

# JUST FUTURES

## Movement Building and Strategy Summit

June 5 and 6, 2025 :: Cedarbrook Lodge



# The Just Futures Partners



**Front and Centered** (FC) is a diverse and powerful coalition of groups across Washington State composed of and serving communities of color whose missions and members come together to advance equity and environmental and climate justice. Our work includes community capacity building, research and development, coalition alignment and advocacy.



**People's Economy Lab** (PEL) convenes community leaders, workshops transformative ideas, and builds better economic models. We push the boundaries of what's possible for a Just Transition to local, community-centered economies that are equitable, democratic, and regenerative.



**Statewide Poverty Action Network** (SPAN) builds grassroots power to end causes of poverty and create opportunities for everyone to prosper. We advocate for and organize anti-poverty strategies such as basic needs and cash assistance, removing barriers to reentry after incarceration, and providing consumer protections around fringe financial services, such as payday lending and debt collection.



Hosted by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, the **Washington Economic Justice Alliance** is a partnership between many lived experts, community organizations, tribes, businesses, and state agencies working to implement the 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty.

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# Land and Labor Acknowledgments

As we convene at Cedarbrook Lodge, Just Futures acknowledges that our event takes place on the lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the *dxʷdəwʔabš* (Duwamish), *bəqəlšut* (Muckleshoot), *spuyaləpabš* (Puyallup), *dxʷsəqʷəbš* (Suquamish), and *dxʷlilap* (Tulalip) nations. The Coast Salish Peoples have lived in the Salish Sea basin, throughout the San Juan Islands and the North Cascades watershed, from time immemorial.

This acknowledgement does not take the place of authentic relationships with Indigenous communities—it represents the beginning of what is necessary to truly honor Coast Salish Peoples. Acknowledgment is just the first step of a long journey that requires building awareness, connecting with peoples, and taking action. We encourage you to use resources like [Native Land Digital](#) to learn more about the Tribal lands where you live, work, and play. We also encourage you to seek out opportunities to build and deepen relationships with Tribes in your area, such as through volunteering, attending cultural events open to the public, or engaging in other avenues of support and connection.

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*The following labor acknowledgment originates from [Solid Ground](#), an organization that began as a group of neighborhood activists and volunteers responding to growing economic desperation in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood. Tapping into the spirit and funding of the federal War on Poverty, they pledged to work for "Freedom from Poverty through Action" and have continued to do so for over fifty years.*

*The Just Futures Movement Building and Strategy Summit adopts Solid Ground's acknowledgments and commitment to a living economy rooted in cooperative work, deep democracy, ecological and social well-being, and regenerative resources.*



Like most modern-day US institutions, Just Futures benefits from the unaddressed legacy of stolen labor at the foundation of this nation and its vast and inequitable wealth.

We respectfully acknowledge our debt to the enslaved people, primarily of African descent, whose labor and suffering built and grew the economy and infrastructure of a nation that refused to recognize their humanity.

While the 13th Amendment to the Constitution technically ended “slavery” in the US, we know that slavery’s ongoing impacts are still felt by countless people forced—through violence, threats, and coercion—to work in the US.

We recognize our debt to exploited workers past and present, whose labor was and continues to be stolen through unjust practices.

We acknowledge our collective debt to the Indigenous peoples of this land whose labor was forced and exploited, the Chinese Americans who built railroads that allowed for westward American development, Japanese Americans whose properties and livelihoods were taken from them while incarcerated during World War II, and Americans from the Philippines, Mexico, and Central and South America who have worked Pacific Northwest farms and canneries.

We recognize the immigrant and American-born workers of African, Asian, and Central and South American descent whose labor remains hidden in the shadows but still contributes to the well-being of our collective community.

We recognize that our economy continues to rely on the exploited labor of incarcerated people, largely people of color, who earn pennies an hour while generating billions in goods and services each year. And we know there are many other people, too numerous to mention, who are prevented from reaping the true value of their labor by unjust systems and cruel practices.

