

# Local Economy Framework

For the past 15 years we've worked with entrepreneurs, investors, funders and community development advocates to discover how to create an economy that works for all of us. We've found that prioritizing local ownership, collaboration and production weaves greater equity and health. A shift from "me" to "we" leadership, aligning community capital and policy, is required to get us there.

These eight strategies are all critical, and come to life uniquely, based on each community.

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## Act Local First.

The path to quality jobs, deeper connection and wealth-building for more neighbors is tied to the number and diversity of locally-owned businesses in a community. Support local production for local needs, celebrate the unique, and choose locally owned businesses first.

Since 1990, small locally-owned businesses have created ALL of the net new job growth in the USA. (SBA)

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## Prioritize Equity.

We are all better off, when we're all better off. Build supportive services and infrastructure for the jobless and under-employed, with attention on race and zip code, so everyone can reach their full potential. Align labor, anchor institutions and businesses in creating local economies that work for all.

The American economy would gain \$2.1 trillion in gross domestic product (GDP) every year by closing its racial gaps in income, a 14 percent increase. (Policy Link)

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## Regenerate Soil & Nature.

If the animals, plants, soil and water we depend on are not healthy, our communities cannot be healthy. Apply holistic land management practices, embrace renewable energy and energy-efficient transit, divest from fossil fuels, and use business to restore ecosystems and reverse climate change.

A rapid shift from monocultures and corporate control, and toward organic, small-scale farming, and a mosaic of sustainable, regenerative production systems, is the answer to "feeding the world." (UN Farming Report "Wake Up Before It's Too Late")

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## Accelerate Collaboration.

Coordinated support for entrepreneurs and changemakers allows more of us to succeed, faster. Foster systems of mutual support for local businesses, and build shared infrastructure and technical assistance to advance collaboration.

Strengthening networks and information sharing between many local businesses can yield the benefits of "economies of scale" by equipping many small businesses to succeed. (MIT CoLab)

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## Share Ownership.

When ownership is held broadly, and rooted in community, there is greater resilience. Move economic control from distant corporations to local communities and choose democratic economic models like worker ownership, land trusts, and the protection of public assets.

When cooperative businesses achieve significant scale within a local economy (5-10% of the workforce), there are higher indices of social well-being related to health, education, crime, social participation and perception of the social environment. (Project Equity)

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## Shift Capital.

Community Capital represents a growing movement of people and institutions keeping more of their money in their community. Invest in community-based businesses, divest from Wall Street, prioritize under-capitalized communities, and champion "living returns" reflecting the real value of healthy, equitable economies.

Quebec's governmental pension fund started investing in local businesses 30 years ago, creating 87k new jobs and preventing 82k from moving overseas. (Marquette University)

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## Co-create Policy.

Including all stakeholders in the process of making decisions leads to better, more equitable outcomes. Advocate for policies that level the playing field, particularly for local businesses, those historically oppressed, future generations, and our natural world.

Of the \$70B+ in local tax dollars spent annually on 'economic development' by U.S. states and cities, approximately 75% goes to subsidize large corporations. (Good Jobs First)

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## Cultivate Connection.

Today's complex crises require a fundamental transition from "me" to "we." Choose connection, awaken the hearts of entrepreneurs, and align business objectives from growth and transactions, to what we know creates deeper well-being: connection with purpose, community, awe, and compassion.

The highest lever for systems change is the "mindset out of which the system arises." (Donella Meadows)

It turns out that these strategies do more than create a healthier, more equitable economy: they also make each of us healthier and happier, as individuals. **It all starts with building relationships — choosing connection in our communities, in our businesses, and even within ourselves.**

Read stories and discover best practices about communities using the Local Economy Framework to create an economy that works for all: [www.bealocalist.org/local-economy-framework](http://www.bealocalist.org/local-economy-framework)