



Rise Up and Thrive: Youth Organize! California 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan Summary



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Rise Up and Thrive Youth Organize! California 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

Youth Organize! California (YO! Cali) first emerged as a network when a steering committee of twelve youth and multigenerational organizations came together from across the state in late November 2016, just weeks after the Presidential Election. YO! Cali was born during a time of growing youth power building, the outgrowth of more than twenty years of youth organizing that had expanded significantly in the 2010s, and the dire challenges under the first Trump Regime. In May 2017, YO! Cali helped to bring hundreds of young people and organizers to converge on the State Capitol in Sacramento for a youth organizing conference and day of action under the banner of “Cali for All.”

Similar to the time of our origin more than eight years ago, YO! Cali, youth organizations, young people, and our communities face even greater threats and attacks from a more consolidated second Trump Regime and emboldened reactionary, fascist forces. At the same time, youth organizing has seen unprecedented growth over the past decade. There are close to 100 organizations in California that practice elements of transformative youth organizing and power building¹. Just as in the early days of contemporary youth organizing during the right-wing dominance of California politics in the 1990s and early 2000s, we are once again at a pivotal moment, one filled with both great opportunity and serious risk. It is a time to deepen youth and multigenerational power, resist regressive attacks, and boldly advance our shared vision of “a world in which many worlds fit—a world of liberation, wholeness, and abundance.”

¹ According to the December 2019 report by Dr. Veronica Terriquez, [*The California Endowment's Youth Power Infrastructure: An Overview of Youth-Serving Organizations and Intermediaries It Supports*](#), 104 out of 171 youth-serving organizations surveyed engaged young people in grassroots youth-led organizing at least once per month.

From January through July 2025, YO! Cali engaged its staff, board members, and more than fifty close partners from network organizations to create our five-year strategic plan. The plan also draws upon our [Mapping Rivers to Oceans](#) report, published May 2025 based on an assessment of the youth organizing landscape in California that gathered input and perspectives from organizing staff at 72 partner organizations. With an eye towards our long-term, generational vision, the plan focuses on the strategic direction, context, opportunities, and priorities for YO! Cali from 2025 to 2030. The plan includes:

- [A contextual analysis](#) of the strengths, challenges, needs, and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats, facing YO! Cali and our network partner organizations,
- A refreshed [strategic compass](#) (our vision, purpose, and values), and
- [Five-year organizational priorities and goals](#).

The Context in 2025

In 2025, YO! Cali's strengths as an organization build upon many of the core strengths that were clear in our 2020–2025 strategic plan. Our current strengths include deep, meaningful, and strategic relationships, long-term vision and responsive strategy, experimentation, modeling, and practicing transformative youth organizing and healing justice, and centering youth organizers and young people in multi-issue movements. Strengths of network organizations include their work around youth leadership programs and development, curriculum development and political education, base building, outreach, and retention, solidarity and movement-building, and arts, media, and storytelling.

There are also a myriad of challenges, needs, and weaknesses confronting YO! Cali and network partners across our four core strategies: Capacity Building, Power Building, Healing Justice, and Field Building. Among the key Capacity Building challenges and needs are the need for consistency and clarity in curriculum, training methods, and definitions for our transformative youth organizing model and framework, as well as for leadership and professional development that sustain movement leaders at different steps in their pathways.

Key Power Building needs include the need for clarity on YO! Cali's model to advance power building, campaigns, and an issue platform regionally and statewide. Network organizations need training on base building, leadership development, campaign strategy, social media outreach, retaining youth engagement, and cultural arts and music making for social change, and direct action organizing and safety for youth members and staff.

YO! Cali's challenges related to Healing Justice include the challenge of addressing the tensions and contradictions in healing justice between individual, organizational, and collective needs, and the need to weave and explicitly connect power building in our healing justice and cultural

offerings. For youth organizations, addressing staff burnout, wellness, and sustainability and more resources and tools to address youth mental health, wellness, and trauma are key needs.

Key needs for our Field Building strategy include a formalized and consistent network structure with clearly defined pathways, criteria opportunities, and roles for organizational members, and different strategies and approaches to field building that address the varied contexts and political and funding landscapes within each of our regions. A core challenge for youth organizations in the broader ecosystem is financial sustainability and long-term fundraising, including the need for multi-year unrestricted, general operating support and diversified sources of funding.

Alongside the strengths, challenges, and needs within YO! Cali and our network, there are also significant opportunities and threats on the landscape and horizon. Major opportunities to leverage YO! Cali's strengths include the ability to build on our role as a trusted convener and meet the desire of organizations to connect and break out of isolation within and across regions, to create infrastructure and nimble systems of action to support proactive efforts, and to hold spaces for collective vision to nourish the movement and achieve what we are fighting for, not just what we're against.

Among the opportunities in the broader youth organizing ecosystem is the opportunity to build on ongoing work to fight for full investment in youth and communities as a broad, intersectional approach that includes multiple issues and communities, to create shared narratives that promote unity to counter attacks that divide us by issues, ethnicities, identities, and communities, and to bolster efforts for trust-based philanthropy and shared power between funders, organizations, and young people.

