large gap in the responsibilities expected between junior- and senior-level titles, organizations can create

one or two title levels between them and scope out how these new positions increase responsibility—as well as grow individuals' networks, access to mentors and relationships, per above—so that junior employees can be developed to take on more senior positions.

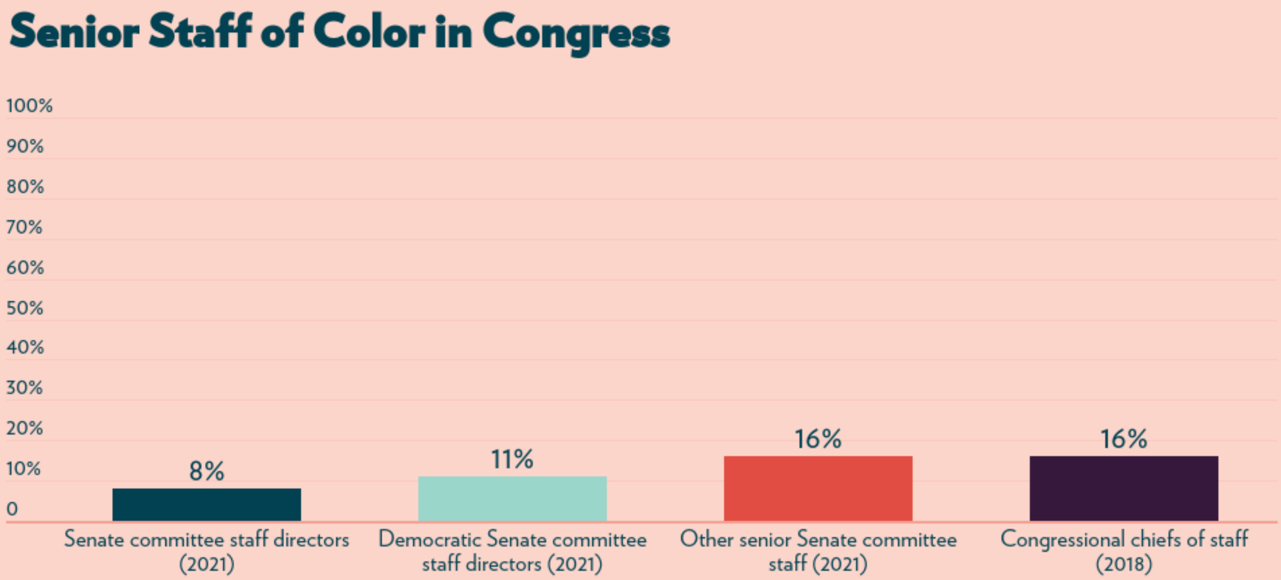
Strategy 6. Support staff who have trauma connected to their work

Hiring people with lived experience in the areas their work seeks to address means they may have trauma associated with the work. While their perspective is invaluable and they may be very committed, their work itself may provoke that trauma. This cannot be swept under the table; it must be acknowledged and addressed.

There are numerous resources available on how to create a trauma-informed work environment—many of them pulling lessons from how to create trauma-informed care in clinical settings. Creating such an environment will benefit all employees, including those without trauma. Some best practices include:

- explicitly recognizing and acknowledging the impact of trauma on individuals, and how that trauma can impact their work;
- providing training to staff on trauma-informed principles and practices, including how trauma can affect an individual's physical and mental health;
- allowing employees to self-define practices that help them stay well;
- offering insurance that covers the costs of mental health care and offers a wide coverage network, which ideally includes adequate numbers of therapists of color, of whom there is an undersupply;
- allowing mental health days to count as sick days without requiring documentation from a doctor;

FIGURE 5



Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

- providing specific, optional self-care resources or events; and

- allowing (optional) carefully facilitated space for people to reflect on how they are feeling, and how events at home, in their community, and in the world are impacting their mental health and their ability to do their work; and ensuring that these spaces are not expecting those most impacted to do the work on behalf of the organization.

BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION-WIDE CULTURE OF AND COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

The primary focus of this toolkit is specific talent practices and tools for recruitment, selection, and professional development, tailored toward building more diverse public policy organizations. To do this work effectively, organizations must center and live the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in their culture, work, and operations. This toolkit aims to help public policy organizations that have a commitment to those values improve their talent practices in particular.

