The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
2017-2022 Strategic Plan

Introduction

In 1999, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (the Institute) was established in Newark with funds provided by the Alan V. and Amy Lowenstein Foundation. The Institute’s first annual report, released seven months after the organization opened its doors in 2001, stated that it would “identify, analyze and address the underlying causes of social and economic disparities and challenge the barriers that constrain cities and their residents from achieving their full potential.”

Now 18 years old, the Institute has made remarkable progress in this short time span as an effective advocate for the empowerment of urban residents and the communities in which they live. Its dynamic and independent advocacy aimed at toppling load-bearing walls of structural inequality to create just, vibrant, and healthy urban communities has been recognized as instrumental in advancing progressive policy and legislative action.

Why a Five-Year Plan

The Institute has come through a challenging period, making its achievements even more noteworthy. It has brought increased attention to such issues as income inequality, barriers limiting formerly incarcerated individuals’ social reengagement, racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, and unequal treatment of people of color and low-income individuals by law enforcement officials. Using all available advocacy tools to effect structural change, the Institute has championed progressive social and racial justice policies in each of its areas of work. Working in collaboration with a host of partners and other stakeholders, its impact is felt in urban places across the state.

Yet, much remains to be done in removing the barriers that limit urban residents’ opportunity to participate fully in our state economically, socially, and politically. Indeed, it is anticipated that the challenges urban residents and low-income individuals will confront in the next several years will be both more numerous and entrenched.

To ensure the Institute’s ability to contribute to improving the prospects of urban residents, its Board of Trustees and senior management determined that the organization should frame a five-year strategic plan that clearly states the organization’s program priorities and the activities to be
undertaken to address them. Institute leaders also urged that the plan address the structural, operational, and financial issues associated with implementing the programs and identify potential major challenges and opportunities.

Through discussions involving the Institute’s senior management and staff, members of the Board of Trustees’ Strategic Direction Committee, selected collaborators, constituents, and members of the community, the plan described in the following pages was developed.

**The Mission, Vision, and Values**

The mission of the Institute is to ensure that urban residents live in a society that respects their humanity, provides equality of economic opportunity, empowers them to use their voice in the political process, and protects equal justice.

The Institute employs a broad range of advocacy tools to advance its ambitious urban agenda, including research, analysis and writing, public education, grassroots organizing, communications, the development of pilot programs, legislative strategies, and litigation.

Using a holistic approach to address the unique and critical issues facing New Jersey’s urban communities, the Institute advocates for systematic reform that is at once transformative, achievable in the state, and replicable in communities across the nation.¹

**The Context for the Institute’s Work**

We are facing a critical moment, the likes of which we have not seen in a generation.

Out of this time comes an opportunity: in a year marking the 50th anniversary of both the Newark Rebellion and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “The Other America” speech, New Jersey’s cities hold incredible promise to advance an agenda that unites us around solutions to some of the greatest social and racial justice challenges of our time in the areas of income inequality, re-imagining criminal justice, and building an inclusive democracy.

The solutions to these enduring problems will come from the ground up in our cities. The Institute is focused on contributing to the creation of these solutions.

The Institute builds upon its accomplishments in policy and advocacy to pursue an ambitious agenda that recognizes the urgency of current social, economic, criminal justice, and political challenges facing New Jersey’s urban areas. The Institute’s goal is not simply to change the conversation, but to disrupt and transform oppressive systems that constrain opportunities for our urban residents.

¹ The Institute’s first annual report stated, “It is our strong belief that urban areas of New Jersey hold remarkable potential to act as regionally competitive economic engines while providing resilient, vital and attractive communities to their residents.” Institute Annual Report, 2001, p.1.
The Institute’s ultimate aim is to help make New Jersey’s cities safe, healthy, inclusive, and equitable places where all may thrive.

Institute 2017 – 2022 Strategic Goals and Associated Activities

The Institute’s Overarching Goal: During the five-year period from 2017-2022, the Institute will establish itself as a progressive urban public policy, advocacy, and litigation innovator that primarily addresses three discrete but interconnected issue areas in New Jersey: economic justice, criminal justice reform, and democracy & justice.

The Institute’s role across these issue areas and in partnership with local, regional, and national collaborators is to serve as a backbone organization that convenes and drives collective, coordinated strategies in a manner that effects structural change. As part of this work, the Institute establishes common goals and measurements, communicates with stakeholders from community residents to corporate boardrooms, and engages local, regional and national research partners to marshal data and best evidence-based practices that will shape policy that supports the vision of a greater Newark and urban life in the state of New Jersey.

To achieve its principal goals, the Institute will perform the programmatic activities listed below in these three issue areas, called organizational pillars, which will allow it to monitor, measure, and evaluate its progress in advancing the principal goal.

Economic Justice Goals & Associated Activities

Objective – The Economic Justice pillar focuses on ensuring equality of economic opportunity for residents in our urban communities through work on employment, transportation, housing, and access to credit.

Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., looked to urban communities and explained that the country consisted of “Two Americas,” divided by race, class, and income, existing side by side in every state, city, and town. Fifty years later, the “Two Americas” persist in cities across this country, including in New Jersey.

