

2020–2025

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

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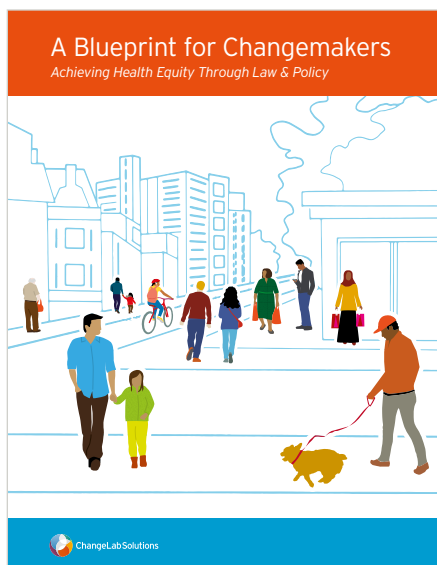
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Who We Are

CHANGELAB SOLUTIONS works across the nation to advance equitable laws and policies that ensure healthy lives for all. With more than two decades of experience in enacting policy, systems, and environmental changes at local and state levels, our organization focuses on eliminating health disparities by addressing the social determinants of health. We are an interdisciplinary team of lawyers, planners, policy analysts, public health practitioners, and other professionals who collaborate with community-based organizations, local and state governments, and anchor institutions (such as hospitals and universities) to create thriving, just communities. Our priority is assisting communities whose residents are at the highest risk for poor health.

By analyzing local and state policies, systems, and environments, we help identify innovative approaches and support community transformations that will yield the most improvement in health and equity. We help to implement solutions that bolster all aspects of community health, working in many interconnected areas, including food systems; commercial tobacco control; housing and transportation; schools and child care; and the built environment. Our extensive collection of model laws and policies complements the strategic technical assistance and tailored trainings that we provide for our partners.



Organizational background

ChangeLab Solutions was founded on the notion of using the best tools in public health, law, policy, and planning to help create healthy environments for everyone. Instrumental in tobacco control efforts in the early 1990s, our organization soon applied this new multidisciplinary approach to other major public health challenges such as childhood obesity. [Learn more about our history.](#)

As the fields of public health, law, and policy began to focus on racial discrimination, poverty, and other social determinants of health as the key drivers of poor health outcomes and disparities, ChangeLab's staff, board, and funders began to define our approach to addressing these fundamental drivers of inequity. The process began with an internal assessment of recruitment practices and naming equity as a core tenet. As a result of our focus, over 60% of our staff and board members are people of color. They come from across the nation – from rural and urban communities – each bringing lived experience, professional expertise, and a commitment to health equity.

Building on our collective strengths, experiences, and diverse viewpoints, ChangeLab Solutions published our foundational guide to public health, law, and policy: [A Blueprint for Changemakers.](#)

How we work for health equity

At ChangeLab Solutions, we believe that the most powerful risk factors in health are laws and policies that have perpetuated racism, discrimination, and segregation throughout our nation's history.

Our organizational strategy is outlined in our [Blueprint for Changemakers](#), which proposes that achieving health equity requires addressing the structural barriers to health, which we call the *fundamental drivers of health inequity*: structural discrimination and racism; income inequality and poverty; disparities in opportunity; disparities in political power; and governance that limits meaningful participation. Using the tools of law and policy, we can undo the fundamental drivers of inequity and thereby increase health equity.

This Strategic Framework document presents our updated vision and values, as well as our long-term goal of reducing the drivers of health inequity. In addition, we outline our 5-year goal, our strategic activities for 2020–2025, and the core strategies we will use to accomplish them.

Mission

Healthier communities for all through equitable laws & policies

Vision

We envision healthy, equitable communities where every person is economically secure and can attain their full health potential because

- Laws and policies are equity-focused, inclusive, and just;
- Systems and institutions, including government, facilitate meaningful participation and work to eliminate unjust disparities; and
- Investments prioritize people and places most affected by injustices and inequities.

Long-Term Goal: Reducing the Drivers of Health Inequity

The current landscape of health inequity

Health inequities are entrenched and growing. Present-day gaps in health and prosperity are rooted in historical injustice and systemic inequity. More and more governments, advocates, funders, and communities are recognizing the existence of these inequities and the need to reverse them through structural change. Laws and policies are powerful tools for change because they have the potential to undo historical harms, affect large numbers of people, and engage changemakers.