We mourn their loss of life, liberty, and opportunity.

We acknowledge that the theft of labor is the theft of generational progress. Nearly all people of color have been robbed of the opportunity and wealth that their ancestors might otherwise have passed on to them.

# Day 1 (June 5): Setting the Table.

11:00am

## **Rolling Start: Getting Settled**

Arrivals, hotel check-in for guests, meet and greet, set intention for the next two days.

12:00pm

## **Lunch**

Explore the Just Futures ecosystem and place in Washington State's effort for collaborative governance. You can also check out the **Storytelling Booth** and the **Economic Justice Alliance** table!

1:00pm

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Join us for land and labor acknowledgments, an event overview, and a quick review of how we got **here**.

1:15pm

## **Anchor Panel**

Hear six anchor organizations discuss their experience using community assemblies as a tool for collaborative governance in Washington State.

2:25pm

## **Relationship Building, Community Agreements**

Let's get to know who is in the room and decide how to maintain brave spaces.



# Day 1 (June 5): Setting the Table.

3:00pm	<b>Break</b> Bathroom, beverages, and light snacks.
3:10pm	<b>Caucusing</b> Convene with similar stakeholders to deepen foundational relationships and develop a comprehensive landscape of the barriers, resources, and other factors in practicing collaborative governance in Washington.
4:15pm	<b>Final Day 1 Session: Sharing Out</b> We'll review what we developed in the caucusing rooms to set the foundation for Day 2. We'll also consider how the assets we have can overcome barriers and challenges.
4:50pm	<b>Group Photo, Then Break</b>
6:00pm	<b>Dinner</b>
Evening	<b>Staying overnight? Relax and have fun!</b>

# Day 2 (June 6): Getting to Work.

8:00am

## **Breakfast**

Enjoy a light breakfast, reflect on Day 1, and meet new faces.

9:00am

## **Collective Recap and Framing Day 2**

Synthesis of Day 1, plus how to navigate hurdles with long-term change in mind.

9:30am

## **Anchor-led Session 1: Breakout by Geography**

*How do we come together to address regional barriers?* Anchors will convene in regional groups (northern WA, central/eastern/southern WA, and western WA) to answer that question.

11:00am

## **Break**

Bathroom, beverages, and light snacks.

11:05am

## **Anchor-led Session 2: Our Common Barriers (and Solutions)**

*How do we establish a shared and concentrated commitment?* Anchors will come together to find the throughline in the barriers we collectively face.



# Day 2 (June 6): Getting to Work.

11:45am

## **Your Unique Contributions**

We've identified the barriers and gaps, but each of us brings unique skills, experiences, and approaches to tackle them. We'll stop to reflect on our unique contributions.

12:00pm

## **Lunch**

1:00pm

## **How to Come Together**

*Where do we go from here? What will each of us do? Logistically, what does it take to coordinate across regions and issue areas?*

Collective action starts with individuals. In this closing session we'll take time to create and state our commitments to moving our work forward beyond this event.

2:15pm

## **Formalizing the Next Steps**

The statewide assemblies pilot is complete... but we're just getting started.

2:30pm

## **Closing**

# The Story of **JUST** **FUTURES** Past, Present, Future



# Before Just Futures

## Strategies for Poverty Reduction

In 2018, Governor Inslee convened agency leaders, advocacy groups, and community members with lived experience of poverty and tasked them with “developing a [strategic plan](#) to reduce poverty, improve communities and make needed progress related to housing, health integration, employment and education.” Known as the Poverty Reduction Work Group, this gathering discussed what it really means to build power and to think about the economy in a different way. They decided that Washington State needed to establish measurable and achievable goals for reducing poverty and worked to create eight poverty reduction strategies:

