

**NEW  ERA
COLORADO**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022–2025



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Executive Summary

In 2006, a group of CU Boulder students founded New Era Colorado with the belief that young people deserve a seat at the table in our political system: new generations serve as a renewal force for our society, demanding that our country live up to its espoused values of equality and justice. And yet, young people face significant barriers to accessing our democracy. New Era was founded in order to remove these barriers to meaningful civic engagement and build youth power in our democracy. Due to changing political circumstances in Colorado, expansions in voter registration and election access, and a deeper commitment to anti-racist principles and practice, we launched this strategic planning process to refresh our organizational mission, vision, and strategy. This plan represents a deepening and sharpening of our electoral work, a concerted effort to hold electeds accountable to the Youth Agenda and pass Youth Agenda policies, and an investment in the leadership of youth organizers across the state.

Vision

We believe young people can and will give life to the world we dream of. That world looks like:

- An abundance of shared resources where every person's basic needs are met, and we all have equitable access
- Caring for the land and environment and acknowledging that it is part of us
- All people are treated with dignity and safety so we can show up as our authentic selves
- Connection between generations, combining the power of young people's possibility-thinking with the wisdom of our elders
- Wellness in our minds, bodies, and souls
- Having the resources we need to make informed, self-determined decisions about our lives and bodies, with consistent respect for the decisions that we make
- Space for healing, creativity, and joy
- Systems of oppression are dismantled and replaced with systems of care and accountability

Mission

New Era Colorado organizes young people through the political process to win on the youth agenda.

- New Era Colorado Foundation organizes young people to participate in the political process, develop as leaders, and find a political home.*
- New Era Colorado Action Fund organizes young people to win on the youth agenda through elections and policymaking.

**New Era Colorado Foundation does not participate in any partisan activities.*

Theory of Change

At New Era, we are building a youth movement toward our collective vision by organizing young people to participate in the political process and pressure the system to create the world we dream of. We believe that change is possible through a combination of inside- and outside-system forces: grassroots organizing, voter turnout, education, leadership development, policy change, culture change, and accountability. We create opportunities for young people to make change by working at the top-down (policy change) and bottom-up (organizing) levels to build toward the Youth Agenda, ultimately creating the world we want to live in. New Era leverages four strategies to achieve our vision for the world: 1) advancing progressive policies*, 2) electing progressive leaders*, 3) developing, uplifting, and politicizing young leaders, and 4) mobilizing and organizing young people to participate in the political process.



Through this work, young people become leaders in an intergenerational movement toward our shared vision of the world and possess the political, social, & cultural power to deconstruct and reimagine our current systems towards our collective vision.

**These are strategies of New Era Colorado Action Fund.*

Strategic Goals

Over the next three years, we will build toward the following strategic priorities:

- 1. Win on the Youth Agenda, or young people's issue priorities**
 - We will have significantly influenced at least five major wins on the Youth Agenda.
 - We will see more elected officials and candidates speak about, uplift, and advocate for issues directly tied to the Youth Agenda.
- 2. Design, build, and launch a holistic multi-issue organizing model**
 - We will see an increase in ongoing participation by progressive young people in the full political process at the federal, state, and local level.
 - We will see more young people, especially young people of color, having the support and resources they need to organize their communities and participate in the political process.
 - We will see more young people, especially young people of color, calling New Era a political home.
 - We will have more trusting, transformational, and accountable relationships with our partners, prioritizing relationships with BIPOC-led partners.
- 3. Reflect our values internally**
 - We will see New Era staff feeling a stronger sense of safety and trust with the organization.
 - Our team will effectively and equitably use our time and resources to achieve our goals while providing space for creativity and autonomy.

Introduction

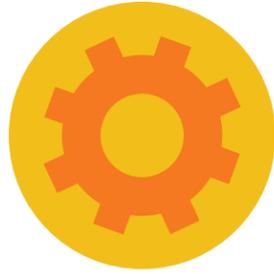
New Era Colorado* was founded in 2006 by a group of CU Boulder students who believed that young people deserve a seat at the table in our political system.

New generations serve as a renewal force for our society, demanding that our country live up to its espoused values of equality and justice. And yet, young people face significant barriers to accessing our democracy. New Era was founded in order to remove these barriers to meaningful civic engagement and build youth power in our democracy. New Era has become a leading voice for young people in Colorado politics and one of the most effective youth organizing groups in the country. Since our founding, we've registered over 250,000 young people to vote and turned our registrants out at some of the highest rates in the country. We've won on each of the issues we

prioritize at the ballot box or the legislature (economic justice, abortion rights, climate change, and election access) and we've graduated hundreds of young people from our leadership development programs. New Era alumni now serve in elected office and key positions of power across the state. Along the way, we've driven Colorado's youth turnout to third in the country in 2020. Though New Era was created to solve one problem, we are in the midst of a transformation. Due to changing political circumstances and a deeper commitment to anti-racist principles and practice, we launched this strategic planning process to take a step back and reassess our vision, mission, and strategy as an organization.