How ChangeLab Solutions addresses the drivers of health inequity

ChangeLab Solutions' strength lies in using the tools of law and policy in a collaborative, multi-faceted, and cross-sectoral way to ensure policy solutions that are both practical for governments, systems, and institutions and meaningful for the people they are meant to help.

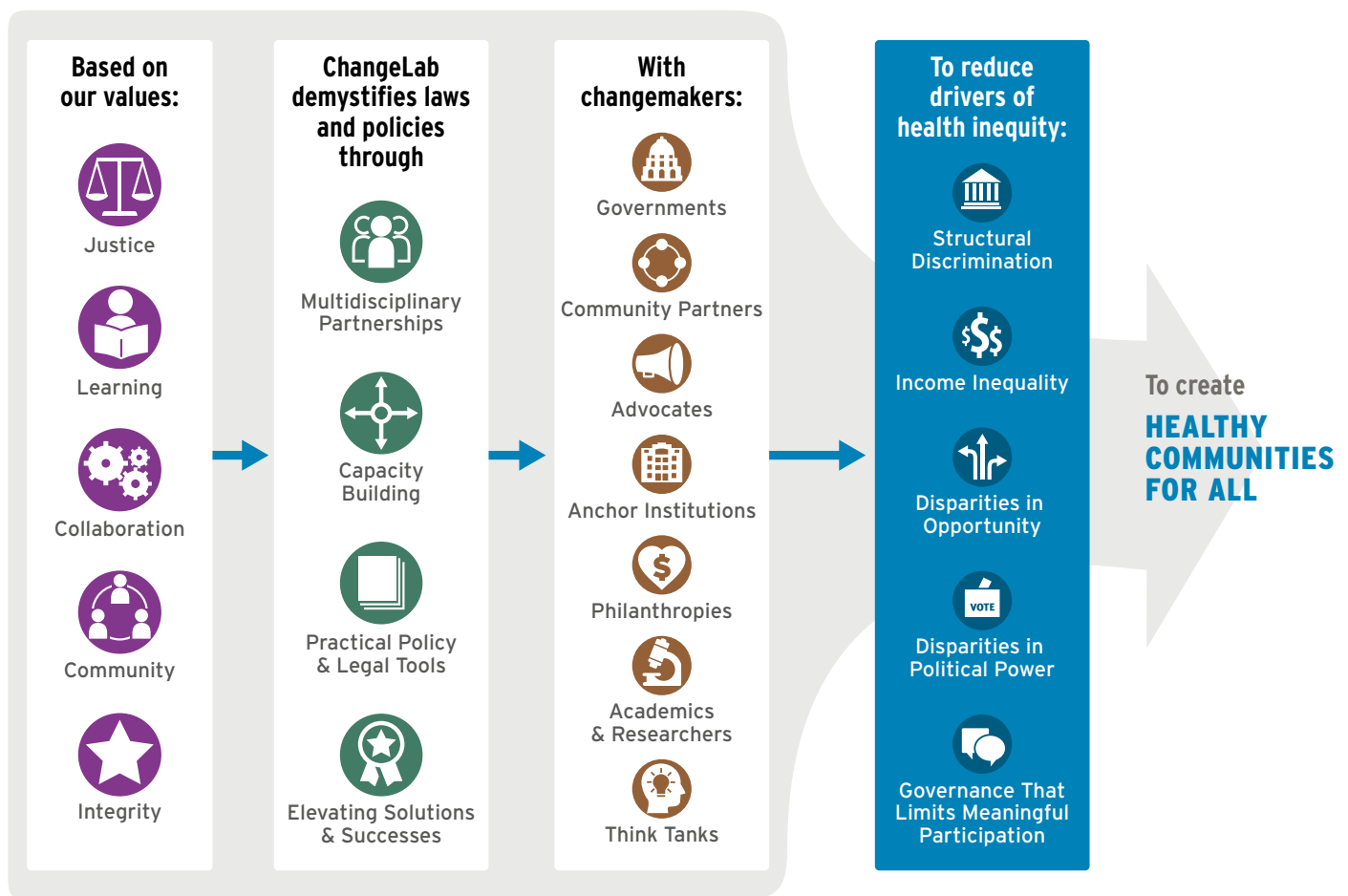
ChangeLab Solutions is uniquely suited to partner with funders, community organizations and advocates, local and state governments, and anchor institutions to eliminate health inequities by addressing structural barriers such as the fundamental drivers of inequity. Many of the factors that impede good health, such as discrimination, poverty, and disenfranchisement, are embedded in unjust laws, policies, and practices that shape physical, economic, and social environments and have led to the proliferation of health inequities over many generations. For example, planning and investment decisions have resulted in some neighborhoods having more liquor stores than grocery stores, limiting availability of healthy food and beverages while increasing availability of unhealthy items such as junk food and commercial tobacco products. Some zoning practices weaken the tax base needed to support schools, leading to dilapidated facilities that make children sick and outdated materials that undermine their ability to learn. Limited, unreliable public transportation makes it difficult for some people to get to work or medical care.