The economic justice pillar aims to bridge the “Two Americas” in New Jersey by disrupting the multi-generational cycle of poverty and reducing the racial wealth gap in our urban communities by systematically targeting its root causes: (1) joblessness and unemployment, (2) a lack of affordable and non-discriminatory housing options in safe and healthy neighborhoods, limited access to transportation services, and (3) discrimination in banking options, predatory lending, and access to credit.

The initiative will proceed in phases, beginning with the most urgent issues facing people living in poverty – unemployment and a lack of access to jobs.
Economic Justice Goal 1:

Over the five-year period 2017-2022, advocate for affordable housing options, access to transportation, and against predatory lending and inequitable and discriminatory banking practices.

Program Activity 1: In support of legal and policy advocacy, produce research and write publications addressing affordable housing, transportation, predatory lending practices, constraints limiting access to credit, and barriers to employment and homeownership, to build an aggressive legislative, litigation, and public education advocacy portfolio focused on addressing these and related challenges in Newark and other selected communities in New Jersey.

Program Activity 2: In addition to deploying all other advocacy tools, and as an important complement to those efforts, explore whether potential litigation should and can be brought by the Institute in the employment, fair housing enforcement, or predatory lending context.

Economic Justice Goal 2:

Through Newark 2020, help connect 2,020 Newark residents to meaningful, full-time employment that pays a living wage by 2020. This initiative will serve as a model for statewide replication.

Newark 2020 is a four-year, city-wide jobs initiative that aims to reduce poverty and promote economic opportunity by cutting the gap in the unemployment rate between the State of New Jersey and the City of Newark in half by connecting 2,020 unemployed Newark residents to full-time work by 2020. In addressing this issue we recognize the skills challenge posed by the deficiencies in the city’s secondary school infrastructure. Skills training is consequently, a critical component of the undertaking.

This initiative was inspired by the contrast between the high levels of poverty and unemployment in Newark, despite the city’s tremendous economic development and growth. Newark 2020 is designed around the city’s unique assets, including its multiple anchor institutions, its renowned institutions of higher education, its strong and collaborative network of community development corporations and workforce development providers, and its large and active faith and non-profit community.

The Institute developed the concept and blueprint for Newark 2020 following more than a year of research, legal and policy analysis, as well as hundreds of hours of meetings with key partners and community members in Newark, the State of New Jersey, and nationally.

The development of Newark 2020 emerged out of the Institute’s partnerships with the City of Newark, Rutgers University-Newark, and Prudential in 2015, later joined by the Newark Alliance and RWJBarnabas Health in 2016. PSE&G, Panasonic North America, Audible.com, United Airlines, the Port Newark Container Terminal, the New Jersey Devils/Prudential Center and a growing number of other anchor institutions and employers have also joined this initiative.
Program Activity 1: Undertake extensive research and writing, and produce various foundational publications to support the initiative and infrastructure of Newark 2020:

- Conduct extensive research into systems change and jobs initiatives in the City of Newark from the last two decades to build upon successes, identify common challenges, and ensure that this jobs initiative incorporates the city’s rich history and assets into the design;
- Design the concept and blueprint for Newark 2020 based on best practices in workforce and economic development, inclusive economic growth, anchor institution hiring strategies, the demographics, skills, and education of the Newark workforce, and industries in Newark—including projected growth—so that the initiative can prepare residents for careers with growth and mobility in Newark and beyond;
- Undertake a comprehensive review of all publicly available reports and policy briefs about local hiring and workforce system reform efforts from around the country to ensure that Newark 2020 incorporates best practices nationally;
- Commission economic analysis about the reasons that it is advantageous for Newark’s anchor institutions to hire locally and to hire a racially and ethnically diverse staff, and presenting that information to anchors in Newark and nationally; and
- Produce reports, including (1) “Bridging the Two Americas,” a report examining the inequality in access to employment in Newark and other cities around the country; (2) an economic analysis of the business case for local hiring, authored by Professor Bill Rodgers of the Heldrich Center; (3) a policy brief on best practices in anchor institution hiring practices, through a partnership with PolicyLink; and (4) a report on the legal and structural barriers to employment.

Program Activity 2: Help to build a system/infrastructure, and governance model to support the Newark 2020 jobs initiative. The Institute will:

- Create a governance structure, based on best practices of successful jobs initiatives, that includes an executive committee, steering committee, and subcommittees comprised of key stakeholders, including the Institute, employer partners, the City of Newark, Rutgers-Newark, the Newark Alliance, and community leaders and residents;
  - In the capacity as a Co-Chair of the Newark 2020 Steering Committee, the Institute will serve as a backbone organization that regularly convenes the partners and helps lead the effort to build out and maintain the necessary infrastructure to support the job pathways for local residents participating in the initiative;
- Develop the infrastructure for Newark 2020 to include: (1) a leadership structure incorporating the anchors/employers to guide the initiative’s work over the next four years; (2) a system that connects local residents to work, including an integrated website and a coordinated workforce training and education strategy; (3) a robust, comprehensive, ward-based community and faith-based outreach and engagement strategy; (4) a research, public education, and advocacy strategy; and (5) the creation of metrics for all of the outcome goals, which will be tracked and assessed by an independent evaluator;
• Identify the most established, effective, and responsive local workforce development and training providers to participate in Newark 2020 and to serve on the Newark 2020 Workforce Development Subcommittee;
• Advocate for the role of the community throughout the development of Newark 2020, including by recruiting community, non-profit, and faith leaders from all five wards to serve on a subcommittee, and by hosting community forums in each ward when Newark 2020 launches;
• Convene forums for the public to provide an opportunity to share information from policy experts or to facilitate conversations around topical issues related to economic justice, employment, housing, or access to credit;
• Collaborate with and host national convenings with other cities implementing similar anchor strategies or reforms;
• Connect key partners and leaders in Newark with their counterparts in other cities to create national cross-collaboration and information sharing, accelerating the rate of progress in Newark and our sister cities; and
• Partner with and support the work of the Newark City of Learning Collaborative so that a greater proportion of Newark residents have postsecondary degrees, certificates, and quality credentials that will enable them to pursue successful careers and experience mobility.