### 8 STRATEGIES POVERTY REDUCTION ROOT CAUSES & BEYOND



- 1 UNDO STRUCTURAL RACISM**  
Understand structural racism and historical trauma and take action to undo how they manifest in state policy, program, and practice.
- 2 BALANCE POWER**  
Make equal space in decision-making for people and communities most affected by poverty and inequality.
- 3 INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**  
Target equitable income growth and wealth-building among people with low incomes.
- 4 ENSURE FOUNDATIONAL WELL-BEING**  
Strengthen health supports across the life span to promote the intergenerational well-being of families.
- 5 PRIORITIZE URGENT NEEDS**  
Prioritize the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness, mental illness, or addiction.
- 6 BUILD A HOLISTIC CONTINUUM OF CARE**  
Build an integrated human service continuum of care that addresses the holistic needs of children, adults, and families.
- 7 DECRIMINALIZE POVERTY**  
Decriminalize poverty and reduce reliance on the child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems.
- 8 PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK**  
Ensure a just transition to the future of work.

## New Economy Washington Report

In 2019, unrelated to Governor Inslee's Poverty Reduction Work Group, People's Economy Lab (PEL), Front and Centered (FC), Statewide Poverty Action Network (SPAN), and the Washington State Budget and Policy Center partnered to create the New Economy Washington (NEW) report, which articulated a vision of a sustainable, equitable economy rooted in deep democracy and self-determination with the goal of creating shared economic well-being. This vision intentionally departs from our existing dominant economy, which is rooted in rampant growth, extraction of natural resources, commodification, and workforce exclusion and exploitation based on race and gender. The NEW report outlined principles and conditions for an equitable economy in Washington State, including a clear understanding of the history of how we got here as a society, a belief and willpower to create change, built consensus, and a willingness to organize across silos throughout the state to build trust, patience, and capacity to move towards long-term change.



## A Global Pandemic

The following year, in the wake of a global pandemic, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services convened a technical advisory group (TAG) to shift the State's thinking about the economic recovery to using more comprehensive measures of progress, disaggregated by race and geography, which is also a goal of the State's [10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty](#).

At the same time, FC led the effort to develop and pass the [Healthy Environment for All Act](#), focused on environmental justice, which created a series of mandates for state agencies to be more accountable to communities on the frontlines of injustice.





# Just Futures

Finally, in spring of 2021, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to create the Just Futures project to establish a community process and new definitions and measures to hold the government accountable to frontline communities in the economic recovery from COVID-19.

The Just Futures Project became a collaborative project of FC, SPAN, and PEL. Building upon previous years of work and commitment to a Just Transition, they convened a **Community Leadership Committee** comprised of community representatives and leaders from the following organizations:

- Asia Pacific Cultural Center
- Black Dot
- Central Valley Early Learning Center
- Choose 180
- Disability Rights Washington
- Familias Unidas por la Justicia
- Latino Community Fund of Washington
- RISE Network
- Skyway Coalition
- Tacoma Ministerial Alliance
- UTOPIA Washington
- Young Warrior Society



Over the course of two years, the Just Futures Community Leadership Committee offered crucial insight, expertise, and legitimacy, representing a variety of lived experiences and ensuring community-oriented policies and programs, designed and intended to seed economic resiliency, will meet communities' needs.

Based on feedback from listening sessions, discussions, and drawing from their own lived experience, the Just Futures Community Leadership Committee established a consensus that:

- Our current economy is built on exploitation of resources and human labor for the purpose of accumulating wealth and power for the few instead of the many.
- Systems built upon oppressive ideologies, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, consumerism, and militarism, are used to maintain governance of the current economy.
- Our collective community vision is to transition to an economy that is rooted in democracy, self-determination, sustainability, and equity towards shared economic well-being.
- A [Just Transition](#) won't happen on its own. First, we must center social and ecological well-being and make headway toward governance rooted in deep, participatory democracy.

The 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty in Washington states: "People experiencing poverty are the foremost experts on their lives and possess considerable knowledge as users of the systems and programs intended to assist them. Incorporating the knowledge and expertise of those most affected by poverty, as well as sharing power and resources with them, is essential to the design of equitable policies, programs, and practices that build a just and equitable future."