ChangeLab Solutions also works with changemakers to improve their knowledge and capacity to use law and policy to change systems, policies, and practices to advance health equity. For some examples of how ChangeLab has worked to address the drivers of health inequity, see [Appendix A](#).



Theory of Change

LAWS AND POLICIES are powerful determinants of health that express values, influence distribution of resources and power, and have the potential to promote widespread, long-term change. ChangeLab Solutions' theory of change walks us through the strategic framework, showing how we act from our values to implement our core strategies, partnering with other changemakers to reduce the drivers of health inequity and ultimately create healthy communities for all.



Values

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES represent the way we work with partners and colleagues. We apply these values to our mission-driven work and to our organizational practices.



Justice

We believe that all people have the right to health, justice, dignity, and opportunity. We work to dismantle oppressive and racist systems, laws, and policies and replace them with laws and policies that address the root causes of health inequities.



Learning

We are always learning. We take risks, reflecting on our failures and our successes in order to strengthen our health equity work.



Collaboration

We believe that complex problems are best solved through partnerships across multiple disciplines and sectors that maximize collective resources and align actions to advance health equity.



Community

We learn from those we work with, and we respect lived experience. We acknowledge that our lives, histories, and futures are interconnected, yet not all voices have been equally heard or valued – which is a barrier to health and equity.



Integrity

Our solutions in service of health and equity are grounded in evidence, legal precedent, and community-led change efforts.

Core Strategies

ROOTED IN OUR VALUES, our core strategies use the tools of law and policy to advance health equity. Dismantling unjust laws, policies, systems, and practices and replacing them with equitable ones requires collaboration across disciplines and sectors, as well as training and tools to facilitate equitable policy development and implementation. To advance our mission of healthier communities for all through equitable laws and policies, ChangeLab Solutions pursues these core strategies for changemaking:



Demystifying law and policy to increase community knowledge, capacity, and power and center equity in decisionmaking to promote health



Connecting across sectors to facilitate organizational learning, create shared understanding among different disciplines, and expand the network of changemakers who are addressing the fundamental drivers of health inequity



Strengthening the leadership, skills, and capacity of changemakers who advocate for and implement laws, policies, and investments that support people (especially those most in need) in meeting their basic needs



Developing policy and legal tools with an interdisciplinary lens and a focus on reducing the drivers of health inequity, to improve programs, places, and systems that support children, families, and communities in achieving their full health potential



Elevating practical, evidence-based, and community-centered tools, solutions, and successes, to scale interventions that improve health equity

Examples of the activities we undertake with our partners include developing model laws and policies; creating toolkits and roadmaps for implementing practical solutions; and providing technical assistance and training on legal issues, policy processes, and stakeholder engagement. We seek to create practical, implementable policy solutions that promote health equity. Our work will center on projects and efforts that address the drivers of health inequity as well as systems change, rather than projects that focus on reducing specific diseases or conditions. [Learn more about our services.](#)

Partners

TO ADVANCE these strategies for changemaking, we work closely with the following changemakers, partners and audiences:



Governments and policymakers at local, state, and federal levels



National and local community-based organizations, advocates, and community leaders



Health care and hospital systems



Philanthropies



Academics and researchers



Think tanks and policy institutes

For more details on how we work with different types of partners, see [Appendix B](#).

Reducing the Drivers of Health Inequities

OUR CORE STRATEGIES leverage our expertise in catalyzing legal and policy change and collaborating with partners across sectors to help communities dismantle the five fundamental drivers of health inequity:



Structural discrimination occurs when systems (as opposed to individuals) unjustly deny wealth, opportunity, power, or government representation on the basis of characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and immigration status.



Income inequality and poverty occur when some people or groups cannot access or afford the basic resources and services that they need to lead healthy lives.



Disparities in opportunity occur when some people or groups are denied the quality education, jobs, and other economic opportunities that would support healthy living.