The current context is also rife with threats to and attacks on young people and our communities. Major threats in the current socio-political context include the further criminalization and escalated attacks on young people, im/migrants and refugees, the queer/LGBTQIA+ community, and Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Facets of authoritarianism, fascism, and attacks on democracy and freedom of speech are consolidating in many institutions and will last beyond the Trump Regime. There is the region-specific threat of heightened conservative opposition in various areas of the state.

Direct threats to organizing, power building, and nonprofits include the lack of safety and security for organizations, organizers, and youth leaders on multiple fronts. Rightwing attacks on organizing and nonprofits, especially to im/migrant, Black, Native, Palestinian, queer, and trans organizing, threaten to prevent community organizing altogether.

Finally, there are internal threats within the youth organizing ecosystem. Among them are racial siloing and anti-Blackness, a scarcity mindset that reinforces competition and infighting

among organizations, and the pattern of falling back into toxic habits in the midst of crises, including moving with unsustainable urgency, mobilizing but not politicizing people, and reacting without building the future we want.

Purpose-Driven Priorities to Meet the Moment and Advance a Generational Vision

YO! Cali's vision² calls for “a world where young people boldly lead with purpose and embody power for irresistible transformation connected to liberation movements across the globe. A world where young people are nourished and nurtured to thrive.” Our renewed purpose as an organization and network include the cultivation of transformative youth organizing to generate long-term transformation in our communities, strengthening the youth organizing ecosystem and growing the capacities of organizations to build power, and investing in sustainable leadership pathways.

As a core piece of our strategic planning process, YO! Cali staff came together in multiple strategic planning sessions, convened frontline organizers in regional strategy gatherings, and brought together network representatives from across the state to develop five-year organizational priorities and goals that align with our purpose, meet the needs, challenges, threats, and opportunities of the current moment, and advance our shared, long-term vision.

Detailed in the [Five-Year Priorities and Goals](#) section below, our broad five-year priorities advance programming, organizational development, and infrastructure:

- 1) **Power Building and Healing Justice:** Advance priority issues from the [Young People's Agenda](#) by developing and implementing a transformative power-building model rooted in healing justice and supporting translocal campaign efforts
- 2) **Capacity Building and Field Building:** Strengthen statewide and regional youth organizing ecosystems by fostering deep relationships and strategic alignment among YO! Cali network partners, building the capacity of organizations, youth organizers, and youth leaders, and organizing funders to increase multi-year funding to the youth organizing field.
- 3) **Support for Black-led Organizing:** Given the needs and challenges facing Black-led organizing within the youth organizing ecosystem and larger socio-political context, YO! Cali will weave a strategy and commitment to engage Black organizers and Black-led organizations into our five-year priorities and goals.

² YO! Cali's vision, purpose, and core values were first developed in 2017 by young people and organizers from our steering committee, and updated by staff and network partners as part of the 2025 strategic planning process.

- 4) **Organizational Development:** Create a clearly-defined staff structure and a values-aligned organizational culture that reflect the skills, competencies, practices, strategic and analytical alignment, and capacity needed to achieve our long term goals
- 5) **Infrastructure and Youth Organizing Hub:** Strengthen YO! Cali's organizational infrastructure, including its financial, fundraising, people, human resources, and operations systems and staffing, and establish a clearly defined-network structure, statewide Youth Organizing Hub, and "movement commons" that include back-office, fiscal sponsorship, and support services for youth organizations.

With the strengths of YO! Cali and our network organizations and our purpose-driven priorities, we are poised to meet the moment and advance a long-term vision over the next five years and beyond.

Strategic Compass

Vision

We envision “a world in which many worlds fit.”³ A world of liberation, wholeness, and abundance. A world of safety and bravery. A world built on mutual support, strength, queerness, and love.

We envision a world where young people boldly lead with purpose and embody power for irresistible transformation connected to liberation movements across the globe. A world where young people are nourished and nurtured to thrive in mutual, sustainable, and reciprocal relationships with community, the land, nature, and all relatives.

Purpose

As a statewide network and hub, Youth Organize! California expands and grows the strategic, professional, and socio-emotional power and political analysis of young people and youth organizers across the state.

We cultivate transformative youth organizing to generate long-term transformation in our communities.

We strengthen the youth organizing ecosystem and grow the capacities of organizations to build power in deep alignment towards a shared vision of liberation, healing, and justice.

We invest in sustainable leadership pathways that center the voices and experiences of the most impacted young people, nurturing a bold, multi-issue movement.

Core Organizational and Network Values

Youth Power

Trusting in the power and leadership of young people, providing support and leadership pathways, and making intentional space for young people to exercise decision making and leadership in the youth organizing ecosystem.

Transformative Organizing

Driven by radical love, healing, community building, and compassion.

³ The concept of “a world in which many worlds fit” was first popularized by the Zapatista movement in Mexico, particularly through the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional). See the Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, January 1, 1996, available at: <https://radiozapatista.org/?p=20287&lang=en>.

Deep Inclusion

Especially of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, queer and trans people, immigrants, systems-impacted youth, people with disabilities and neurodivergence, and youth outside of the state's urban cores.

Intersectionality & Interdependence

Recognizing that our lives, issues, and oppressions are interconnected and our collective and individual liberation are tied to one another.

Margins to Center

Centering youth and regions that have been historically undervalued and underinvested at the forefront of leadership and resources.