Program Activity 3: In addition to helping connect 2,020 local residents to full time, meaningful jobs, the Institute’s integrated advocacy will:

• Conduct Research and provide legal and policy analysis regarding the barriers to work for Newark residents, informed by the lived experiences of people in poverty gathered by the Institute, and provide policy and legal recommendations that the Institute will advocate before the Newark City Council, the New Jersey State Legislature, and the U.S. Congress, where a federal law or administrative regulation is implicated;
• Promote the removal of legal, structural, and policy barriers to work for residents;
• Seek to break down the silos between various job and anchor strategy initiatives happening in Newark to create one city-wide effort; and
• Strive to ensure that both public and private plans for economic development in the city account for the hiring of local residents.

Criminal Justice Goals & Associated Activities

Objective: Advocate for comprehensive criminal justice reform to address systemic issues in policing, incarceration, and reentry. Contribute to the creation of a rational and effective criminal justice system that (1) strengthens communities by treating people of color fairly and equally; (2) provides alternatives to incarceration; (3) protects constitutional rights; (4) allows people with convictions to successfully reintegrate into society; and (5) increases law enforcement responsiveness, accountability, and transparency.
This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Newark Rebellion, which was sparked by police abuse of a Black cab driver. Although half a century has passed, Newark and the state of New Jersey still struggle with many of the same criminal justice issues that led to that transformative uprising. Today, 50 years later, the Institute is working to transform New Jersey’s criminal justice system at every point in the continuum from entrance to exit, with special emphasis on policing, juvenile justice practices, and formerly incarcerated individuals’ reentry support, through advocacy, regulatory reform, legislative action, public education, and litigation.

The Institute has played a central role in convening Youth Justice New Jersey (YJNJ), a statewide coalition of research, advocacy, academic, and direct service organizations and representatives dedicated to producing better outcomes for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Among other successes, YJNJ was instrumental in the passage of S2003, landmark legislation signed into law in 2015, that raised the minimum age at which a child may be prosecuted as an adult; narrowed the list of offenses that can lead to prosecution as an adult; limited the use of solitary confinement as a punitive measure in juvenile facilities; and provided due process protections to young people facing administrative transfer from youth to adult prisons.

Even before mobilizing to advance the recent reform legislation, YJNJ and its members filed lawsuits, sought regulatory changes, and advanced the public discourse on many issues confronting young people in the juvenile justice system. YJNJ members have litigated five juvenile transfer cases, contesting the scant due process provided to young people before they were administratively transferred to adult prisons. Members filed a Petition for Rulemaking challenging the practice of solitary confinement of youth. Members also wrote op-ed pieces, appeared in the media, and served on committees addressing the pressing needs of children in the juvenile justice system.

Members continue to provide individual legal representation to incarcerated youth on a range of issues, including isolation, education and special education, medical and mental health, parole and parole revocation, motions for early release, family engagement, and release planning. YJNJ is the only state-wide advocacy coalition of its kind positioned to lead a coordinated effort to reform the current system. It represents a large consortium of over two dozen organizations and representatives committed to improving outcomes for youth involved in the justice system. While there has been notable progress, much more needs to be done to reduce the number of youth, particularly youth of color, incarcerated in New Jersey.

As the convener of YJNJ, the Institute will work in close collaboration with these coalition partners to launch and lead YJNJ’s campaign that seeks to replace youth prisons with a community-based system of care. The Institute regards convening as important, but understands that driving the conversation and shaping policy are more important and consequently, will strive to participate actively in shaping the conversation in its work with YJNJ as well as the work described below.

First, the Institute’s innovative New Jersey Communities Forward initiative will work to improve and strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and the communities it serves. Second,
as a member of the Newark Police Division’s federal monitoring team, the Institute will help transform the Division into an agency that can serve as a national model for police reform. Third, the Institute will strive to expand its national leadership role in the prisoner reentry field by launching “Reentry Roundtable 2.0,” a three-part strategy to evaluate current reentry law in New Jersey and review best practices in the field around the country. And, fourth, the Institute will launch a campaign to close New Jersey’s youth prisons and divert more resources into rehabilitative, community-based alternatives to incarceration.

The program agenda for this pillar includes the following.

Criminal Justice Reform Goal 1:

Continue to strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and the communities it serves through the New Jersey Communities Forward (NJCF) initiative.