**New Era Colorado is comprised of New Era Colorado Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and New Era Colorado Action Fund, a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization. New Era Colorado Foundation does not participate in any partisan activities.*

Our desired outcomes were for our strategic planning process were:



Process

A collaborative strategic planning process, involving New Era staff, Board, and key stakeholders that allows us to wrestle with key topics related to anti-racism, movement building, & youth empowerment; and analyzes and establishes the identity of New Era Colorado as an organization. Our team is unified, energized, and clear on our vision and priorities heading into 2022.



Product

Strategic guidelines for the next 3–5 years that center anti-racism in our work, with clearly defined priorities in alignment with our mission that are both stable and nimble—a clear north star, with flexibility in getting there, including:

- A renewed mission and vision statement that still centers the power of young people in democracy (in all its forms – voting, protest, policy, movement building, structural change).
- A renewed set of values.
- Clarity in our theory of change and assumptions.
- A set of immediate and long-term outcomes, and a strong connection between New Era’s program and how it will achieve these outcomes.
- A framework for how our programs achieve our mission that can be evaluated and tested.

Incorporation of organizational, programmatic, and operational priorities, including:

- Outlining a set organizational and programmatic priorities & goals aligned to our renewed theory of change.
- Determining the unique strengths and value-add of New Era in the larger Colorado progressive infrastructure to identify a clear set of internal and external priorities.
- Integrating anti-racism to ensure it is centered in both internal organizational development and external strategy.
- Designing the internal infrastructure, including structural and operational systems, required to meet strategic goals.

We worked for over a year with consultants at Weav Studio in three key phases: Exploration, Design, Goal Setting.

Exploration

Interviews were conducted with New Era staff, board members, and partners in order to:

- Assess and establish a baseline for the current power dynamics, agreements, policies, practices, and culture at New Era Colorado
- Understand how we are situated within the progressive ecosystem
- Surface the reinforcing factors (both internal and external) that are contributing to the current work processes and the state of equity and inclusion at New Era
- Gather information to design our theory of change

We also launched the Youth Agenda Listening Tour to ensure this plan was rooted in the lived experiences of our communities and young people across the state.



Design

The subcommittee and staff-led subgroups designed and tested various elements of this plan, including:

- Align on shared values, mission & vision, and Theory of Change (TOC)
- Ensure our values, mission & vision, and TOC align with youth voices and experiences
- Build an internal vision for New Era that is in service of New Era’s external theory of change



Goal Setting

A strategy subgroup comprised of New Era staff members worked to build out our long-term strategic priorities and goals in order to: Connect New Era’s values, mission & vision, and theory of change to immediate and long-term day-to-day activities and goals for change

This plan represents over a year of hard work and collaborations at all levels across the organization—and we hope it inspires you as much as it inspires us.



Background

A lot has changed in the world and in Colorado since our last strategic plan was written in 2015. Skinny jeans are out, platform shoes are back, and our entire political system was turned upside down in 2016. A whole thesis could be written about the changes from 2015–2022, but we will focus on a few key shifts that inform the rewriting of our strategic plan.



1

Colorado's political context

Colorado remains and has always been a “purple” state—with equal balance of registered Democrats and Republicans and a significant rise in unaffiliated voters since 2016. Since the 2018 midterm elections, there has been a Democratic trifecta at the state house, senate, and governor’s office and all major statewide offices are held by Democrats. However, these majorities are loosely held and Colorado remains purple, with a strong libertarian lean and a propensity for shifting powers. With the 2020 redistricting process, Colorado’s state and congressional seats became even more competitive. At the federal level, we gained a new congressional seat and currently have 3 strong Democratic districts, 3 strong Republican districts, and 2 swing districts.

While we must stay committed to working on elections in order to elect youth agenda champions, this shifting context means we must also increase our accountability tactics: demanding that our elected officials prioritize young people in their policymaking. This strategic plan represents a more targeted shift toward elected official accountability and progressive policymaking due to the changes in Colorado politics; and, we must make our work on elections even more targeted so that we maintain a political environment where progressive change can take place.



2

Election access in Colorado

Voter registration has been a central piece of New Era’s work since our founding and a core strategy to achieving our mission of ensuring young people have access to our democracy. We found through our organizing work that voter registration was one of the biggest barriers to youth participation in the political system, so we worked for more than a decade to address this issue: we built our field programs around bringing young people into our democracy through voter registration and used our expertise to craft policy and critical legislation to make voting even more accessible. We’ve worked in coalition to pass legislation winning critical expansions for election access, including: same-day registration, voter pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds, online voter registration, guaranteed campus voter service centers and dropboxes, expanding online voter registration to SSNs, mandating universities to send election information to students, and, in 2019, automatic voter registration (AVR). The implementation of automatic voter registration is a game-changer for democracy access. Everyone who interacts with the DMV in Colorado and who is eligible is now automatically registered to vote. This policy is a major win and flips the script on voting access in Colorado. Now eligible new permit and license holders will be automatically registered, which greatly reduces barriers to voting for young people.