This toolkit does not attempt to cover all of the critical work needed for organizations to embrace and live those values in their day-to-day culture and operations. That must start with a commitment from the highest levels of organizational leadership to a culture that reflects DEIB goals and practices; initial and ongoing investments in assessing and managing the adaptive challenges that will come from that realignment; and developing the honesty and self-reflection it will take to examine and improve every aspect of internal culture. Leaders in public policy organizations—including at Next100—must be willing to continually examine and address the internal structures, policies, and beliefs that hold their organization back from being truly equitable. All of these changes must be made to ensure that the organization is a welcoming and empowering space for all and that people/individuals from all backgrounds feel valued and empowered.

The fact that this toolkit does not cover the deep preparation and ongoing work needed to build and maintain an equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist culture is not due to a lack of belief in its importance. In fact, it is in deference to the complexity of the work, the time and energy it requires, and the respect we have for the organizations and professionals who are better equipped to guide organizations comprehensively through that work. However, the need for ongoing organizational improvement in developing around a DEIB culture should not be used as an excuse to fail to take action on the recommendations within this toolkit, or, more broadly, on changing the who and the how of policy work. Ultimately, each of these components will reinforce each other, and all are necessary to build more diverse, effective, and inclusive organizations that contribute to better public policies.

While this toolkit does not attempt to guide organizations through DEIB value and culture alignment, there are many excellent organizations that offer support and partnership to those who are ready to embrace equity and anti-racist practices, which we encourage readers of this toolkit to explore. The Management Center (TMC), Promise54, and The Equity Lab are three excellent organizations that the authors of this report have worked with that also have a variety of resources on their sites. In addition, Racial Equity Tools is a crowd-sourced depository (led/vetted by these three organizations) of tools, research, tips, and curricula to help organizations work for racial justice, and Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity has additional tools and resources targeted at local and regional government staff, some of which may also be helpful to broader public policy organizations.

CURRENT STATE OF THE POLICY SECTOR

As noted above, available data on policy leaders and policy staff indicate that they do not represent the diversity of our country. Even with the most diverse Congress in history, Members of Congress are overwhelmingly white—77 percent. Members of Congress are also wealthier than average Americans, with some estimates concluding that the average net worth of a Congressional representative is approximately five times the median U.S. household net worth. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which has carefully tracked the makeup of Congressional staff over time, as of July 2021, committee staff directors, who hold critical positions in terms of moving and shaping key legislation, were just 8 percent people of color; these numbers were barely better when looking only at the Democratic side, at just 11 percent. Other senior committee staff are just under 16 percent people of color. Another 2018 Joint Center analysis found that in 2018, of the 421 chiefs of staff in Congress, 354 (84 percent) were white. As of 2022, there are only two Black chiefs of staff in the Senate. A letter recently published by two Congressional staff associations highlighted this issue and recommended key changes to increase the number of Black staff in Congress.

The lack of diversity on the Hill partially stems from the low pay for Congressional staffers, with many junior staffers making less than a living wage and more than half of the staff in non-management positions reporting that they struggle to pay bills and "make ends meet." The low pay means that staffers may rely on second jobs or family support to survive, locking out many of those who come from less privileged backgrounds, who are also disproportionately people of color.

This inequity also extends to gender: members of Congress and of state legislatures are both overwhelmingly male, at 73 percent and 69 percent, respectively. On average, the typical member of a state legislature today is a white male baby boomer with an advanced degree. Women currently hold only 29 percent of all state legislative seats in the United States. In contrast, in the 2020 Census, less than 58 percent of the U.S. population identified as non-Latinx white, and the country is only becoming more diverse: people of color currently represent more than half of the nation's youth.

President Biden has stated that creating an administration that is representative of the nation is a top priority, and his Cabinet is among the most diverse in history. However, the existing diversity in leadership at the top masks substantial lack of diversity at the staff level in some key areas. Across chiefs of staff in the administration, only 8.7 percent are Black and only 3.8 percent are Latinx. Only 4.3 percent of chiefs of staff are women of color. There are no Native American, or Middle Eastern/North African chiefs of staff, and no people with disabilities in these positions. Reporting on a White House list of staff released in July 2021 highlighted that Latinx individuals made up around 10 percent of White House staff, compared to 18.5 percent of the U.S. population. Politico reported in November 2021 that only two Latinx people carry the White House's most senior title, "assistant to the president," and they are both on the first lady's team, while none of the nineteen assistants to the president on the president's team are Latinx.