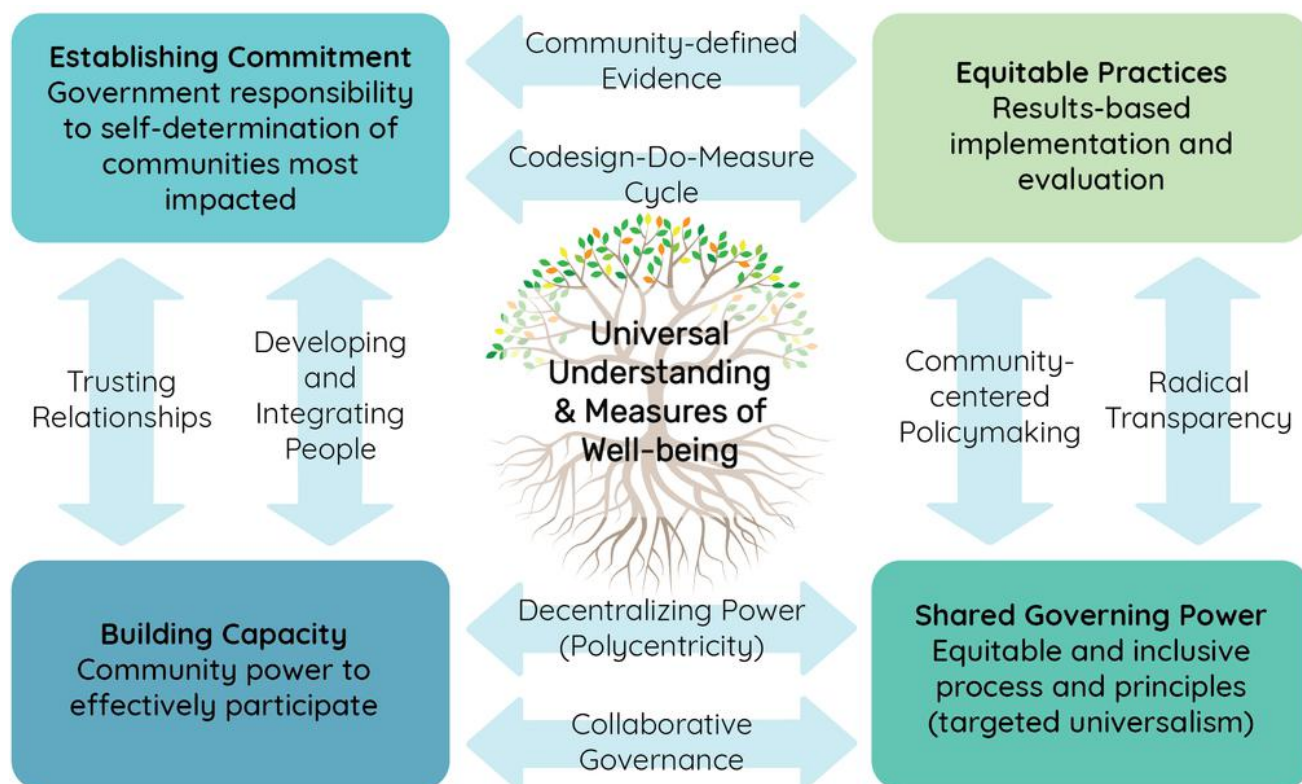
We, the Just Futures partners, agree with this statement, and we are aligned in centering lived experiences to understand and diagnose gaps in policy design and implementation.

# Cornerstones of Collaborative Governance

The Just Futures partners and Community Leadership Committee worked together to create the Cornerstones of Collaborative Governance. **The Cornerstones call for the adoption of a deeper form of democracy—shared decision-making power with frontline communities in Washington.** ([Read our full report](#) on the Cornerstones of Collaborative Governance.)

By “collaborative governance” we mean the implementation of “formal and informal participatory models and practices through which government and communities work together to make collective policy decisions, co-create programs to meet community needs, and ensure those policies and programs are implemented effectively.” **Collaborative governance rethinks what power looks like at all levels of government.**

## Cornerstones of Collaborative Governance for a Just and Equitable Future





# Community Assemblies

Inspired by people's assemblies and citizens' assemblies, the Just Futures partners developed **Community Assemblies** as one tool for putting collaborative governance into practice.