While AVR is a significant expansion of voting rights and access, we know that gaps still remain and that peer-to-peer voter registration is still needed, especially for young people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Young people in particular still face barriers to registering even with AVR: many move frequently and need to update their registration, some young people choose not or are unable to obtain a drivers license, others are students with out of state drivers licenses who are still eligible to register and vote in Colorado, and some distrust government and are hesitant to register. However, AVR has a huge impact on ensuring young people are registered to vote, which means that running a large-scale voter registration program year-round is no longer a strategic model to meet our goals. We’ll continue to meet young people where they’re at—in their communities, on their campuses, online—and give them the opportunity to register, ensuring that we fill the gaps where AVR can’t reach.



Yet now, we have a new problem to solve: mobilizing and organizing young people to participate in the political process and fight for the youth agenda. We'll do this at New Era by making tangible changes on the issues young people care about and connecting those issues to what's on their ballot: giving them a reason to vote. Through this multi-issue model, we'll shift our field work and prioritize issue engagement, building up a base of issue-focused voters that we can filter and target for our legislative advocacy and voter turnout work. This strategy allows us to bring more young people into our base, focus on ballot measures and issue campaigns earlier, and have greater engagement in local races. Colorado's exceptional access to voting allows us to focus on meaningful conversations with voters, building faith in the political process and encouraging habitual voting.

3

Anti-racism commitment

As an organization, we have been on a journey to embed equity and inclusion in our organization's DNA, and to transform into a truly anti-racist organization. [In 2020, we released an equity statement to publicly acknowledge our past mistakes, make known our commitments to this work, and offer transparency and accountability through regular updates.](#) Our ultimate aim for our anti-racism work includes: authentically centering the experiences and leadership of young people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color in our program work; dismantling white supremacy within our organizational systems, policies, and culture, and rebuilding anew; and ensuring we have an inclusive, welcoming culture in which all staff and board members are valued, thriving, and advancing our mission.

In our work, this commitment means balancing the transactional elements of our model (voter mobilization) with deeper, transformational practices (a more holistic organizing model and leadership development program) to weave anti-racist practices into our programs. In the Youth Agenda, it means fighting for explicitly anti-racist policies, or policies that will improve equity and fairness in our state and country. It means creating a political home for all young people, especially Black, brown, and Indigenous young people, which means diversifying the areas where we are organizing. Finally, it means an internal commitment to staff well-being, sense of belonging, and sustainability.

The Youth Agenda

[In 2021, New Era Colorado embarked on a year-long listening tour to ground our strategic plan in the vision, hopes, and dreams of young people across Colorado to ensure that the work we did moving forward was rooted in their lived experiences.](#)

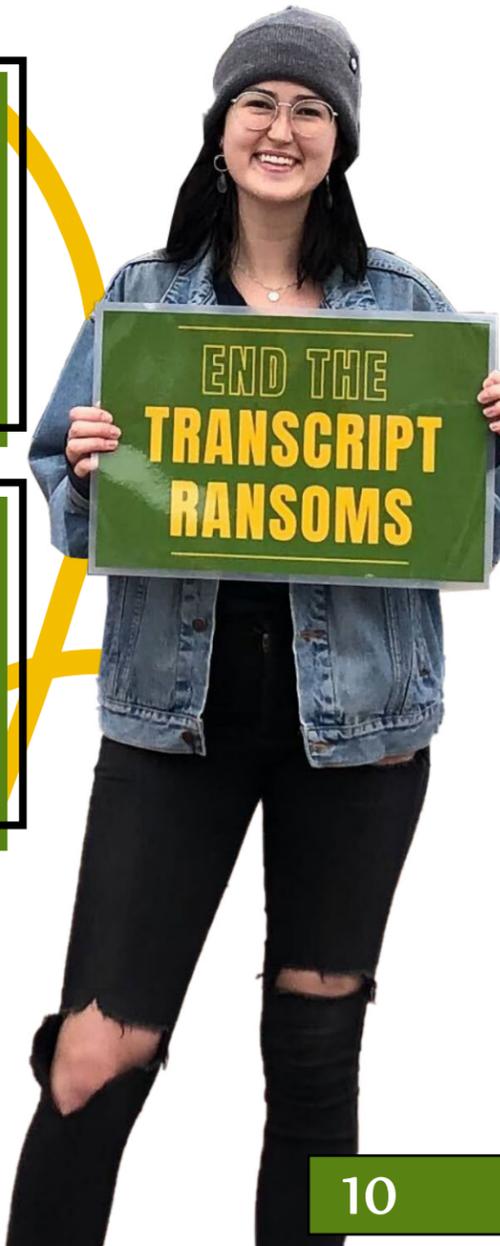
From this intention, the Youth Agenda Listening Tour was born: a large-scale, statewide survey seeking to answer 4 key questions:

1
What are the experiences of young people across Colorado? What issues do they care most about?

2
What does youth power mean to young people?

3
What barriers do young people face and how can we break down these barriers to developing young people's power?

4
How do we meet young people where they are at?



→ We collected surveys, interviews, and focus group responses from over 1,200 young people across the state—with over a quarter of respondents identifying as BIPOC and 32% identifying as queer/trans.