Love and Rage

Holding love for our people at the center while tapping into rage at oppression and injustice to fuel bold transformation.

Equity

Advancing justice by addressing the needs of the most impacted communities and youth and making investments and redistributing resources. Honoring the labor of young people and organizers by compensating them.

Strategy, Rigor, and Accountability

Elevating shared strategy and vision, rigor, power building, and collective action, grounded in relationships, integrity, accountability, evaluation, and adaptability.

Risk Taking, Experimentation, and Innovation

Taking strategic risks that build on YO! Cali's position and resources to build power and accelerate movement wins. Fostering opportunities for experimentation and innovation that create bold and creative models for youth organizing and power building.

Liberation Values⁴

Collective Liberation is...

Freedom from white supremacy, anti-Blackness, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, settler colonialism, ableism, and ageism.

Having the **spaciousness and support** to grow, learn, and heal.

Connectedness to people, place, and culture.

Honoring and reclaiming the **humanity and wholeness** in ourselves and others.

Grounded in **love and joy**.

⁴ These values were adapted from the work of [Tammy Johnson](#) and her sessions with YO! Cali staff on moving from anti-Blackness to Black liberation. They serve as values to guide the practices and commitments for the YO! Cali team as we show up for each other, our network partners, and the larger youth organizing ecosystem.

Contextual Analysis: YO! Cali and the Youth Organizing Ecosystem in 2025

In 2025, the realities facing Youth Organize! California and the larger youth organizing ecosystem reflect the strengths of YO! Cali and our network partners, the weaknesses and challenges that can hold us back, the opportunities to accelerate youth and community power building to advance transformation, and the dire threats in the current moment and long-term.

In 2024, YO! Cali conducted an assessment of the youth organizing landscape in California that gathered input and perspectives from organizing staff at 72 partner organizations. A full report of this assessment can be found in our [Mapping Rivers to Oceans](#) report, published in May 2025. In early 2025, YO! Cali staff assessed the organization's strengths, challenges, and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats facing the organization. Finally, youth leaders, organizers, and funders came together for two strategy sessions with the California Youth Organizing Funders Collaborative in June and July 2025.

This contextual analysis summarizes key themes from those assessments and sessions.

Strengths

YO! Cali Organizational Strengths

Deep, Meaningful, and Strategic Relationships

- Serving as a trusted expert in the field due to deep, long-lasting relationships and movement connections
- Building trust with organizations and organizers in each region by having YO! Cali staff with organizing roots, lineage, experience, and expertise in those regions
- Building relationships in a way that contributes to the youth organizing field, recognizes and uplifts the expertise of organizations on the ground, and counters extractive and transactional habits
- Creating familial, safe, and generative movement spaces that deepen meaningful and strategic relationships among organizers across regions and organizations
- Centering the context, identity, and unique needs of each region we work with
- Deep relationships with and commitment to established and emerging organizations in our regions
- Building relationships among youth leaders, organizers, and funders, centering the voices and power of youth and organizers in the process, and influencing philanthropy to resource the youth organizing field

Long-Term Vision and Responsive Strategy

- Creating spaces for *conocimiento*⁵, education, strategy, generative thinking, radical imagination, and visioning for young people, organizers, and organizations
- Supporting organizations to keep the horizon and long vision in view as they're working on immediate needs, issues, and campaigns
- Informing our strategies, goals, and programming by centering the needs and vision of each region through site visits, intentional conversations, and consistent presence and relationships
- Providing width and depth in our offerings to meet the emerging needs of the field and each of our regions

Experimentation, Modeling, and Practicing Transformative Youth Organizing and Healing Justice

- Modeling what transformative youth organizing and healing justice can look like in practice. Supporting organizations to replicate and adapt what we share and model
- Through Fellowship programs, we test and model capacity building, healing justice, and power building methods and practices
- Practicing flexibility and nimbleness in how we provide offerings to respond to the needs of network organizations and organizers, regionally and statewide
- Weaving healing justice practices, frameworks, and principles throughout programming, including the integration of healing offerings, community care, creativity, arts, and culture as a core part of gatherings
- Innovating and piloting programs, offerings, and curriculum that benefit and enrich organizations in our network
- Balancing rigor and diligent practice with healing, fun, and joy in gatherings and offerings
- Expertise in designing and facilitating curriculum with organizers and young people that makes our capacity building offerings accessible and effective

Centering Youth Organizers and Young People

- In bringing together youth organizations for shared strategy, we center and uplift the lived experiences, perspectives, lessons learned, and best practices of young people, organizers, and organizations.

⁵ In this context, *conocimiento* can be defined as critical awareness, consciousness-raising, and shared knowledge.