Program Activity 1: In order to greatly improve the delivery of law enforcement services and, consequently, build stronger, safer communities, NJCF will facilitate the development of action plans that focus on adherence to local hiring and residency requirements for officers, body-worn camera policies, and appropriate public access to footage, use of force policies, and training around de-escalation, and bias-free, community policing, among other issues.

Program Activity 2: Develop Action Plans through facilitated community forums in Northern New Jersey (Montclair, Newark, and Jersey City), Central New Jersey (Trenton and New Brunswick), and Southern New Jersey (Camden and Atlantic City) that identify key criminal justice reforms. The reforms will serve as the basis for the development of a comprehensive legislative strategy, in collaboration with the Institute’s partners and other criminal justice reform stakeholders.

Program Activity 3: NJCF will also be used as an organizing component of the Institute’s juvenile justice campaign to close New Jersey’s youth prisons.

Program Activity 4: Craft a comprehensive study and policy paper, based on extensive local and national research, writing, and investigation that casts an affirmative, forward-thinking vision for what model policing and ideal community-law enforcement engagement can and should look like, based on best practices.

Criminal Justice Reform Goal 2:

Develop best practices in policing to transform policing in the city of Newark and the state through our work on the Newark Police Division federal monitoring team over the next five years.

Program Activity 1: Develop an annual city-wide survey assessing community, police, and detainee thoughts on policing and public safety in Newark, in collaboration with a team of experts in the field of policing.
Program Activity 2: In collaboration with a team of policing experts, oversee the development of evaluative tools that will allow the Newark Police Division to do the following:

- Assess the extent to which Newark’s law enforcement officers are properly trained on bias-free policing techniques, and the extent to which they employ it in their practice.
- Measure the extent to which the Division employs constitutionally sound “use of force” policies and uses a feasible and effective body-worn camera policy, among other things.
- Assess the responsiveness of the Division to the community, with particular emphasis on the utilization of respectful, culturally-sensitive, de-escalation-focused community policing strategies.

Program Activity 3: Serve as the community liaison between the Newark community, the federal monitoring team, and the Newark Police Division during the consent decree process.

Program Activity 4: Develop a collaborative relationship with the Newark Police Division to include the Institute’s participation in trainings, community task forces, and programming.

Program Activity 5: Establish partnerships with community stakeholders and partners, like Seton Hall and Rutgers Law Schools, to produce presentations, documents, and other programming to engage the Newark community with the consent decree process.

Criminal Justice Reform Goal 3:

Launch a targeted campaign to close New Jersey's harmful youth prisons and focus funds and advocacy on community-based incarceration alternatives.

Program Activity 1: In collaboration with a diverse coalition of lawyers, advocates, system-involved youth, families, labor representatives, legislators, religious leaders, and community members, close the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility and the New Jersey Training School for Boys. Work with this same coalition to advocate for a shift of financial resources from these closed facilities to expand the continuum of community-based alternatives to incarceration.

Program Activity 2: Draft reports to support the campaign, including a report on incarcerated girls. Collaborate with research partners to create additional reports, including a report on comprehensive alternatives to incarceration and a fiscal analysis of youth incarceration as compared to community-based alternatives.

Program Activity 3: Create an innovative media strategy—using social media, polling data, and stories of system-involved youth—to support the campaign to close youth prisons and additional juvenile justice initiatives.

Democracy & Justice Goals & Associated Activities
**Objective:** To build a progressive, policy-driven agenda to protect and expand democracy in New Jersey; to provide a space for robust discussions with candidates, policy makers, and elected officials, focused on social justice issues; and prepare voters to realize maximum participation in the next several election cycles and collecting and analyzing data from those elections to identify and offer policy recommendations to address voting barriers.

The right to vote is the very foundation of democracy—no right is more precious. However, the 2016 presidential election was one of the most racially charged and divisive presidential elections in American history.

In this moment, it is imperative that a broad coalition of communities join together to have their voices heard. The Institute is building a body of work that seeks to ensure the full, equal, and active participation in the electoral process of New Jersey’s urban residents.

Attention will also be given to the civil and voting rights of incarcerated individuals making the case that disfranchisement of this population warrants re-examination and should end. Moreover, the practice of counting incarcerated individuals as residents of the prison communities where they are incarcerated, when drawing election district lines (“prison-based gerrymandering”), should end in New Jersey. Prisoners are not residents of the districts where they are incarcerated and should not be counted as such because it dilutes the political representation and the federal and state resources provided to the communities where they actually live—and where they will return. In order to ensure that people with convictions are meaningful members of society, this pillar will also examine and push to allow people with criminal convictions to serve on juries. This pillar, in addition, will shine a bright light on the importance of the 2020 U.S. Census, with particular attention to its implications for legislative and Congressional redistricting in the state.

**Democracy & Justice Goal 1:**

1) Launch “Use Your Vote,” and 2) identify, address, and provide policy recommendations to combat additional voting barriers, especially those impacting formerly incarcerated persons, low-income individuals, students, seniors, and people of color.

**Program Activity 1:** Drawing from lessons learned in the 2016 presidential election, the Institute will launch *Use Your Vote 2017*, a non-partisan program that seeks to educate, engage, and empower communities of color through mobilization and preparedness in advance of Election Day and by providing on-the-ground assistance to voters at the polls on Election Day.