Disparities in political power occur when some people or groups are denied the ability to make their needs visible to and a priority for government and institutional decisionmakers.



Governance that limits meaningful participation occurs when governments and institutions make decisions that shape places and distribute resources and opportunities without working to get agreement across all of the stakeholders who will be affected by those decisions.

5-Year Goal & Strategic Activities, 2020–2025

TO SUPPORT our long-term (20- to 50-year) goal of reducing the drivers of health inequity, we have identified our 5-year goal and supporting strategic activities.

5-Year Goal

Our 5-year goal is to elevate awareness of the *Blueprint* and the fundamental drivers of health inequity so that changemakers across the nation are using them to develop integrated, comprehensive, and community-driven strategies to eliminate health inequities.

Strategic Activities, 2020–2025

To further our big goal, we will focus our efforts on the following four strategic activities. (Bulleted examples are provided to help ground the strategic activities in actionable steps.)



Curate suites of health equity-centered policy tools, resources, or trainings that promote strategies to help people meet their basic needs.

Our resources will help translate the concept of addressing the drivers of health inequity into practical solutions and action steps. We have already started this work by producing our equitable enforcement guide and our long-range planning guide. Our main areas of focus are listed in the next section, Priority Issues.

- **Use an interdisciplinary approach** to analyze the role of community-centered approaches as well as health-in-all-policies, equity, preemption, equitable enforcement, and civil rights and health justice frameworks in promoting health equity
- **Identify additional areas of focus and new strategies** to support the stated needs of our community and government partners

2

Create an outreach strategy to elevate awareness of the drivers of inequity framework.

While many changemakers are interested in moving upstream or addressing the social determinants of health, they often lack the language and tools to connect these concepts to the implementation of strategies to dismantle health inequities. By raising awareness of the drivers of inequity framework and promoting tools and approaches for assessing the impacts of the drivers, we can help our partners take steps toward achieving equity. Over the next five years, we plan to elevate the drivers of inequity and other frameworks, approaches, and tools to make our collective work more achievable.

- **Identify new funders, partners, and policymakers** in order to introduce the drivers of inequity framework through trainings or workshops (create a three- or five-year strategy to cover the nation)
- **Identify influencers and messengers** to help make the drivers of inequity a familiar concept, spread awareness of the work, and secure interest
- **Create asset-based messaging** and informational materials to communicate the importance and utility of the drivers of inequity framework in improving health equity

3

Intentionally collaborate across sectors and disciplines to build a network of changemakers who are addressing the drivers of inequity and advancing health in all policies.

There is growing interest and alignment among government, community, and other changemakers on using the drivers of inequity framework. We will build on this interest to promote our services and increase cross-sector coordination by convening and connecting individuals, agencies, and organizations to build and strengthen ecosystems of partners in communities across the country. We will also seek to build cross-sector relationships where there is little infrastructure or a need to strengthen the policy ecosystem.

- **Map current partners and collaborators** to understand our reach and identify new connections and opportunities to support larger systems-level discussions and policy interventions
- **Identify and address gaps in reach**, and work with funders, policymakers, partners, board members, and others to identify opportunities to build relationships and alignment



Develop the next generation of interdisciplinary changemakers.

We have heard from partners around the country that they are interested in learning how to work with people in other sectors or disciplines. Building on our experience in creating cross-sector trainings – for example, collaborations such as the Public Health Law Academy, sessions that bring together public health and planning, or webinars that examine how housing affects health – we will formalize and scale our interdisciplinary approach to share with government, advocates, academia, and philanthropies in order to provide guidance and assistance to advocates and partners who are moving in this direction.

- **Scale ChangeLab's equity-centered, interdisciplinary practice** by refining our organizational practices, improving our trainings, and building our brand in order to expand the knowledge and skills of our staff as well as our partners and other stakeholders
- Use current funding opportunities to **build a training curriculum** for higher education, beginning with public health programs

Priority Issues

The following priority issues are the cornerstones of policy initiatives that we will continue to cultivate and refine by addressing the drivers of inequity:

- Improving safe, affordable, quality **housing** for low-income people and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC)
- Promoting healthy, sustainable, and equitable **planning, infrastructure, and development** to reduce place-based health disparities
- Creating healthy, safe, and resilience-promoting opportunities for **children and youth**
- Strengthening **family-supportive systems** and employment opportunities
- Supporting spaces free from exploitative industry influence and the targeting of harmful **commercial products** to low-income people, BIPOC, youth, LGBTQ people, and others
- Creating **food systems** that are healthy, sustainable, and equitable
- Supporting equitable **investments** to improve neglected communities across the nation

Appendix A: Examples of How We Address the Drivers of Inequity

THIS TABLE provides examples of how ChangeLab Solutions is using the tools of law and policy to address the fundamental drivers of inequity and improve health outcomes.