- Our work to create youth-designed platforms and narratives provides clear and specific ways to develop and engage youth leaders in visioning and decision-making processes across regions and organizations
- Building the skills and wisdom of young people and youth organizers by supporting intergenerational organizations that create relationships between youth and elders

Strengths of YO! Cali Network Organizations

Youth Leadership Programs and Development

- Providing opportunities for young people to develop their organizing, life, and socio-emotional skills and reach their full potential
- Nurturing the leadership of young people most impacted by systemic injustice to break free of internalized oppression, build power, and develop and win transformative campaigns
- Providing opportunities for young people to assume ownership over imagining and building power to create real alternatives to systemic injustice

Curriculum Development and Political Education

- Developing and implementing curriculum to dissect the root causes of issues that impact young people's lives
- Training young people to reclaim their voices, self, and cultural pride

Base Building, Outreach, and Retention

- Ability for organizations' youth and multigenerational bases to harness widespread support into the power of numbers
- Consistently employing a variety of base-building approaches: door knocking, canvassing, phone banking, school-based outreach, and peer-to-peer outreach

Solidarity and Movement-Building

- Building solidarity and relationships across different community institutions, individuals, and stake-holders
- Developing trust within and across communities, institutions, organizations

Arts, Media, and Storytelling

- Harnessing the power of storytelling and narrative change to shift hearts and minds
- Amplifying lived experiences and the real-life impact of issues through constituency-centered narratives and testimonies
- Connecting young people's stories with evidence and research to persuade decision-makers and stakeholders

Needs, Challenges, and Weaknesses

YO! Cali Organizational Needs, Challenges, and Weaknesses

Capacity Building

Needs:

- Consistency and clarity in curriculum, training methods, and definitions for our transformative youth organizing model and framework
- Online “clearinghouse” for youth organizing resources, including a “syllabus” with YO! Cali’s core curriculum
- Consistency and clear strategy for virtual and in-person youth-specific offerings that are accessible to youth leaders from network organizations

Challenges / Weaknesses:

- Meeting the growing demand for capacity building in the youth organizing field across all of our core strategies, specifically around transformative youth organizing, power building, and healing justice
- Providing offerings that meet diverse and varying regional needs while also coordinating across regions and statewide

Power Building

Needs:

- Clarity on our role and contributions to power building and campaigns as an organization and network
- Clarity on our model to advance power building, campaigns, and an issue platform regionally and statewide

- Clarity on our commitment and role to actualize a translocal campaign strategy⁶
- Need to share learnings and tools from issue-based cohorts with specific groups of organizations with the larger network of organizations working on similar issues
- Organizations need information, training, and skills building to ensure implementation of campaign wins stay true to demands and solutions

Challenges / Weaknesses:

- Being bold and consistent in centering an abolitionist vision and framework in our power building strategies
- Taking our work with youth leaders and organizations to create shared platforms and narratives to the next level by supporting shared strategies, impact, and power building across regions
- Measuring the impacts of power building efforts based on network partners' interests and priorities rather than funder opportunities and trends

Healing Justice

Needs:

- Integrating disability justice values and practices into our healing justice work, internally with staff and externally with network organizations and organizers
- Integrating healing justice principles and practices into our backend infrastructure and systems (e.g., healing justice practices in human resources)
- Clarity and consistency in the healing justice offerings and resources for which network organizations can rely on us

Challenges / Weaknesses:

- Balancing the expansiveness of what healing justice is and can be with concrete tools, resources, and containers for organizations to practice healing justice
- Weaving and explicitly connecting power building in our healing justice and cultural offerings
- Tensions and contradictions in healing justice between individual, organizational, and collective needs, especially given the need for organizations' staff capacity and skill sets

⁶ A translocal campaign strategy is a model of power building and organizing that: (1) gathers and shares the experiences, resources, and wisdom of young people, youth organizing, and communities across geographies; (2) advances interdependence and connections between local communities and across movement fights; (3) honors local wisdom and strategy while aligning efforts to create change within larger geographies; and (4) scales up and out local wins towards collective power and transformation. Adapted from Grassroots Global Justice Alliance: <https://ggjalliance.org/program-activities/translocal-organizing>

Field Building

Needs:

- A formalized and consistent network structure with clearly defined pathways, criteria opportunities, and roles for organizational members
- A relational contact management database to track organizations, program alumni, and other contacts
- A strategy to most effectively support regions outside of the state's urban cores of the San Francisco Bay and Greater Los Angeles areas
- Different strategies and approaches to field building that address the varied contexts and political and funding landscapes within each of our regions. (For example, the different contexts of youth organizing and power building between the True North, South Bay, and Bay Area, all of which are part of our Northern California region.)

Challenges / Weaknesses:

- Ability for our current staff structure to meet the needs of the field and reach our full potential
- Weaving and advancing field building in the offerings and programs of other YO! Cali strategies
- Disconnection between our funder organizing, our broader field building strategy, and other core strategies that can silo the efforts from the larger YO! Cali staff team
- Moving our statewide funder organizing from being primarily a learning and relationship building space into a strategic direction that materially impacts the youth organizing field with significantly increased multi-year general support funding and resources

Needs and Challenges for YO! Cali Network Organizations

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Fundraising

Needs:

- Multi-year unrestricted, general operating support for frontline organizations
- Diversified sources of grant funding, grassroots donations
- Creative and innovative approaches to revenue and resource generation: grassroots fundraising, earned income contracts, land trusts, property ownership, and other income-generating enterprises

- Intentional investment in resources for staff and support systems to allow organizations to operate at full capacity
- Campaign and program budgeting, organizational financial planning, and administrative and financial responsibility structures
- Funding based on relationships, trust, shared power, and accompliceship between funders and organizations, rather than transactional, unsustainable deliverables and top-down decision-making
- Spaces for collective learning and shared accountability between funders, youth leaders, and organizers
- Investment in physical spaces, land trusts, collective property for organizations to bring young people and communities together