**Phase 1: Pre-Election Day Advocacy.** To ensure maximum participation by New Jersey residents—particularly voters of color—in the November 2017 gubernatorial election and beyond, *Use Your Vote* will educate people through the dissemination of user-friendly materials that explain how to do the following: (1) register to vote and verify their registration; (2) verify their poll site location; and (3) confront barriers to voting, such as confusion about acceptable identification, being asked to cast a provisional ballot in the correct precinct, restrictions on voting for people with criminal
convictions, voting machine irregularities, and Election Day challenges by partisan representatives.

We will use two primary methods of getting information to our target communities: (1) written materials for door-to-door community canvassing, outreach by our grassroots partners, and for live presentations and trainings, and (2) live presentations and trainings by Institute lawyers and legal partners in venues across New Jersey, including presentations at civic organizations, places of worship, college campuses, and community centers.

**Phase 2: Election Day Advocacy.** On Election Day, the Institute and its partners will distribute voter empowerment tools and materials outside of polls in targeted communities. Where necessary, the Institute will dispatch legal volunteers to key polling sites to assist voters with problems they encounter at the polls, observe the voting process, and, if any irregularities occur, to report them to New Jersey elections officials and, if necessary, the Department of Justice.

Institute attorneys will play both a reporting role, by communicating issues and problems, and a substantive role, by augmenting the problem-solving capabilities of Poll Monitors and Mobile Field Attorneys. They will also forecast potential issues that are likely to cause problems on Election Day.

**Program Activity 2.** Following each election cycle, the Institute will closely scrutinize the experience of voters and the challenges faced to determine next steps, including whether to make policy and legislative recommendations in response to those experiences.

**Democracy & Justice Goal 2:**

*Host convenings that foster, strengthen, and encourage civic engagement, including a social justice-oriented gubernatorial candidates’ forum.*

**Program Activity 1:** Host a gubernatorial candidates’ forum at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in partnership with the NAACP New Jersey State Conference. Consistent with our respective organizations’ missions, and our positions as non-partisan community institutions, ensure that gubernatorial candidates make commitments to the racial, economic, and social justice issues that drive our work.

**Program Activity 2:** Provide opportunities for candidates for public office at the state and local levels to present their plans for New Jersey on policies that impact the daily lives of urban residents, people of color, low-income individuals, and seniors.

**Democracy & Justice Goal 3:**

*Build an Agenda for A Renewed Democracy that, among other things, advocates for the enfranchisement of all people with criminal convictions, including those who are currently incarcerated.*
Program Activity 1: Work with partners, such as the Brennan Center for Justice, to create *An Agenda for A Renewed Democracy in New Jersey*, which will help position New Jersey as an exemplar for state action by building an inclusive democracy that maximizes participation.

The agenda will advocate for a New Jersey Voting Rights Act that will urge the New Jersey Legislature to pass legislation providing: (1) automatic voter registration; (2) minimum early voting requirements; and (3) access to voting rights for people with criminal convictions.

We will work with partners and elected officials to build a campaign around these issues for legislative reform, and to hold state and local candidates and elected officials accountable, with the aim of helping to make New Jersey an example of what an inclusive democracy can be.

Democracy & Justice Goal 4:

Evaluate the current state of reentry in New Jersey to develop innovative strategies to ensure that all returning citizens can fully reintegrate into their communities.

Program Activity 1: Building off of *An Agenda for a Renewed Democracy in New Jersey*, produce a report and series of policy papers and public education documents that outline in detail the historical underpinnings of New Jersey’s law that disqualifies people with criminal convictions from voting, explores its modern day impact, particularly on communities of color, and makes the case for why we should end that practice, including for those people who are currently incarcerated.

Program Activity 2: Based on the findings of our research and writing, and interviews with community members and those impacted by this practice, launch a campaign using legislative and litigation strategies to restore voting rights to people with criminal convictions, including those who are currently incarcerated.

Program Activity 3: Produce a report and series of policy papers and public education documents that outline the inability of people with criminal convictions to serve on juries in New Jersey and how this exclusion specifically impacts communities of color.

Program Activity 4: Based on the findings of our research and writing, and interviews with community members and those impacted by this practice, launch a campaign using legislative and litigation strategies to restore the right to serve on juries in New Jersey to people with criminal convictions.

Democracy & Justice Goal 5:

Ensure that racial equity is a major priority in the state’s redistricting plans and that public input is considered by the redistricting commissions.
Program Activity 1: Undertake to assist the U.S. Census Bureau in assuring an accurate 2020 Census count in New Jersey through an initiative to be called “Full Count New Jersey” which will:

- Encourage urban residents to participate fully in the count;
- Assist the Bureau to identify and hire residents in urban areas; and
- Promote the passage of legislation, similar to recently enacted legislation in Maryland and New York, requiring that incarcerated individuals be counted in the communities from which they came to prison.

Program Activity 2: Design and implement an initiative to monitor New Jersey’s Legislative and Congressional Redistricting processes to assure fair and equitable treatment of urban areas and their residents.