In September 2023, the Environmental Justice (EJ) Council issued a set of recommendations to the governor on EJ policies to advance the state's commitments in the Healthy Environmental for All (HEAL) Act and the 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty. The recommendations included a proposal for the legislature to allocate \$10 million to a series of community assemblies across the state.



In April 2024, the legislature appropriated \$2 million for community assemblies, with funding coming from the Climate Commitment Act. This funding was issued to the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), with pass-through funds to design and run assemblies going to community organizations. In its budget appropriation, the state legislature authorized funds “to pilot a statewide network of community assemblies” that engage “overburdened communities” to “elevate community expertise and solutions to budget and policy makers on sustainable investments and to create a more climate resilient Washington.”



After an open request for proposals, DSHS awarded the contract to the Just Futures partners. The contract gave Just Futures a year to complete the entire project, while a November ballot initiative threatening to repeal the Climate Commitment Act (and by extension, funding for assemblies) created urgency to launch community assemblies as soon as possible.

Based on their mandate and shared commitment to building up collaborative governance over the longer term, Just Futures and DSHS identified four main goals for the community assemblies:

1. Identify community needs, priorities, and solutions
2. Build community infrastructure and capacity
3. Build trust and productive working relationships
4. Demonstrate the utility of assemblies to government and normalize collaborative governance

In July 2024, Just Futures movement partners put out an application for local organizations around the state to host assemblies as “anchor” organizations and ultimately selected six anchors: [Blue Mountain Action Council](#) (BMAC), [Community to Community Development](#) (C2C), [ECOSS](#), [Equitable Recovery and Reconciliation Alliance](#) (ERRA), [Nuestra Casa](#), and [UTOPIA Washington](#). Movement partners helped anchors prepare and lay plans for their assemblies by producing guidebooks and bringing on consultants to support the assembly process.

## Conducting the Assemblies (Sept. 2024–Feb. 2025)

In 2024, Just Futures and the anchor organizations piloted six community assemblies across the state to make government more inclusive, participatory, and responsive. Frontline communities from Spokane to Skagit drew from their experiences of pollution, inflation, lack of resources, and more to generate new policy ideas.

Community members identified solutions on a wide range of issues like mental health, affordable housing, and agricultural worker protection. **Here's what some of them had to say about taking part in community assemblies and experiencing collaborative governance in action:**



**TaNeashia, participant from Tacoma**

*We talked about the root cause, not just its effects. We owned our part and let our voices be heard without getting lost in lots of data. This wasn't about collecting information—it was about action.*

**Marcus, participant from Walla Walla**



*This was the first time I ever did anything that involved government policy. Listening to everyone's perspective actually changed my mind, and we all got on board to create more mental health resources in Walla Walla.*



**Karla, participant from Walla Walla**

*The variety of people made the community assembly feel different. There were pastors, restaurant workers, and hospital workers all working to help our town. After the assemblies I had a moment where I thought to myself, "This is real, something is actually happening here."*





# 2024 Community Assembly Priorities and Solutions

## BMAC:

*Low-income community members (restaurant workers, pastors, small business owners) convened with local mental health care providers over four months to discuss how to expand critical mental health resources.*

**Anchor:** Blue Mountain Action Council (BMAC)

**Location:** Walla Walla

**Community:** Residents experiencing poverty, especially Latine residents

**Top community priorities:** Mental health.

**Additional priorities:** Affordable housing; combating homelessness and substance misuse; and spaces for youth and teens.

**Community-identified solutions:**

1. Open a 23/7 mental health crisis relief center.
2. Offer a bachelor's degree in social work or mental health counseling at Walla Walla Community College.
3. WA Health Care Authority training to certify peer counselors with lived experience in behavioral health.