These statistics are not meant to imply that the Biden–Harris administration hasn't done better around inclusion and diversity than previous administrations, or than other state and local government entities and public policy nonprofits; overall, they are making meaningful progress. However, there continues to be room for improvement, and a lack of transparency across the sector makes tracking progress challenging.

While there is no centralized source of diversity data among think tanks, some think tanks have chosen to make public the data on the demographic makeup of their staff, including the Brookings Institution and the Center for American Progress (CAP) (For more on how CAP shares demographic data, see Transparent, Actionable Data). Unfortunately, these organizations' transparency is rare among their peers. Next100 surveyed the public websites of nineteen leading, national, multi-issue think tanks that have a complete or substantial domestic policy focus and either self-identified as "progressive," "liberal," "left," or similar terms, or as nonpartisan. (A full summary of our findings and methodology are in Appendix A.) Our research makes clear that think tanks generally lack transparency and adequate diversity. Of the think tanks surveyed, only 37 percent made their staff demographic information publicly available. Analysis of the demographic data released from these think tanks revealed the number of people of color in leadership positions is low, with just 19 percent to 33 percent of people in leadership positions identifying as people of color—with the exception of CAP, which has a leadership team on which 40 percent of individuals identify as staff of color.

NOTES

1. In this toolkit, we use "white" or "non-Latinx white" depending on what is described in the data source.

2. In this toolkit, we have chosen to use the identifier "Latinx" throughout for consistency's sake, including in some cases as a substitute for "Hispanic" when referring to data sources that use the latter term.

APPENDIX A:
BACKGROUND ON THE POLICY SECTOR, DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY AND JOB POSTINGS (BASED ON SCAN CONDUCTED DECEMBER 2021)

To inform this toolkit, Next100 surveyed the public websites of nineteen leading, national, multi-issue think tanks that have an entire or substantial domestic policy focus and either self-identified as "progressive," "liberal," "left," or similar terms, or as nonpartisan. All data on think tank job descriptions is based on a review of the websites of these nineteen organization's websites and their job openings during the week of December 12–18, 2021. The think tanks reviewed were:

> The Aspen Institute, The Bipartisan Policy Center, The Brookings Institute, The Center for American Progress, The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, The Center for Economic and Policy Research, The Century Foundation, Demos, The Economic Policy Institute, The Institute for Policy Studies, Mathematica, MDRC, New America, The Pew Research Center, The RAND Corporation, The Roosevelt Institute, Third Way, The Urban Institute, The Washington Center for Equitable Growth

Staff Demographic Data and Diversity

In reviewing demographic data on think tank diversity, we sought to answer the following questions by reviewing think tanks' websites:

- Is staff demographic information public?
- If staff demographic information is public, what percentage of the staff identify as a person of color?
- If staff demographic information is public, what percentage of the organization's leadership team identify as a person of color? How does that compare to the demographics of the general staff?

Only seven of the nineteen of the think tanks surveyed had publicly available demographic data in some form: the Center for American Progress, the Urban Institute, the Brookings Institute, MDRC, the RAND Corporation, the Pew Research Center and Mathematica. Each of these think tanks reported on demographic categories; all included information on race/ethnicity and gender (except for one that reported only partial information). Five of the organizations reported data on age (specifically, by generation; for example, Millennial) and only one organization reported data on the sexual orientation of their staff. Six of the think tanks that released diversity data specifically detailed the demographics of their leadership team. For those organizations that did share data on their leadership teams, roughly two-thirds or more of leadership identified as non-Latinx white at five of the six organizations. The one exception was the Center for American Progress, with a leadership team that is roughly 40 percent staff of color. (Read more about the Center for American Progress's reporting in Transparent, Actionable Data.)