Challenges:

- Lack of adequate funding significantly hinders organizations' capacity to effectively address the needs of their staff and communities
- Understaffing creates an inability to fully organize a strong base

Staff and Youth Wellness, Healing Justice, and Sustainability

Needs:

- Addressing staff burnout, wellness, and sustainability
- More resources and tools to address youth mental health, wellness, and trauma
- Ongoing support and training to live out the values of healing justice amidst growing contradictions
- Integration of healing and wellness at all levels of organizations
- Healthy relationships, boundaries, and mentorship between staff and youth
- Sacred, physical "third" spaces for BIPOC and gender-expansive youth to connect, build community, heal, and experience joy as part of organizing

Challenges:

- Disconnect between organizers' hopes for healing justice praxis and their ability to bring these hopes to life
- Tensions between individually and collectively focused healing

Youth Members and Organizers' Leadership and Professional Development

Needs:

- Training, tools, and curriculum that foster youth and organizers' capacities to grow in the movement
- Leadership and professional development that sustains movement leaders at different steps in their pathways
- Support for staff transitions and adequate onboarding, especially in supporting youth to fill staff roles and staff members to learn a variety of roles
- Tailored professional development (e.g., project management, network building) for staff to confidently embrace new, differentiated roles and responsibilities
- Internships and fellowships as opportunities to deepen and grow the leadership of youth members
- Training on base building, leadership development, campaign strategy, social media outreach, retaining youth engagement, and cultural arts and music making for social change, and direct action organizing and safety for youth members and staff alike

Base Building, Outreach, Retention, and Youth Incentives

Needs:

- Training for youth members to recruit their peers in schools and the community
- Supporting retention by addressing obstacles to youth participation in meetings and activities in-person, such as access to transportation and food for meetings
- Presence in and strong pathways from schools into to youth programs
- Shared learning around designing strong base-building and organizing experiments, including the evaluation and assessment to measure an experiment's success

Opportunities

Opportunities in the Youth Organizing Ecosystem

A wide range of opportunities was identified during YO! Cali strategic planning sessions, regional strategy gatherings with key youth organizing partners, and strategy sessions with field leaders and funders with the California Youth Organizing Funders Collaborative.

Opportunities to Leverage YO! Cali Strengths

- Building on YO! Cali's strength as a trusted convener to meet the desire of organizations to connect and break out of isolation within and across regions.
- Leveraging YO! Cali's role as a convener to tap into different groups who are more skilled and staffed on certain topics (e.g., specific campaign issues, rapid response, mutual aid) to share knowledge and lessons learned within our regional and statewide networks
- Gatherings, shared learning, deepening trust, and breaking silos for the purpose of sharpening folks capacities to build power and scale organizing efforts
- Opportunity for YO! Cali and our network organizations to be positioned for responsive, rather than reactive organizing. Building infrastructure and nimble systems of action to support proactive efforts.
- Supporting scaled campaigns, civic engagement, electoral politics, and the skill building organizations need to get to that place
- Holding spaces for collective vision to nourish the movement and achieve what we are fighting for, not just what we're against.
- Building on YO! Cali's track record, best practices, and success in Fellowship programs to create youth movement pathways that not only engage young people in organizing careers, but in different careers with values of justice and liberation

Opportunities in the broader Youth Organizing Ecosystem

- Building upon ongoing work to fight for full investment in youth and communities as a broad, intersectional approach that includes multiple issues and communities (immigration, QTBIPOC)
- Creating shared narratives that promote unity to counter attacks that divide us by issues, ethnicities, identities, and communities – narratives of hopefulness amongst the many horrors
- Building upon efforts around trust-based philanthropy and shared power between funders, organizations, and young people to move funders as accomplices and risk takers for power building and liberation
- Expanding sustainable funding and re-grants to incubate youth organizing and power building efforts
- International Solidarity and Strategy: Connections and work across nations, sharing across geographies and issue areas, learning from liberation struggles across the globe

Threats

Multiple threats to YO! Cali and the Youth Organizing Ecosystem were identified during strategic planning sessions, which fall broadly into the following categories:

Threats in the Socio-Political Context

- Further criminalization of young people and im/migrants and refugees
- Attacks on Queer/LGBTQIA+ community, people of color
- Facets of authoritarianism, fascism, and attacks on democracy and freedom of speech are consolidating in many institutions and will last beyond the Trump Regime
- Social media and online platforms block social justice content (for example, flagging and shadow banning of Pro-Palestine content) and spread misinformation/disinformation
- Digital surveillance and doxing
- Region-specific threats: Heightened conservative opposition in specific regions (e.g., Central Valley). Regional attacks from pro-police groups and officials on organizing efforts. Wide range of threats in each region and varied capacity of organizations to respond.

Threats to Organizing, Power Building, and Nonprofits

- Lack of safety and security for organizations, organizers, and youth leaders on multiple fronts: data and digital security, legal attacks, keeping our network members safe when gathering, traveling, etc.)
- Attacks on organizing and nonprofits to prevent community organizing altogether. Government investigations and attacks on nonprofits, organizational credibility.