The Institute’s Proposed Organization Structure

Modifications to the organizational structure of the Institute will strengthen its ability to target resources more efficiently on the three pillars and meeting the goals within each. The most significant change in organizational structure will be the elimination of the direct service function as a component of the Institute’s operations. Future demonstration or pilot projects will be just that, demonstrations or pilots that will spin away from the organization within a set timeframe.

The chart below shows the proposed new organization structure and staffing.

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Board of Trustees

President & CEO

Vice President

Operations Director

Administrative Director
HR & Benefits Associate
Development Associate
Consultants
Administrative Volunteers & Interns

Law and Policy Director

Senior Policy Counsel
Policy Counsel
Associate Counsel
Trustee Fellow
Debevoise Fellow
Program Associate
Field Organizer
Campaign Manager
Volunteers & Interns

Communications Director

NJCF Outreach Manager
Communications Associate
Volunteers & Interns
The Institute’s organizational structure will facilitate the management of its program activities and support services efficiently and effectively. The three operating departments: Operations, Law and Policy, and Communications will each be headed by a director with program specific managers and associates reporting to them. The three directors and the Vice President will be direct reports to the President. Implementation of the programs and activities associated with the Institute’s three pillars will be overseen by the Law and Policy Director supported by the staff of the two other departments.

**New Resources Required by the Plan**

It is anticipated that the program and restructuring proposed in the strategic plan will require additional resources over the five-year span. Salaries for the President/CEO, the Vice President and directors of Operations and Communications are already included in the 2017 budget, but salaries and fringe benefits for several other staff people will be additions to the budget under the plan.

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Manager of Civic Engagement</td>
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<td>NJCF Outreach Manager</td>
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<td>Communications Associate</td>
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Moreover, additional costs associated with outreach activities, communications and marketing, technology, and staff development must be included in the budget over the life of the plan. It is anticipated that these additional costs will be phased in over the first three years of the plan.

**Resource Development & the Institute’s Funded Growth Strategy**

The Institute’s annual budget assumes core funding coming from the endowment established through the Alan and Amy Lowenstein Foundation. Funds provided by the endowment allow the Institute to maintain a small staff of policy development and community outreach professionals, who are supplemented by an equally small compliment of support staff. As the programmatic agenda of the organization has grown, its need for additional resources also has grown. Indeed, program expansion and the 2008 nationwide economic downturn resulted, over several years, in the need to increase the size of the Institute’s drawdown from the endowment.
The Institute has made substantial progress in reducing its reliance on the endowment in the last year. In eight of the last 10 years the Institute withdrew more than $1 million from its endowment. In 2015, for example, it withdrew more than $1.1 million. In FY 2017, however, the Institute is poised, for the first time in nearly 10 years, to draw down the Board-approved amount of $600,000. While its finances have improved, additional resources will be required to fully implement the agenda outlined above.

The Institute’s improved financial position is attributable, in a very meaningful way, to the generous giving of its Trustees, who, on an individual basis, have steadfastly provided financial support to the organization. All members of the Board contribute annually, in addition, all support the annual gala, which is a means by which the Institute raises general operating funds and advertises its program to a diverse audience of potential new friends.

The Institute is working with the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) on a year-long customized consulting engagement to build the Institute’s financial capacity and to help staff develop financial information to make sound strategic decisions and communicate these decisions to internal and external stakeholders. As part of this consultation, the NFF will work with Institute staff to develop cash projections for this strategic plan, so that the Board’s Development and Strategic Direction Committees can plan for the financial needs to enable the implementation of the plan.

Given this important moment, and the work outlined above, Trustees will need to play a more active role in resource development if securing the funds required to achieve the goals identified in the strategic plan is to be realized. It would be particularly helpful if Trustees identified contacts they have at national foundations and individuals they are willing to approach on behalf of the Institute. They, moreover, could provide Institute staff with introductions to these contacts. Program officers at the J. P. Morgan, Ford, Arnold, Annie E. Casey, Public Welfare, and Open Society Foundations have expressed interest in aspects of the Institute’s program agenda; advocacy by Institute Trustees could deepen these foundations’ interest in the organization’s work and possibly generate additional financial support. Board members have been quite helpful in making the case for the Institute with local foundations like Prudential, Victoria, the Fund for New Jersey, Schumann, and others. Similar assistance with national philanthropy is what is needed now. The Board’s Resource Development Committee could play a facilitating role in keeping Board members focused on the importance of their role in this area.

**Monitoring Plan Implementation**

To ensure this strategic plan does not become anything more than an articulated wish list, its implementation will be monitored on a regular basis by the Board’s Strategic Direction Committee. The Institute’s President and Chief Executive Officer will report to the committee, at least bi-annually, on progress toward achieving the goals specified in the plan.

Such reports will identify difficulties encountered in implementation and what actions have been or are being undertaken to address them. If modifications to the plan are considered necessary, the committee will discuss the modifications with management and determine what action should
be taken. The Strategic Direction Committee will keep the Board informed about plan implementation progress.