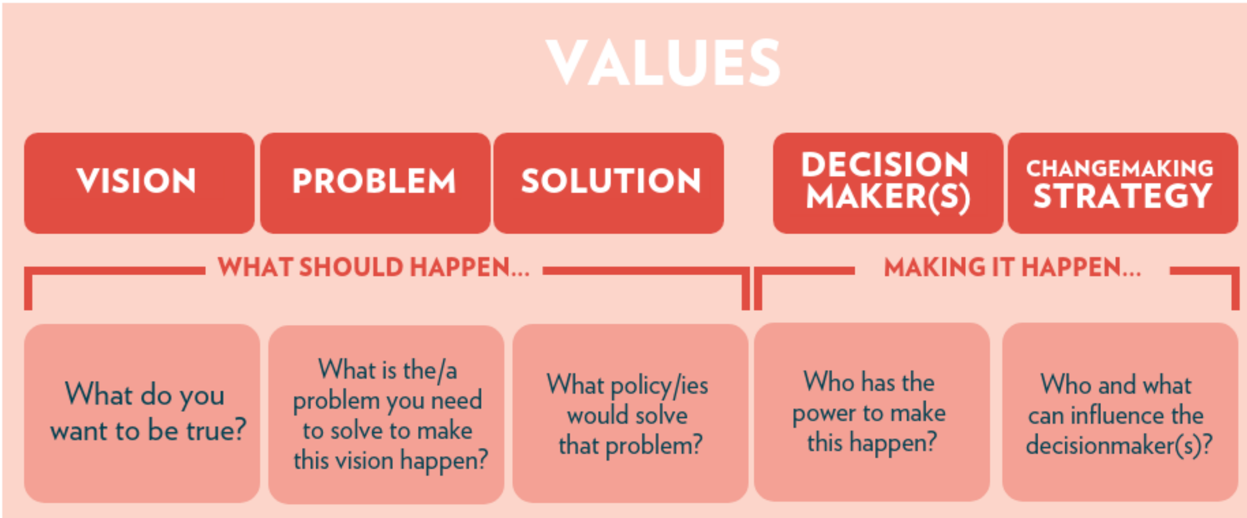
Job Openings

To better understand the roles available at these think tanks, we reviewed all open jobs posted on the website of each of these think tanks. In our analysis of open job postings, we included full-time job postings and excluded part-time and internship postings. Sixteen of the nineteen think tanks had policy job openings. We examined postings for whether job descriptions:

- listed salary, salary minimum, or salary range;
- required a bachelor's degree for policy and non-policy positions;
- required a master's degree for policy positions;
- required an unspecified graduate degree for policy positions;
- required prior policy experience for their junior-level policy jobs; and
- required prior policy experience for mid-level (three or more years of experience) policy jobs.

FIGURE B1

Next100 Making Policy Change Framework



Only six of the sixteen think tanks with open policy positions listed any form of salary information for all of their policy jobs. Of these six, two posted a salary minimum—but no maximum—for all openings.

Thirteen of the think tanks surveyed either required or preferred a bachelor's degree for at least some of their open policy jobs. Within organizations, this requirement was often inconsistent across job postings, even for positions that appear to share similar responsibilities. This may suggest that specific people or departments are making individual decisions, rather than having consistent organization-wide policies that would systematically enhance equity. Higher-level positions or positions with graduate degree preferences or requirements often did not explicitly state a bachelor's degree was required, presumably because graduate programs require a bachelor's degree and the organization was assuming applicants have already attained bachelor's degrees.

Twelve organizations required or preferred a graduate degree for the majority of mid- or upper-level policy roles. There were certain positions that required PhDs, which tended to be quantitative-research-heavy roles and required experience candidates would only pick up in the academy or in a research-based policy setting, such as having peer-reviewed publications and experience in obtaining external research funding.

I felt seen. It [joining Next100] felt like an opportunity to bring not only my whole self to the policymaking space, but to elevate the narratives and perspectives of people like me that don't have the privilege of occupying the same spaces. I see this as not just an opportunity, but a very real responsibility to seriously subvert the ways that we think about developing and making policy."