Internal Threats within the Youth Organizing Ecosystem

- Racial siloing and anti-Blackness within the organizing ecosystem. For example, immigrants' rights is framed as being about the Latinx community, while Black immigrants and migrants face some of the harshest attacks
- Threats to organizations' capacity, ability, and infrastructure to simultaneously respond to crises and maintain their core organizing, power building, and campaign work, especially as immigration and racial justice needs are constantly shifting
- Scarcity mindset: Falling into the idea that there are not enough resources. Reinforcing competition and infighting among organizations.

- Falling back into toxic patterns in the midst of crises: Working and moving with unsustainable urgency, mobilizing but not politicizing people, and reacting without building the future we want.

2025-2030 Priorities and Goals

Five-Year Programmatic Priorities and Goals

Priority 1 – Power Building and Healing Justice: Advance priority issues from the Young People’s Agenda by developing and implementing a transformative power-building model rooted in healing justice and supporting translocal campaign efforts.

Goal 1 – Campaign Capacity Building: Build capacity for campaign efforts that weave together Healing Justice and Power Building through shared curriculum, training, toolkits, political education on YPA issues, and hands-on support for campaign strategy development and implementation.

Goal 2 – Shared Strategies for Translocal Campaigns: Collectively accelerate power building on specific YPA issue(s) by creating spaces for network organizations to share lessons learned, develop coordinated translocal strategies, efforts, demands, messages, and plan for collective action.

Priority 2 – Capacity Building and Field Building: Strengthen statewide and regional youth organizing ecosystems by fostering deep relationships and strategic alignment among YO! Cali network partners, building the capacity of organizations, youth organizers, and youth leaders, and organizing funders to increase multi-year funding to the youth organizing field.

Goal 1 – Shared Core Curriculum: Ensure that organizations have access to and are trained in shared resources, practices, and collective knowledge by developing and implementing a standardized and adaptable core curriculum on: (1) Foundational Organizing Skills (base-building, campaign strategy, fundamental elements of youth organizing); (2) Healing Justice; and (3) Political Education connected to the Young People’s Agenda and global issues.

Goal 2 – Youth Organizer Pathways: Strengthen and expand youth organizer pathways by implementing Fellowship programs, building out our Fellowship alumni network, and sharing sustainable leadership development opportunities for organizers in the youth organizing ecosystem.

Goal 3 – Organizational Cohorts: Advance youth organizing and power-building in under-resourced communities by providing targeted resources, coaching, and support to regional organizational cohorts, prioritizing organizations that organize and are led by Black, Native/Indigenous, Palestinian/Arab, trans and queer, disabled, and immigrant youth and communities.

Goal 4 – Increase Multi-Year Funding to Youth Organizing Groups: Organize funders to increase multi-year general support funding to under-resourced organizations and regions and build on the lessons learned, best practices, and model of the Northern California Youth Power Fund.

Year-One (July 2025–June 2026) Programmatic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 – Campaign Capacity & Translocal Strategy: Refresh and relaunch the Young People’s Agenda by:

Objective 1: Conducting an inventory of all the work of YO! Cali and network organizations around YPA issues (by December 2025)

Objective 2: Training YO! Cali staff to have a shared understanding of the purpose and language of the Agenda (by June 2026)

Objective 3: Engaging staff (including campaign and organizing leads, directors, and organizers) and young people from 10-15 strategically-aligned network organizations per region to provide feedback to refresh the issue platform and prioritize issues (by June 2026)

Goal 2 – Shared Core Curriculum: Develop and pilot standardized and adaptable core curriculum by:

Objective 1: Conducting an inventory, evaluation, and consolidation of current curriculum and assessment of needs and priorities (by December 2025)

Objective 2: Assessing curriculum and training needs, gaps, and priorities with YO! Cali staff and field leaders (by December 2025)

Objective 3: Piloting priority curriculum that bridges Foundations of Organizing and Healing Justice in regional and statewide programming, including Youth Organizing Institutes and the Emerging Organizers Fellowship program (by June 2026)

Goal 3 – Organizational Cohorts: Strengthen strategic alignment among network organizations through cohorts that build power in under-resourced regions and communities by:

Objective 1: Creating a comprehensive and organization-wide database of organizations and funders in the youth organizing ecosystem, housed in YO! Cali’s IT infrastructure (by December 2025)

Objective 2: Assessing the regional and statewide terrain, and determining the readiness and desire for organizations to participate, and engaging in experimentation to inform YO! Cali’s cohort model (by June 2026)

Engaging Black Organizers and Black-Led Organizations

YO! Cali will weave a strategy and commitment to engage Black organizers and Black-led organizations into our five-year priorities through the following goals:

Priority 1 – Power Building and Healing Justice: Consistently engage a critical mass⁷ of Black-led organizations and multiracial organizations with significant Black leadership and membership in building capacity for campaign efforts and in spaces for developing shared translocal strategies.

Priority 2 – Capacity Building and Field Building

Goal 1 – Shared Core Curriculum: Incorporate a foundational understanding of movements for Black Liberation and analyses of white supremacy and anti-Blackness in Political Education connected to the Young People’s Agenda and global issues.