**Plan Implementation Challenges**

The five-year period this strategic plan covers will present a variety of challenges the Institute will be required to overcome. Some of the challenges will be shaped by the external environment in which the organization functions and others will be defined by the manner in which the Institute goes about its work. Several key challenges are listed below:

**Internal Operational Challenges**

- The goals and program activities presented in these pages describe an agenda that is ambitious yet tightly focused on a set of social justice issues that the Institute has demonstrated an ability to successfully address. Given the political environment at the national level and the uncertain political and economic environment at the state level, the Institute will need to exercise considerable institutional discipline, if it is to avoid having its attention diverted from its agenda to the policy crisis of the moment. While maintaining some flexibility in its ability to respond to major policy challenges the Institute might be particularly suited to address, the Board and senior management must keep their focus on and adhere to the agenda described in the strategic plan.

- The Institute also must acknowledge and respect the presence of other organizations operating in areas in which it has a possible interest – especially when Institute capacity and expertise are in question – and demonstrate a willingness to collaborate, cooperate, and partner with others to advance issues of mutual concern. Even when the Institute believes it can apply greater expertise, every effort must be made to avoid taking on issues other organizations consider their domain. In such instances, the Institute must exercise restraint and seek to work in a supportive role to help advance the issue(s) in question. Such a posture also helps the Institute avoid straying from its programmatic agenda.

- While the Institute has established strong and effective working relationships with many non-profit organizations involved in social and economic policy development, public education, and advocacy in general, it has been limited in its outreach to Latinos and other people of color organizations. Indicating how the issues agenda of the Institute speaks to the concerns of these groups should become a more prominent aspect of Institute outreach. Given the organization’s commitment to advance social justice on behalf of all people of color, addressing this limitation is essential to the realization of its mission.

- One of the Institute’s strengths is its ability to serve as a trusted, neutral convener of individuals and organizations committed to action that ameliorates social justice inequities. This role is an important tool in conducting the Institute’s work, and because it requires not only skill, but also patience and substantive knowledge, if not deep expertise,
it should be carefully nurtured. As one NJISJ staffer noted, convening often feels like “herding cats”, but if done well, the rewards can be substantial.

- Much of the change the strategic plan seeks to accomplish in the criminal justice reform pillar will require the cooperation and support of labor unions. Building successful working relationships with the unions means Institute staff must become familiar with the concerns of union members and sensitive to the role of union leaders as advocates for their people. Navigating successfully between the interests of unions and those of the Institute’s constituencies will demand a level of skill and sophistication the Institute must develop in very short order.

- Although more attention is being given to the need to “Brand” the Institute as a social justice innovator, communicating the brand requires still more attention. Better and more effective utilization of social media, for example, is one key means by which the organization should seek to enhance its capacity. NJISJ also should explore engaging a marketing firm to assist it in developing and implementing an effective message delivery strategy.

- Building the Institute’s operational infrastructure to assure its ability to carry out the work described in this strategic plan must be a very high priority. The plan envisions the addition of several new staff people, and additional resources committed to technology upgrades, community outreach, and marketing. These additions will be critical to the Institute’s ability to perform the work the plan describes. Given the importance of this challenge, the Board must step forward and begin to play a more active role in identifying and securing the resources needed to build NJISJ’s capacity. Management, which has the lead role in this regard, also must assure that the resources made available to the organization are being efficiently and effectively utilized.

*External Environmental Challenges*

- Few challenge the view that the national political landscape is foreboding for those the Institute considers its constituency. The environment suggests that the concerns of social justice advocates are likely to be given short shrift. The Institute, therefore, should be prepared to explain what the federal government proposes to do and is doing in the areas on which it is focused, their implications for urban residents, people of color, seniors, and low-income individuals, and what must be done to address them. Advances in the social justice arena achieved over the last 50 years may be at risk, and the Institute should position itself to sound the alert and provide a response roadmap.

- New Jersey’s political landscape, while less scary, is fraught with uncertainty. In the first year of this five-year strategic plan, the state will experience a gubernatorial campaign leading to the election of its next governor by year’s end. The policy agenda of the incoming administration is unknown and, consequently, it is not possible to predict where the Institute’s energy should be directed in terms of state policy concerns. Given this
uncertainty, perhaps the Institute should craft a statement of its chief policy concerns and provide it to the gubernatorial candidates and request their responses.

- What is clear about New Jersey’s position and prospects, however, is that the state’s fiscal condition is abysmal. New Jersey is ranked among the five states with the most severe fiscal problems\(^2\) of the fifty states. It ranks 38\(^{th}\) among states with enough cash to cover their short-term bills; 49\(^{th}\) among states that can cover their fiscal-year spending using current revenues; 50\(^{th}\) in having a hedge against large, long-term liabilities; and 40\(^{th}\) with large unfunded pension liabilities and state debt compared to the state’s personal income.\(^3\) Given this harsh reality, the state’s inclination to undertake any meaningful policy initiatives that don’t produce immediate financial returns is improbable. The state is broke and in a fiscal hole out of which it has not been able to map an exit.

- The philanthropic community, primarily at the national level, has become much more cautious about supporting efforts focused on promoting economic health, educational improvement, and general wellbeing in Newark. Local and state-based foundations, however, are more receptive to requests for funds from Newark nonprofit organizations, but their level of support tends to be substantially less than what can be provided by larger, national foundations. Newark’s difficulty in attracting funds from national foundations may reflect foundation executives’ belief that the problems confronting the city are intractable or that past investments made in the city have not been well managed or effectively utilized. Some local philanthropic leaders maintain that publication of *The Prize*,\(^4\) a book recounting how a $100 million gift from Mark Zuckerberg in early 2010 to achieve education reform in Newark was used, exacerbated major foundations’ lack of interest in investing in Newark. Committing a third of the gift - $31 million – to cover two years of back pay for school teachers didn’t appear to many as consistent with the quest for education reform.\(^5\) The narrative about the possibility of successful philanthropic investing in Newark must be changed.