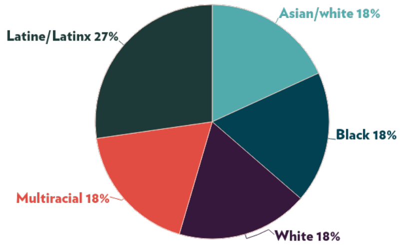
—**DAN MATHIS,** NEXT100 POLICY ENTREPRENEUR

Ten of the sixteen think tanks with open policy positions either required or preferred some form of prior experience for most junior-level positions. This requirement also varied across job postings, even within the same organization and for positions that appear to share similar responsibilities. Some required a certain number of years (usually ranging from one to three) of experience in a specific research area. Others simply asked for one to three years of experience in a related field. Some wanted just a demonstrated interest in the subject area. Fourteen of the sixteen think tanks with open policy positions required some form of research or advocacy experience for most mid- and upper-level positions.

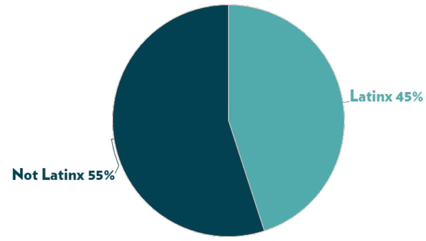
APPENDIX B: ABOUT NEXT100

Next100 is a policy leadership development program and startup think tank that was created by The Century Foundation to address the systematic exclusion in the public policy sector of the communities most directly impacted by policy. We believe changing who makes policy and how policies are developed,

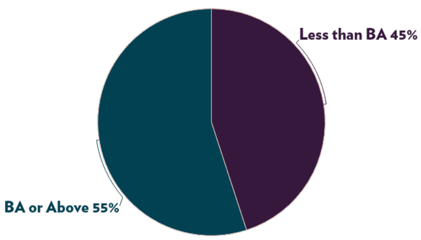
RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY



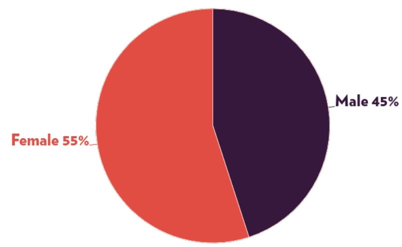
LATINX IDENTITY



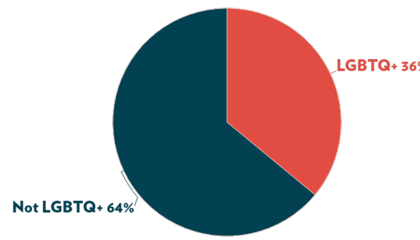
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED BY PARENTS



GENDER



LGBTQ+ IDENTITY



prioritized, and implemented will lead to more effective and equitable policies, and a more inclusive, democratic, and just America.

At Next100, we identify, develop, support, and learn from individuals—policy entrepreneurs (PEs)—who bring diversity, proximity to impacted communities, and lived experience to the policy sector. We provide skillbuilding, knowledge-building, a platform, and autonomy to the PEs to allow them to drive policy change through research, policy development, and advocacy, informed by their communities. We work on the issues our PEs identify, including education, climate change, criminal justice, immigration, economic opportunity, national service, and housing and design.

Our Demographics

Above is information on the demographic diversity of the Next100 team as of April 2022.

Our Training Program

Next100 is structured with an intense set of trainings upfront, followed by structured support for PEs to identify, develop, and execute work to drive inclusive policy change. We start our program with a "bootcamp" focused on skills development and culture building, followed by a structured learning sprint to allow PEs to further build their knowledge in their issue areas and identify opportunities for policy impact. The PEs then turn to developing and driving their policy research, development, and advocacy work, independently and with partners.