Some of the key insights we discovered:

Vision, Values, and Issues

Young people believe in a future where everyone is treated equally, resources are abundant, and we use innovative and creative solutions to solve big problems such as climate change and racial inequality. In this same vein, we saw racial justice come out consistently as a top issue (65% of respondents named it as one of their core issues), alongside and often intersecting with mental health (56%), healthcare (54%), and education (41%). This vision is reflected in our organizational vision and values statement.

Youth Power

Young people described youth power as the feeling of having their voices heard and seeing themselves represented in our government. Many young people in the community are unsure of where to start when it comes to creating change, but have a desire to be more involved and learn through experience. Youth across the state have a strong desire for a like-minded community and want to work together to create change. We integrated young people's definition of power into our theory of change and leadership development program.

Views on Voting and Government

Young people strongly value the impact of voting, yet also believe it is insufficient on its own to create change. Voting must be coupled with community organizing and other forms of direct action and engagement. Young people also view our local government much more positively than our federal government, especially those who hold marginalized identities (such as people of color and queer folks of color). These views are represented in our multifaceted organizing model and our commitment to increasing our work at the local level.

Barriers and Resources

Young people have a desire to be more politically engaged, but many named they don't know where to start. Young people also cited not having enough time or access to paid opportunities that would allow them to get first-hand experience in organizing. Young people are seeking hand-on learning experiences that allow them to work in community with others. We address these barriers through our organizing and leadership development programs.

These key findings are integrated into our strategic plan through the ways we reach young people and the issues that we work on. We plan to hold elected officials accountable to addressing these issues, a policy platform that we are calling "The Youth Agenda," to ensure they remain as bold as young people in our vision for Colorado. We will use this information to meet young people where they are at, and to create a lasting political home for young Coloradans from the Eastern Plains to the Western Slope.

Vision Statement

The purpose of the vision statement is to align on a visionary future that we all want to see. While this vision may be many generations away and won't all be achieved through our work, it is intended to be a roadmap to guide us in the decisions we make and the fights we take on.

Young people, and specifically young people of color, have always been at the forefront of progressive movements. We know that when empowered, organized, resourced, and prioritized, young people can and will transform their communities. Right now, the climate crisis, economic inequality and a number of other compounding crises uniquely and disproportionately impact young people, worsening our quality of life and endangering our futures. Each one is rooted directly in white

supremacy. Young people are visionary and aren't held back by pessimism or allegiance to the way things are, or have been, and for that reason, we have unparalleled revolutionary potential. We believe young people can and will give life to the world we dream of.

That world looks like:

- An abundance of shared resources where every person's basic needs are met, and we all have equitable access
- Caring for the land and environment and acknowledging that it is part of us
- All people are treated with dignity and safety so we can show up as our authentic selves
- Connection between generations, combining the power of young people's possibility-thinking with the wisdom of our elders
- Wellness in our minds, bodies, and souls
- Having the resources we need to make informed, self-determined decisions about our lives and bodies, with consistent respect for the decisions that we make
- Space for healing, creativity, and joy
- Systems of oppression are dismantled and replaced with systems of care and accountability

Values Statement

The purpose of the values statement is to collectively name the values that we hold and strive for within the New Era community, as individuals and an organization. We believe that by using these values to evaluate and guide our work, we will make progress towards our vision.

Community

We hold a deep sense of shared responsibility for each other's wellbeing. We celebrate the unique identities and honor the lived experiences of each community member. We are honest and transparent with ourselves and with others about who we are, what we need, and what we can offer. We exchange resources and skills to collectively meet our needs, so that we can live our best lives and strengthen our community. We have a deep connection to the land – we care for the earth and all of its resources, as it does for us. All of this is essential to our collective liberation.



People Power

Our power-building work is of young people, by young people, for all people. We believe in the distribution of power to the people, and collective decision-making that prioritizes the experiences and perspectives of marginalized people. We come from numerous backgrounds, and these experiences strengthen our movement as a whole. By understanding each other and forming deep, trusting relationships, we can build collective power to create change, grow our personal and bodily autonomy, and liberate our communities.

Accountability

We build our relationships around trust and a commitment to repair harm to foster healing. We believe in the power of restorative and transformational justice over punitive systems and use that framework to guide us when addressing conflict and harm, and in preventing harm. We believe in teaching and learning how to be accountable and how to have healthy conflict, as individuals and as a collective. We are accountable to our own growth, and work to repair the harm we cause. We create space for that growth by providing grace to each other while centering the experiences and asks of those harmed.