**Opportunities**

The Institute has made significant strides in its eighteen years of existence advocating on behalf of urban residents, establishing working relationships, and advancing progressive policies affecting community development, juvenile justice, employment and training, and prisoner reentry. Building on this track record is obviously a high priority of the organization and opportunities to do so are not hard to identify.

\(^2\) Ranking the States by fiscal Condition 2016 Edition, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, June 1, 2016.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid. p. 156.
The most common refrain of those who have interacted with Ryan Haygood is that he is an impressive young professional whose dedication to task is both sincere and substantive. Since his appointment as the Institute’s President and CEO, Ryan has captured the imagination of the progressive, activist, social justice-oriented community. He is characterized as a capable leader, whose intellectual assets, interpersonal skills, and professional demeanor should enable him to position the Institute as an increasingly important player in social justice policy formation and implementation. His growing popularity presents a real opportunity for the Institute to become a leader in the work it does. But, also because of his popularity, Ryan must avoid the temptation to be involved in every social justice activity occurring in the state. Some observers maintain that in his effort to establish his bona fides as a sincere, caring social justice advocate, he may spread himself too thin. His Board of Trustees should husband the resource it has in its President.

The relationship between the Institute and the Mayors of Newark has never been strained (except when the city has failed to reimburse the Institute on a timely basis for services rendered), but it has never been as strong as it is today. The level of cooperation, especially regarding employment and training, between the Mayor’s office and the Institute is unique and suggests that other opportunities to collaborate, after careful delineation of roles, could be in the offing.

Several in the local philanthropic community believe the possibility exists for Newark’s social welfare and social justice programming to receive more favorable attention from major national foundations. It is suggested that marshalling the political stature of Newark’s mayor, the national educational stature of the Chancellor of Rutgers University-Newark, and the growing stature of NJISJ and its President could help change the narrative about what’s possible to achieve in Newark. An orchestrated, joint outreach effort to a select group of national foundations by this team, marketing an agenda to which they are committed could produce beneficial results. The Board of Trustees and Institute senior management should carefully explore this possibility.

Ryan has maintained and built upon the relationships earlier Institute administrations established with the Office of the Attorney General, the Juvenile Justice Commission, and the Office of the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections. Good working relationships with these governmental entities are important to the Institute’s criminal and juvenile justice reform work. The relationships must be nurtured to ensure continued cooperation and to assure future opportunities to advance the Institute’s social justice agenda.

The Institute has established itself as an effective convener who comes to the table without a hidden agenda. It is thought to be an honest broker, one that clearly states what it is attempting to accomplish and its willingness to partner with others similarly inclined. And, because its research and policy analysis is highly regarded (some critics allege, however, that the organization is a bunch of lawyers who write papers) and its Board is highly respected, other nonprofit organizations are eager to partner and collaborate with it. The
opportunity to deepen and broaden collaborative efforts should be thoughtfully explored to determine how doing so can contribute to advancing the Institute’s agenda.

- One means by which the Institute might extend its visibility and perhaps broaden its financial support base would involve adding a more robust advocacy component to its method of operating. The Institute should develop and implement a strategy to educate potential supporters about what it is doing on behalf of urban residents, low-income individuals and people of color, and how others might participate and contribute to those efforts. Advocacy, at present, is one of the tools in the Institute’s arsenal of approaches to its work but resource constraints and the lack of a carefully developed strategy indicating how it should be used has limited its application. Discussions should be had to determine what an advocacy strategy might look like for each Institute pillar, what resources would be needed to implement it and what benefits might accrue to the Institute if undertaken.

- The philanthropic community nation-wide appears to realize that the federal government’s anticipated retreat from support of a domestic safety net, social justice and other progressive social programs will create an increased demand for greater investment by philanthropy in these areas. The fall-off in federal support also means local and state-based organizations will be called upon to intensify their efforts to assist these organizations as they attempt to fill the gaps. The Institute must position itself so that it is considered capable of responding to the social justice challenges occasioned by the cut backs.

Conclusion

A strategic plan is only as good as the effort committed to its implementation. This plan identifies the goals for the next phase of Institute operations and the action steps that indicate how the goals will be pursued. It identifies operational and resource issues that must be addressed if the plan is to be realized, and it proposes a method by which the organization, though the oversight of its Board of Trustees, can monitor progress in achieving its goal.

The plan reflects the thinking of the organization’s senior management and the Board’s Strategic Direction Committee, with input provided by program staff and selected stakeholders, constituents, collaborators and members of the community regarding how the Institute should position itself as a social justice advocate over the next five years. It is a programmatic road map that, if followed, will enable the organization to carry out its mission of service to urban residents, particularly, low-income individuals, seniors, and people of color.

Finally, the plan highlights some of the major challenges that must be confronted as well as some of the opportunities that can be maximized to realize the goals articulated in it.