**Anchor:** Community to Community Development (C2C)

**Location:** Skagit and Whatcom Counties

**Community:** Latine farm workers

*Farm workers convened for three intergenerational gatherings to discuss methods to protect their communities from exploitation and climate change.*

**Top community priorities:** Housing; food; child care; immigrant resources; and farm worker lending cooperatives.

**Additional priorities:** Wages and cost of living; youth transportation; deportations; labor law enforcement and stopping the H-2A visa program that displaces workers; and safety from pesticides via protective equipment.

**Community-identified solutions:**

1. Laws protecting workers' right to organize.
2. Investment in housing, food, child care, and lending cooperatives for farm workers.
3. Establishment of an immigrant resource center.
4. Universal health insurance; workplace health services; a worker hotline; and compensation for workers who lose jobs and risk missing payments.
5. An app to control pesticide use.
6. Oversight committee for the state's Department of Labor and Industries.

# 2024 Community Assembly Priorities and Solutions



**Anchor:** ECOSS

**Location:** South Seattle

**Community:** Residents of the Duwamish corridor

*Immigrant and refugee community members, ages seven to 70 years old, convened over two days to discuss environmental harms in the Duwamish Corridor.*

**Top community priorities:** Affordable housing and government transparency and accountability.

**Additional priorities:** Green space; family and youth programs; and public transportation.

**Community-identified solutions:**

1. Community steering committee to monitor Duwamish River cleanup; advocate for community priorities; and guide community investment.
2. Reclamation of the waterfront for the Duwamish Tribe.



**Anchor:** Equitable Recovery and Reconciliation Alliance (ERRA)

**Location:** Spokane and Tacoma

**Community:** BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) small business owners and economic development advocates

*BIPOC small business owners and technical assistance providers convened at four sessions to discuss building community wealth.*

**Top community priorities:** Small business resources, support, and funding; shifting from capitalist to community-centered economic structures.

**Additional priorities:** Funding and infrastructure for the BIPOC small business ecosystem; and challenging structural and cultural forces promoting individual self-preservation rather than collaboration.

**Community-identified solutions:**

1. Community mobilization including education, tools, action plans, coordination across organizations, and community partnerships with public agencies.
2. Community infrastructure in the form of a backbone and policy support organization.
3. Community building in Spokane and regular inter-organizational communication and collaboration.

# 2024 Community Assembly Priorities and Solutions



**Anchor:** Nuestra Casa

**Location:** Sunnyside

**Community:** Latine immigrants

*Immigrant and non-English speaking community members came together for a three-day community assembly to discuss the lack of fair housing, contaminated soil, and poor air and water quality.*

**Top community priorities:** Living conditions; water quality; housing affordability; and language justice.

**Additional priorities:** Multilingual information on programs and services; better collaboration between governments, community groups, and residents; and political representation.

**Community-identified solutions:**

1. Hosting know-your-rights trainings, lobby days, and more community assemblies with Nuestra Casa (NC).
2. NC collaboration with housing justice organizations.
3. Creating a community resource hub.
4. Making housing a local/state policy priority and funding it.



**Anchor:** UTOPIA Washington

**Location:** South King County

**Community:** LGBTQ Pacific Islanders in King County

*Pacific Islander community members convened for a two-day Mālama I Ka 'Aina assembly to discuss how to strengthen capacity building and analyze shared problems and experiences.*