Equity

We center the voices of those most impacted by systems of exploitation and oppression. We are a real reflection of our generation and, as a result, we are connected to the real-life perspectives of those closest to the inequities we are fighting to eradicate. We fight for justice and the creation of deliberate systems that reconcile historic and current inequality. We acknowledge that not all young people face the same injustices to the same degree, and we see our shared stakes in fighting for justice. We're guided in this fight through our love for each other and the pursuit of joy.

Perseverance

We bring authenticity, integrity, humility, and creativity to all of our work and relationships. We are fighting for our vision, not just against the pillars that stand in the way. We continue to build a shared analysis of what we want to change and what we want to build. We work with integrity to achieve our goals—when we commit to something, we follow through. We don't make promises we can't keep. We celebrate our wins and value the lessons from our losses. We have systems of care in place to prevent burnout and take time to rest and recover so we may continue to fight.

Creativity + Progress

We acknowledge the inherent creativity of all humans, especially young people. We value creativity not just for its utility, but also for the joy it brings. We believe in innovation and transformation for the sake of improving our lives, not for profit. We know creativity drives progress because it allows us to think in new ways and dream up a world that has never existed before. Without creativity, we can't create that world.

Theory of Change

A theory of change clearly articulates how our organizational mission and strategy aims to get us closer to our vision of the world. There are many ways an organization could aim toward the vision articulated above, and we have chosen a unique and narrowed strategy based on the problem we wish to solve, our organizational strengths, and various assumptions that undergird our model.

Overview

Mission

New Era Colorado organizes young people through the political process to win on the youth agenda.

- New Era Colorado Foundation organizes young people to participate in the political process, develop as leaders, and find a political home.*
- New Era Colorado Action Fund organizes young people to win on the youth agenda through elections and policymaking.

**New Era Colorado Foundation does not participate in any partisan activities.*



Young people share a common vision for the world: one that centers equality, prosperity, love, and joy; yet, it's a future that's painfully far away. Here in Colorado and across the United States, societal, cultural, and political forces are holding communities back from building this vision. Excessive emphasis on the individual over the collective has led to a world that prioritizes profits over people, individual privileges over collective care, and those with power and money over "we the people." The exploitative social and economic systems that govern our lives work as designed, benefiting the powerful few while divesting from our common purpose and the public good. In our deeply unhealthy democracy, young people, Black and brown people, and the poor are hushed and continuously exploited in favor of the privileged. We have a long journey to get to our common vision of the world, and there are many avenues to achieve that vision.

Young people are the most progressive and diverse generation that has ever existed, thereby critical to the movement for a better future; and, we make up a significant part of the electorate in Colorado. Young people have the most at stake in the long-term, and we have the capacity to dream bigger and design the solutions toward a better future: young people are imaginative, futuristic, innovative, and have a natural propensity towards justice. It's why young people have been at the forefront of every major movement toward justice in our nation's history. Yet, young people are often shut out from the halls of power and often do not have the resources to wield their collective power toward this shared vision for the future. Many young people simply do not know where to start to get involved—but they are looking for hands-on ways to learn, opportunities to create tangible change, and community support to access their power. Political campaigns, elected officials, and decision-makers rarely reach out to young people for their input or involvement, and the barriers to access are steep. Young people have been historically left out of the political process due to structural and cultural barriers: lack of information in a confusing political system, little respect from those in power, and emerging political identities.

The problem



We need a strong, youth movement in Colorado to fight for our collective vision and build political pressure toward that vision. At New Era, we are building that youth movement in Colorado by organizing young people to participate in the political process and pressure the system to create the world we dream of. We believe in the potential power of the political process, and that change is possible through a combination of inside- and outside-system forces: grassroots organizing, voter turnout, education, leadership development, policy change, culture change, and accountability. We also know that our political system has never truly been representative nor responsive due to a history white supremacy and the power of monied elites, which means we must work simultaneously to redesign the system so that it truly represents the will of the people, especially those most marginalized. Young people of color specifically have been the most marginalized by our systems and therefore understand first-hand how our systems fail; we must center the voices of young people of color because they are the best positioned to design solutions that address root causes in systemic failures.

The young people we serve at New Era have the capacity to lead us to this future, which must be combined with the wisdom and learned experiences of generations before us. Although young people tend to have a common vision for the world, they are not a monolith, and there is a lot of work to do with young people, specifically with young white folks and those with economic privilege, to bring them along in their political ideological development. As a result, our work must address both mobilization of young people who are with us and deep organizing to shift hearts and minds. Shifting hearts and minds requires education, narrative shifting, and culture change to move young people along a developmental path of ideology, to connect the dots between their stated values and current political debates.