Health-Related Issue	Examples of ChangeLab's Work	Drivers of Inequity Addressed
<p>Influencing the built environment. Historically marginalized populations often don't have agency or control over the conditions of their environment because policy decisions are often made without including their experiences and voices.</p>	<p>ChangeLab Solutions worked with the City of Roanoke in Virginia to (1) engage their residents in a public deliberation process to determine where to target community development funding, (2) develop the city's 20-year comprehensive plan, and (3) incorporate a health-in-all-policies approach in the city's governance process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reducing disparities in political power ■ Supporting governance that promotes meaningful participation
<p>Addressing health disparities in educational settings. Data show that Black, Latinx, Native American, and LGBTQ students as well as students with mental health conditions are disciplined more often than others, leading to higher drop-out rates and stunting educational development.</p>	<p>ChangeLab Solutions partnered with civil rights and education academics to demonstrate the negative health impacts of exclusionary disciplinary practices and the role they play in perpetuating drop-out rates. We are working to elevate best practices and model policies that eliminate exclusionary disciplinary practices and institute restorative justice or trauma-informed supports to promote health and educational opportunity in schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reducing disparities in opportunity ■ Reducing disparities in income and wealth accumulation ■ Reducing structural discrimination
<p>Ensuring that low-income employees have employment protection and benefits. People who are precariously employed are less likely to have access to paid sick leave and more likely to work in jobs that increase their risk of COVID-19 exposure.</p>	<p>ChangeLab Solutions produced a legal and policy research brief for the Pew Charitable Trusts on policy responses to COVID-19 and precarious employment, to help create a systems approach that ensures that workers don't lose wages if they need to isolate due to exposure or infection, that prevents evictions, and that ensures that workers participate in defining their workplace conditions, benefits, and opportunities to build wealth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reducing disparities in opportunity ■ Reducing disparities in income and wealth accumulation

Appendix B: Additional Background on How We Work, with Whom, & Why

WE DEMYSTIFY LAW and policy to build changemakers' knowledge and capacity to create healthy communities through equitable systems, laws, policies, and practices. We work to counteract unjust laws, policies, and practices that have shaped physical, economic, and social environments in ways that create and perpetuate health inequities.

HOW we do our work?



We convene and connect across disciplines and sectors to translate, transform, and cross-pollinate ideas and solutions for systemic change.

WHY? People's needs are varied and intersectional, cutting across sectors that don't often collaborate or coordinate their efforts. We seek to translate across sectors so that they are more responsive to families' and communities' needs.



We conduct sound and thorough legal and policy analysis and training to instill confidence in the changemaking process.

WHY? Law and policy change can be complex, confusing, and resource-intensive. Our interdisciplinary team builds the knowledge and skills of changemakers through our research, analysis, and training.



We create reliable, practical legal and policy tools that are effective and easy to implement.

WHY? Changemakers don't have the time, resources, or expertise to vet and develop policies. We listen to partners and create tools and solutions that will help them advocate for change.



We elevate successes, stories, and solutions to inspire and scale change.

WHY? We listen to and learn from our partners and collaborators. We share what works in order to inspire other changemakers to take action.

WHO are changemakers?



GOVERNMENTS: local, state, and federal

We work with government staff, decisionmakers, and policymakers because they are able to scale change and work across sectors within government. We can help them feel comfortable with their decisions by providing strategies that are legally sound, based on evidence, and centered in equity.



COMMUNITY: National, state, and local community organizations, leaders, and advocates

We work with communities and advocates because they often have concrete solutions that can help advance policies to address structural barriers.



INSTITUTIONS: Health care systems and hospitals, businesses, universities, and philanthropies

We work with anchor institutions because they can understand structural barriers and implement equity-focused, legally sound policies. Philanthropies are investing in the ecosystem of policy change with the goal of furthering health equity.



ACADEMICS & RESEARCHERS: Scholars, professors, and evaluators

We work with scholars and evaluators because they offer rigor and evidence to strengthen our practical analysis and tools. They, in turn, learn from our implementation and practice in the field.