**Top community priorities:** Cultural preservation and mental health.

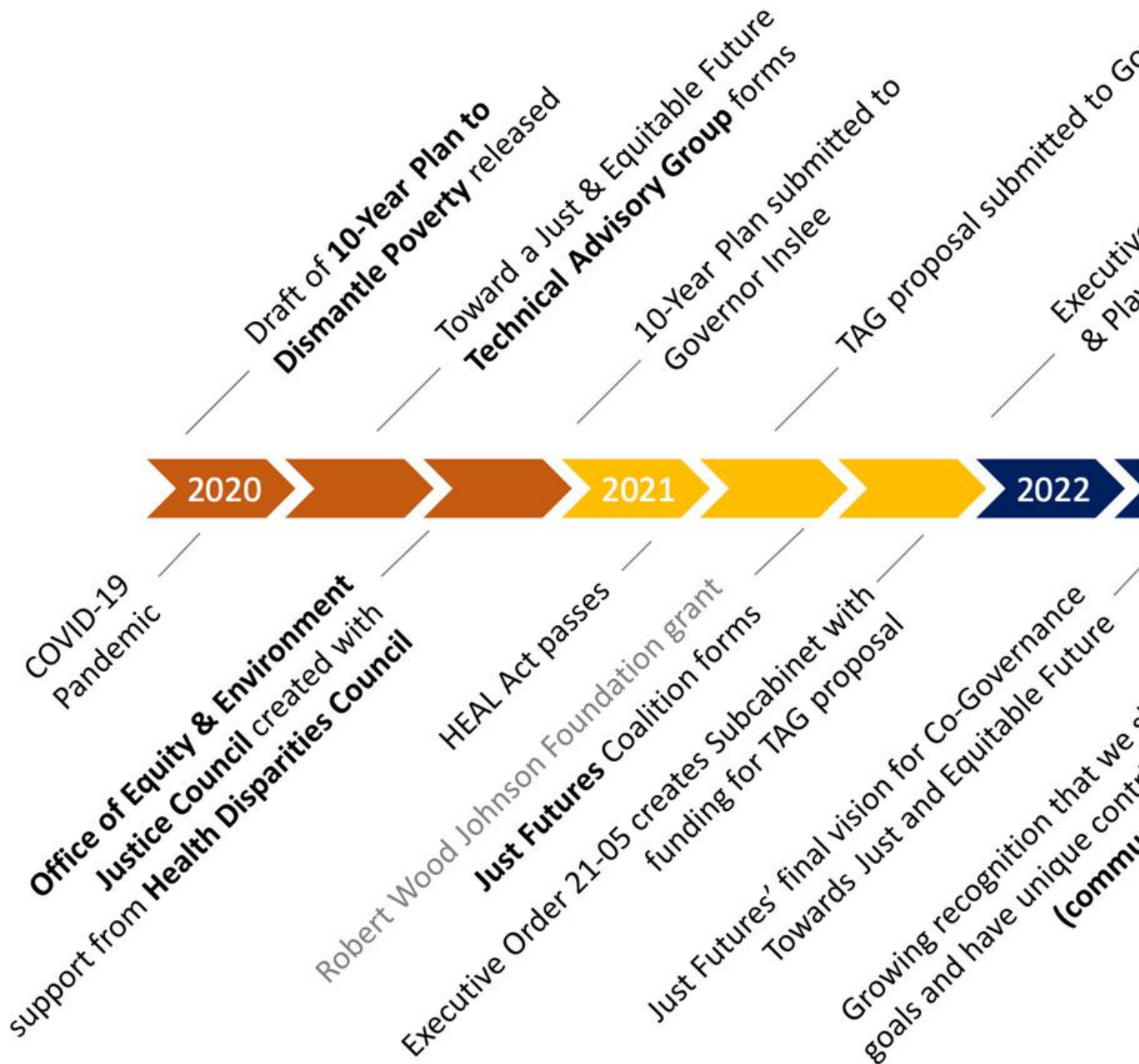
**Additional priorities:** Data collection and storytelling; food systems; and more spaces like assemblies for community conversations.