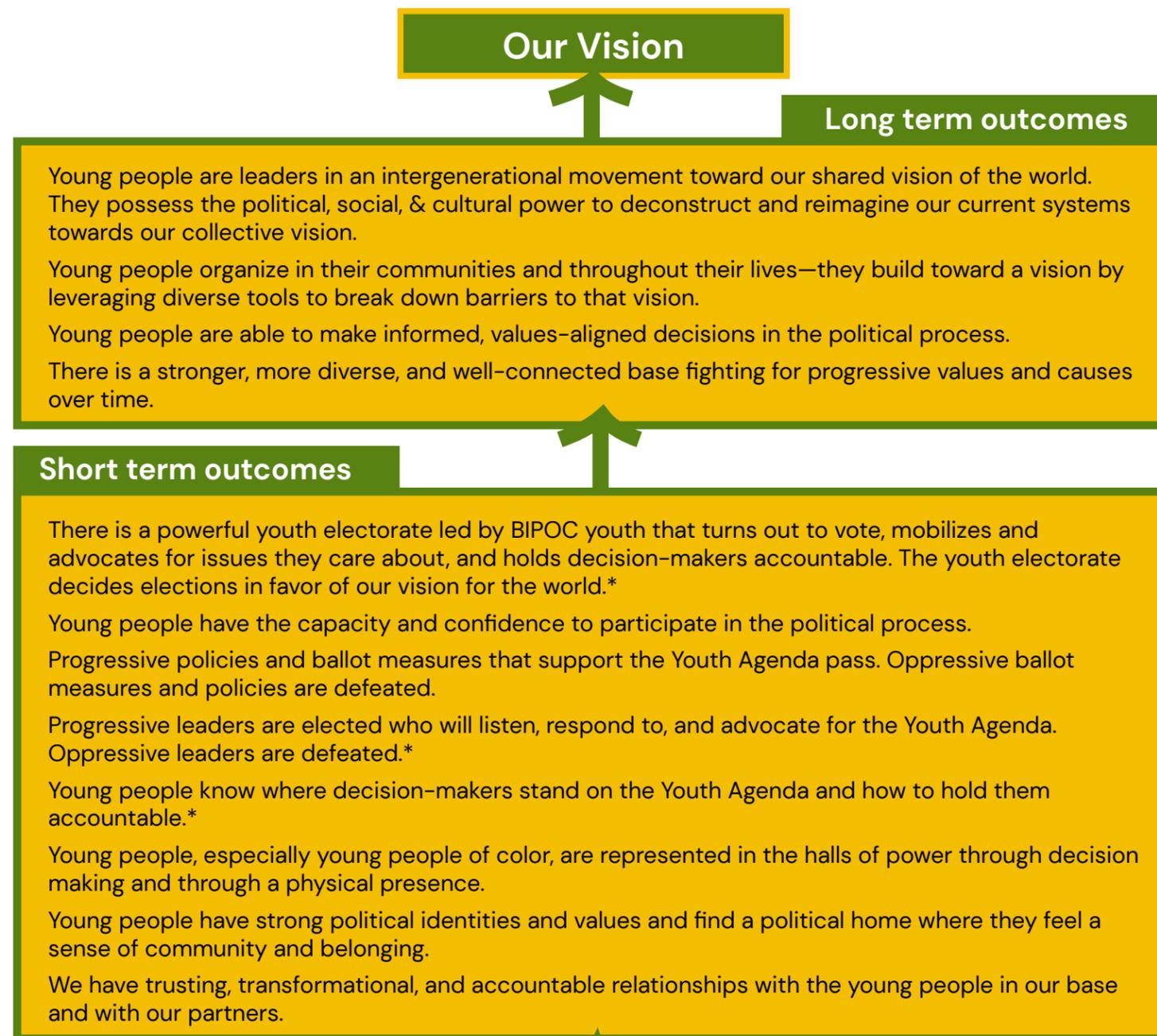
New Era breaks down barriers to young people accessing our democracy and builds a political home for young people to access and leverage their power. We create opportunities for young people to practice democracy in their lives and in their communities to make change by working at the top-down (policy change) and bottom-up (organizing) levels to build toward the youth agenda, ultimately creating the world we want to live in. We also believe in the power of youth leadership, and through our leadership development program we support and resource young people to practice democracy in their lives and in their communities.

Our team is made up of experienced organizers, young people from the communities we serve, and a team with a common vision and values. We have a proven track record of engaging and mobilizing young people toward action, building one of the strongest youth civic engagement infrastructures in the country. We are strategic about the fights we pick—we cannot fight all battles at all times—and engage on issues and campaigns that young people can significantly influence. We believe in the power of peer-to-peer organizing, in-person field work, and collaboration with partners.

In this strategic plan, we aim to improve on our past successes by getting more clear about the vision of the world we are fighting for and leveraging new organizing tools to pressure the political system toward that vision. There are many ways to have an impact on the world; this plan outlines what we believe is the most strategic path for New Era to tackle: just one piece of the puzzle that is large-scale systems change.