Skill-building

Our skill-building is anchored in the introduction of a "making policy change" framework. (See Figure B1.) This training sequence is a four-part series that aims to anchor the experience, knowledge, and skills that PEs bring with them, as well as those they will develop, in a common, accessible framework for those new to the policy space. The framework breaks down the process of making policy change into five steps: (1) vision, (2) problem, (3) solution, (4) decision-maker(s), and (5) change-making strategy. As shown in Figure B1, a question is associated with each step

FIGURE B2

Next100 Trainings

TEAM + CULTURE	PERSONAL MISSION/WORK AT NEXT100	RESEARCH SKILLS	POLICY SKILLS	COMMS + ADVOCACY SKILLS	GETTING STUFF DONE SKILLS	ADMIN
Welcome session + our 1st few weeks of work	Breaking down the framework	Consuming research	Reading + interpreting policy	Telling your story	Feedback	Editorial + production process training
Identity, leadership, + values	Developing your mission	Qualitative research	Analyzing policy	Writing for change	Project management	Organizational performance management
Working across lines of difference	Building knowledge + learning sprint prep	Quantitative research parts I & II	Developing policy	Advocacy pts. I & II	Building & managing relationships	
Personal working styles	Developing your plan for impact	Developing policy + research w. impacted communities	Policy memo-writing	Social media	Intro to fundraising	
			Congress 101	Media training	Intro to Excel	
			Crash course on executive actions	Creative workproduct ideas (ongoing)		

FIGURE B3

Next100 Learning Sprint Framework

VISION

What is your visionary headline of the future in your policy area? In 5-10 years? In 2 years?

SOLUTIONS

1. What existing policy solutions have you learned about that would help address this problem?
2. For each of these solutions, what is effective? What are you concerned about? What do you need to learn more about?
3. For each of these solutions, who was involved in its development? Who is advocating for it? Who is opposed?
4. Are new solutions needed? Why or why not?

DECISION MAKERS

1. What government (or in some cases, outside entity) can make this/a policy solution(s) happen?
2. What individuals can make this/a policy solution(s) happen?

YOUR WORK

1. What 2-3 projects do you want to pursue over the next two years to move those solutions forward? What is the goal(s) of and audience(s) for each project? Why do you think these projects will be effective in making change? How will they add to what's already going on?
2. Who / what are some organizations / coalitions / individuals / policy efforts you want to build relationships with and stay engaged with as your work progresses?
3. What's the first piece, blog post, or commentary you want to write on this for Next100?

PROBLEM

1. What problem do you seek to solve to get to your vision?
2. What does the data tell you about the racial/ethnic and other disparities in this area?
3. What are the key root causes of the problem you are trying to solve that most resonate with you? What additional historical context is important to understand the problem?
4. What are 2-3 other problems that are related to yours? How are they related?
5. Who do you know who is impacted by this problem? What organizations do you know that work with people impacted by this problem?
6. Are there other communities facing similar challenges?

ECOSYSTEM

1. Who are some of the other key players (individuals, organizations) working on this issue? How are they framing the issue?
2. What are their priorities/what are they working on?
3. Are there individuals/organizations who seem like partners you want/need to work with (they may or may not already be involved in the policy conversation)? Why are they good partners? How might you work with them?

YOUR MENTORS

1. Who are your dream mentors?
- Issue experts
- Policy context experts
- Making change experts
- Validators/enhancers

that can lead someone new to the policy sector through how to think about the policy development and change-making process. (We have found this same framework can be helpful in thinking through how to ensure impacted communities can be engaged at critical stages of the policy change process, not just at the beginning or end.)

Next, we pivot to training across four broader skill categories: research skills, policy skills, communications and advocacy skills, and organizational effectiveness skills (for example, project management, giving and receiving feedback, etc.), delivered by internal staff or external partners. In addition, we continue to integrate the foundational framework throughout the rest of the training—repeating the material through different lenses for maximum learning impact. (See Figure B2.)

In addition to these skill-building trainings, we conduct sessions on values and leadership, working across lines of difference, and culture building, to establish from day one an environment where all participants feel safe and comfortable to ask questions, engage with the material, and learn from each other.

Knowledge Development

While the PEs join us with irreplaceable lived experience and connections to their issue areas that inform their work, they often have not been given the opportunity prior to Next100 to dive more deeply and broadly into the context of their issue area. To give them this opportunity, following these skills-based trainings, the PEs pivot to a structured "learning sprint" in their area. Working independently (with management support), they research a sequenced set of questions about the existing data and research, policy ideas, political context, organizational ecosystem, and opportunities and challenges in their issue area. They then use this process to identify specific projects and paths for their work to drive inclusive policy change, specific policy opportunities to work on, and potential partners to work with. These findings all guide their work over the rest of their time at Next100. (See Figure B3.)

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