Goal 2 – Youth Organizer Pathways: Engage a critical mass of Black organizers in our Fellowship programs, Fellowship alumni network, and sustainable leadership development opportunities. Explore developing opportunities to support peer spaces and pathways for Black organizers to move director-level roles.

Goal 3 – Organizational Cohorts: Provide targeted resources, coaching, and support to a critical mass of Black-led organizations and organizations with significant Black leadership and membership.

Goal 4 – Increase Multi-Year Funding to Youth Organizing Groups: Ensure that a critical mass of Black-led organizations and organizations with significant Black leadership and membership receive multi-year general support funding as part of any increased funds generated by funder organizing.

Priority 3 – Organizational Culture: Strengthen YO! Cali’s organizational culture to support the strategy to engage Black-led organizations and Black organizations by:

Goal 1 – Staff Practices: By June 2026, we will have successfully launched, put into effect, and evaluated the practice of YO! Cali’s conflict transformation policies and collective liberation and anti-racism values, including the ability and commitment of staff to meaningfully and consistently engage Black Organizers and Black-Led Organizations

Organizational Structure, Culture, and Infrastructure Goals

Priority 1 – Organizational Structure and Culture: Establish a clearly-defined staff structure (positions, roles, supervision, staff development and evaluation, and leadership pathways) and

⁷ In “[Paying attention to Critical Mass in Communities & Networks](#),” Fabian Pfortmüller defines critical mass as “that tipping point when a community reaches enough active members to thrive.” For YO! Cali’s goals to engage Black organizers and Black-led organizations, critical mass can serve as a way to set goals and assess engagement that ensures that Black organizers and organizations are not tokenized and isolated in programs and spaces, but thrive and have power and influence in the larger group.

a values-aligned organizational culture that reflect the skills, competencies, practices, strategic and analytical alignment, and capacity needed to achieve our long term goals

Year-One Goal 1 – Organizational Structure: By June 2026, we will have developed a plan and begun to implement priority hires and core position changes, as well as an updated compensation structure, evaluation process, and hiring and onboarding processes.

Year-One Goal 2 – Organizational Culture: By June 2026, we will have successfully launched, put into effect, and evaluated the practice of YO! Cali’s conflict transformation policies and collective liberation and anti-racism values.

Priority 2 – Infrastructure: (1) Strengthen YO! Cali’s organizational infrastructure, including its financial, fundraising, people, human resources, and operations systems and staffing, and (2) Establish a clearly defined-network structure, statewide Youth Organizing Hub, and “movement commons” that include back-office, fiscal sponsorship, and support services for youth organizations.

Year-One Goal – Network Structure: Develop a consistent network structure that outlines the criteria, onboarding process, resources, support, and decision-making roles for member organizations.



The Young People's Agenda: Vision and Issue Framework (2019)

The Young People's Agenda is a starting point to spark radical alignment between young people of color, movement organizations, elected officials, and institutional leaders. The Agenda reflects young people's vision for a world rooted in equity, freedom, and racial justice. A world of wholeness. A world with safe and brave spaces. A world of adequate and abundant resources. A world built on mutual support, strength, leadership, and love. This is the future we are calling into existence. The future our communities demand and deserve.

The Young People's Agenda was jointly developed in 2019 by Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, White, immigrant, refugee, queer, transgender, gender non-conforming, and low-income young people who are working in solidarity together as part of the Youth Organize! California and Power California networks.

The specific demands and proposals that we call for under each issue area are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they represent examples of key issue priorities and current organizing efforts.

Imagine a World with Full Investment in Youth and Communities

Where we are no longer locked up, locked out, suspended and expelled, detained and deported, stereotyped and dismissed. Where our dreams are supported and uplifted, invited and encouraged, welcomed and desired, loved and accepted.

We call for:

- Investing local and state general funds in services and opportunities that uplift young people and divest from enforcement, punishment, and incarceration that dehumanize young people.
- Increasing corporate taxes to fund investments in free college for all, single-payer health care, and affordable child care for working families.

Imagine a World with **Immigrant and Refugee Justice**

Where there are no borders, deportations, criminalized immigration experiences, or separation of families. Where different identities do not draw boundaries but bring us all closer.

We call for:

- Full protection for all undocumented families, immigrants, and refugees in California including Indigenous, African, Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Arab, Muslim, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.
- A pathway to legal residency and full citizenship for all undocumented youth and adult immigrants and refugees.

Imagine a World with **Trans, Queer, and Gender Justice**

Where LGBTQIA+ communities, women, transgender, two-spirit, and gender non-conforming people can live without fear. Where there is an end to rape culture, sexual assault, violence, and harassment. Where we can express ourselves and not be judged and our worth is recognized and upheld.

We call for:

- Recognition and protection under the law for LGBTQIA+ communities, and people of all gender identities, expressions, and designations.
- Access to affordable health services addressing the specific health needs and concerns of women, trans, and gender non-conforming people.

**LGBTQIA+ is an acronym that is inclusive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Trans, Two-Spirit, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual identities.*

Imagine a World with **Racial Justice**

Where we dismantle anti-Blackness in all forms that still persist throughout the political, social, cultural, and economic systems we engage in daily. Where sovereignty for Indigenous peoples in the United States, across the Western Hemisphere, and globally are central to the struggle for liberation. Where communities of color unapologetically create and thrive in intersectional spaces. Where we are free of colorism and the internalized hatred of Black and Brown skin that has stemmed from the legacy of colonization and white supremacy.