Logic Model

A logic model breaks down our theory of change into the nitty gritty: how our tactics and strategies flow to achieve our short-term and long-term outcomes, which build toward our vision of the world. Tactics are what we do every day in our programs. The strategies articulate how these tactics impact our short-term outcomes, which can be measured. The long-term outcomes are unlikely to be measured, but hinge on logical assumptions. Finally, there are several pre-conditions for success that must be in place for the logic to follow in this model.



**These are goals of New Era Colorado Action Fund. New Era Colorado Foundation does not participate in any partisan or political activities.*

Strategic Priority 1: Win on the Youth Agenda

Advance progressive policies

We publicize a Youth Agenda policy platform

We track legislators' positions on the Youth Agenda

We take the lead and work in coalition to run bills that advance the Youth Agenda

We drive actions to elected officials to influence decisions and votes

We testify for policies that align with the youth agenda/against those that do not

We oppose/support ballot measures

We turn out young people for ballot measure races

We leverage our relationships with elected officials to demand progress on the youth agenda

We uplift the voices of young people and create space for young people in the halls of power (testimony, lobby meetings, townhalls)

We work with partners who are aligned with our vision to fight for progressive change

Elect progressive leaders

We turn out young people for elections at all levels of government

We engage in targeted races for primary and general elections to elect Youth Agenda champions

We inform young people where candidates' stand on the Youth Agenda

We design and distribute targeted voter guides

We influence candidates' stances on the Youth Agenda

We hold lobby meetings with elected officials and candidates on the Youth Agenda

We serve as a thought leader on the Youth Agenda to elected officials and partner organizations

Strategic Priority 2: Launch a holistic, multi-issue organizing model

Develop, uplift, & politicize young progressive leaders

We run a leadership development program to develop young people's political identity

We provide trainings and workshops on activism and organizing

We provide mentorship for young people

We employ people early on in their political careers

We create a space for young people to express their political identities and find a community of belonging

We recruit young people to volunteer on our campaigns and become more involved over time

We develop the skillsets and mindsets that young people need to drive change in their own communities, becoming organizers in their own lives

We connect young people with resources in their community

We seek feedback from young people on our organizational priorities

We leverage our power/political capital to uplift those with historically less access to power

Mobilize & organize young people to participate in the political process

We mobilize young people with opportunities to participate in voting, testifying, lobbying, protesting, accountability, and relational organizing

We educate young people on the youth agenda and its intersection with the political process

We build a base of Youth Agenda supporters and ID young people on issues that matter to them

We register people to vote in youth-dense areas

We support young people in activating their own communities through relational organizing

We build environments of activism in youth-dense communities, including college campuses, to fight for the Youth Agenda

We build partnerships with student groups and student governments on campuses

We solicit feedback from young people about their barriers to political participation and develop solutions to address those barriers

Pre-conditions for success

- An internal and external commitment to anti-racism and equity
- Strong internal infrastructure and culture
- Responsive democracy
- Strong ecosystem of partners and progressive infrastructure
- Funding and monetary investment in Colorado
- Continual listening and learning from young people over time—we are adaptive to their needs and experiences
- Young people continue to reflect our vision for the world

Assumptions

There are several key assumptions that create the foundation for our organizational mission and strategy. These assumptions must continue to be tested over time if we hope to achieve our vision for the world.

- **IF** young people have the capacity, confidence, and knowledge to participate in the political process, **THEN** they are more likely to turn out to vote, testify, protest, and lobby.
- **IF** young people turn out to participate in the electoral process, **THEN** more progressive policies can be passed and more progressive leaders can be elected.
- **IF** young people are mobilized and organized, **THEN** elected officials and candidates will be pressured to center the youth agenda.
- **IF** young people know where elected officials and candidates stand on the youth agenda, **THEN** they can hold them accountable to center the youth agenda.
- **IF** elected officials and candidates center the youth agenda, **THEN** they will pass progressive policies that get us closer to our vision of the world.
- **IF** more progressive leaders are elected, **THEN** they are more likely to center the youth agenda.
- **IF** young people are politicized, radicalized, and developed as leaders, **THEN** we will have a stronger base fighting for progressive values and causes over time.
- **IF** young people have a political home, **THEN** they can organize together toward a better future.

Strategic Goals

Bringing together our current context, organizational strengths, and theory of change, we have identified three strategic priorities for New Era to develop over the next three years

2

Design, build, and launch a more holistic organizing model that mobilizes, organizes, and develops young progressive leaders to participate in the full political process in coordination with our BIPOC-led and youth partners.

1

Win on the Youth Agenda by building momentum toward policy wins and leveraging our political capital to pressure elected officials to center our issues.

3

Reflect our values internally by developing a supportive and sustainable internal infrastructure to achieve these goals.