**Community-identified solutions:**

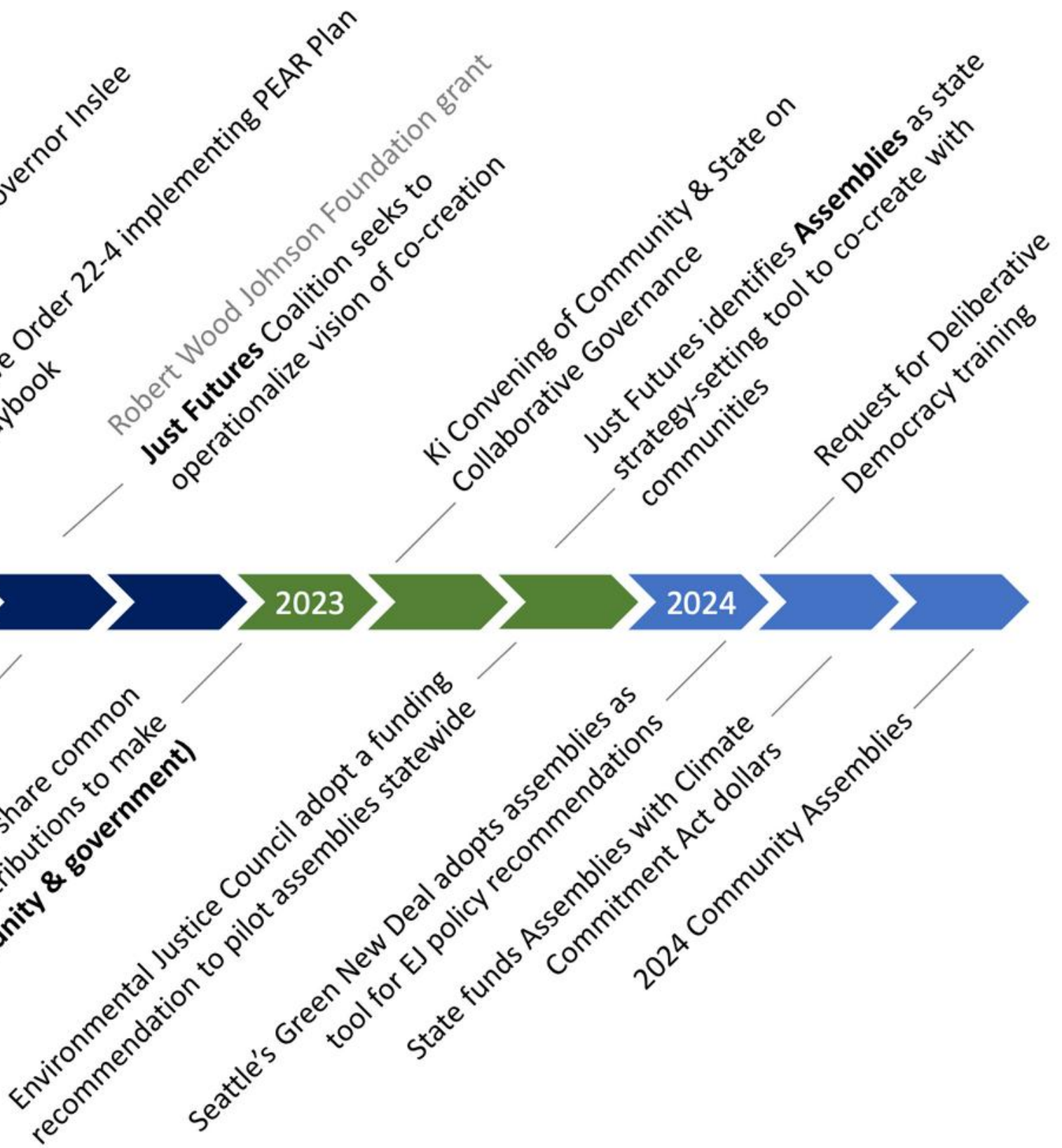
1. Collaborate with state's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.
2. Secure funding for more spaces like assemblies for community conversations.
3. Address systemic barriers to Pacific Islander representation in state agencies as well as the mental health field and other fields.
4. Secure resources to support oral histories, traditional agriculture, and environmental stewardship to keep Pacific Islander cultures alive and promote sustainability.

# 2025 and Beyond

In 2025, Just Futures is supporting community assembly participants and anchor organizations to advocate for the solutions their assemblies generated. We are also continuing to build relationships with government partners and seeking additional funding to keep convening community assemblies throughout Washington State.







# JUST FUTURES