Strategic Priority 1

Win on the Youth Agenda

By the end of 2025, we will have significantly influenced at least five major wins on the Youth Agenda

- We significantly influence the outcome of ballot measures that build us closer to that vision, prioritizing our core issue areas.*
- We significantly influence bills that build us closer to that vision, prioritizing our core issue areas.
- We secure wins on major issue campaigns aligned to our core issue areas, including but not limited to:
 - Building a culture in Colorado where higher education funding and access are priorities, building toward a vision of debt-free college.
 - Observing a significant increase in the base of young people supporting public funding for abortion, and repealing parental notification, as well as removing barriers to reproductive rights in general in Colorado.
 - Continuing to broaden access to our democracy through working on election access, protection, voting rights, and democracy reform initiatives.
 - Creating a Colorado that is a national leader in the climate justice movement and combating the devastating impacts of climate change on our lives and environment.
- Young people are the deciding factor behind at least one major state- or local-level policy win (swing a ballot measure outcome, change the fate of a bill, etc.)

By the end of 2025, we will see more elected officials and candidates speak about, uplift, and advocate for issues directly tied to the Youth Agenda.

- We will see more elected leaders explicitly name commitments or actions towards policy priorities identified in the Youth Agenda.*
- We will see more elected leaders and candidates consistently reach out to our staff before taking policy positions or ask for thought-partnership on drafting legislation.*
- We see elected leaders taking a supporting position on major Youth Agenda policies as a result of our organizing.*

**These are goals of New Era Colorado Action Fund. New Era Colorado Foundation does not participate in partisan or political activities.*

Strategic Priority 2

Launch a holistic, multi-issue organizing model

By the end of 2025, we will see an increase in ongoing participation by progressive young people in the full political process at the federal, state, and local level.

- We will see more young people in our base participate in more than three actions (voting, testifying, signing a petition, attending town halls, etc.) over the course of an election cycle.
- We will see an increase in young people testifying or lobbying their elected officials on issues directly tied to the Youth Agenda and in support of young BIPOC.
- We will see an increase in young people in our base partaking in actions other than voting, such as town halls, protests, rallies, and lobby meetings.
- We will see youth turnout stay consistent at/not fall below 48% in 2022 and 70% in 2024.*
- We will significantly influence the outcome of more local races and measures and see more local elected officials respond to the demands of the Youth Agenda.*



By the end of 2025, more young people, especially young people of color, will have the support and resources they need to organize their communities and participate in the political process.

- We will see more young people participate in our trainings, workshops, and events, especially young people of color.
- We will see more young people reporting that our programs helped them feel more confident in navigating the political process.
- We build more trust with young people and integrate more direct service resources from the community into our programs.
- We have explored new approaches to youth-driven decision-making models and have clear recommendations on what we want to test moving forward.



By the end of 2025, more young people, especially young people of color, will feel like they have a political home at New Era.

- We will see an increase in leadership development participants naming our program had a positive impact on their professional development and political growth, with no disparity across lines of race
- We will see an increase in leadership development participants naming "I feel like I belong at New Era" and "I have a community at New Era," with no disparity across lines of race.
- We consistently move our base along the ladder of engagement, with no disparity across lines of race.
- We will see higher rates of political participation from those who participated in our leadership development program, with no disparity across lines of race.
- We will see more of our leadership development participants stay in the progressive movement (through alumni surveys or focus groups), with no disparity across lines of race.
- We will see an increase in BIPOC applicants to our programs and leadership positions.
- We will see an increase in positive feedback from young people, especially young BIPOC, about our organizational strategy and priorities.

By the end of 2025, we will have more trusting, transformational, and accountable relationships with our partners, prioritizing relationships with BIPOC-led partners.

- We will see an increase in the number of partners, especially BIPOC-led and youth-serving partners, that return over multiple years to work on campaigns, projects and/or other general areas of work with us.
- We will collaborate with more BIPOC/youth-serving partners on major initiatives (ballot measures, big legislation, local actions), prioritizing racial justice initiatives.
- We receive feedback from partners that we are dependable, responsive, and embody our values.
- We are active members in multiple, long-standing coalitions and work to bring in & open space for other BIPOC-led and youth-serving organizations.
- We can point to examples where we've supported and learned from other organizations on racial justice and equity.

Strategic Priority 3

Reflect our values internally

By the end of 2025, New Era staff feels a strong sense of safety and trust with the organization.

- We will see staff report a positive feeling of value and belonging at New Era, with no disparity across lines of race.
- We will see high staff satisfaction in internal opportunities for professional development and growth, with no disparity across lines of race.
- We will see base staff staying with the organization for an average of at least two years, with no disparity across lines of race.
- Management has a strong relationship with the staff union and the Labor Relations Committee functions in the best interest of the organization and its employees.



By the end of 2025, our team effectively and equitably uses our time and resources to achieve our goals while providing space for creativity and autonomy

- We will see more New Era staff feeling clarity around roles/responsibilities, decision-making, and how they contribute to the larger organization.
- We will see more equitable role expectations and workloads across similar positions in the organization.
- We will see more New Era staff drive independent projects aligned to organizational goals.
- We will see more staff-led ideas at the organizational level.
- We use this strategic plan to make decisions about strategic resource investments, taking into account long-term sustainability and funding opportunities.