We call for:

- Inclusive and spacious movements that center the shared leadership and decision-making of youth, women, gender-nonconforming and trans people of color.

- Full and abundant funding for all public schools.
- The elimination of criminal justice and immigration systems that criminalize poverty.
- Community reinvestment regardless of neighborhood or zip code that allows youth of color everywhere to feel affirmed and thrive powerfully.
- A contagious commitment to healing ourselves and each other that inspires us to co-create a culture of feeling seen, heard, supported, interconnected, and deeply loved.

Imagine a World with **Educational Justice**

Where there is no school-to-prison pipeline, school-to-poverty, or school-to-deportation pipeline. No erasure of our hxstories, and no factory-model of education bent on testing, punishment, and compliance. Instead, education affirms who we are, embraces our liveliness, and respects our identities.

We call for:

- Welcoming and safe schools that honor students of color, American Indian/Alaska Native students, LGBTQIA+ students, immigrant and refugee students, and other marginalized groups.
- Healing centered, culturally responsive curriculum and practices that address trauma, violence, and mental health.
- Abundant resources and services that create community and relationship-centered schools which center student experiences.

Imagine a World with **Transformative and Restorative Justice**

Where there are no prisons, criminalization, deportation, mass incarceration, state-sanctioned violence, or racial profiling in communities of color. Instead, young people and community members are embraced by a true community of healing and transformation.

We call for:

- Creating restorative and transformative justice practices in communities, systems, and schools.
- Supporting re-entry of formerly incarcerated youth and community members with healing, services, housing, and employment.

Imagine a World with **Housing and Economic Justice**

Where we aren't in constant struggle to provide for ourselves, where we aren't pushed out of our homes by gentrification and corporate greed. Instead, we have equitable resources for all people of color, centering on the experiences of those farthest on the margins.

We call for:

- Stable, safe, quality, and affordable housing based on community income.
- Equal access to meaningful work and living wage jobs.
- Access to programs that support housing rights for LGBTQIA+ families and first-time buyers.
- Deeper investment in financial, employment, mental health programs for youth and individuals impacted by houselessness or housing displacement.

Imagine a World with **Health and Reproductive Justice**

Where we are strong not because we've had to survive so much hardship but because we have so much support in our communities. Where young people are embraced with wellness, wholeness, healing, and transformation.

We call for:

- Single-payer healthcare with access and services for all people, including undocumented and trans community members.
- Access to free, high-quality health and reproductive care and services.
- Centering the needs of young parents by ensuring all people have access to the information, education, and resources needed to make real decisions about our own bodies and lives.
- Access to free trauma-informed, mental health, and wellness services in communities and schools.

Imagine a World with **Environmental and Climate Justice**

Where we recognize and uphold treaties and Indigenous communities' rights to land, water, and ways of life. Where we put an end to global warming and environmental injustice in our communities, including toxic dumpsites, water pollution, unclean air, and pesticides. Instead, we heal and protect the world we live on.

We call for:

- Clean air, water, and land for all communities by protecting the sanctity of our natural resources.

- Freedom from reliance on fossil fuels and resource extraction.
- Transitioning to a society and an economy based on sustainable and renewable energies.
- Abundant recreational spaces, parks, gardens, and green spaces for all communities.
- Access to healthy, fresh, nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food.
- Access to free, quality public transit.

Imagine a World with **Grassroots Governance**

Where we are no longer excluded, silenced, or denied access to power. Where those in power are guided by mutual love and accountability to the communities they represent. Where we stand together, love each other and pass on leadership. Where we always have the power to change the world.

We call for:

- Expanding the vote in local and state elections to all Californians age 16 and older, including undocumented residents and formerly and currently incarcerated individuals.
- Building new school and community governance systems where young people and families of color have authentic voice, meaningful participation, and decision-making power.
- Youth-led decision-making power that keeps local elected officials accountable to community not corporations.

Imagine a World with **Cultural Dignity**

Where we honor and respectfully recognize the tribal and ancestral homelands which we occupy. Where our organizing is proudly rooted in culture. Where art forms, such as Jazz, Folklorico, Danza, Hip Hop, and poetry, are seen as vessels for political storytelling. Where our communities are encouraged to sing, paint, dance, and reimagine their way towards collective freedom.

We call for:

- Honoring the cultural, ancestral, and intersectional wisdom that art and storytelling have brought our movements for generations.
- Building strength-based narratives and cultural work that uplifts our dreams, dignity, and political power.
- Cultivating healing and radical joy through collaborative art-making, experimentation, self-expression, and creative practices.



“Rise Up and Thrive” Programmatic Priorities and Strategic Goals [2025 – 2030]

Five-Year Priorities

Priority 1:

Power Building and Healing Justice

Advance priority issues from the [Young People’s Agenda](#) by developing and implementing a transformative power-building model rooted in healing justice and supporting translocal campaign efforts

Five-Year Goals

Goal 1: Campaign Capacity Building

Goal 2: Shared Strategies for Translocal Campaigns

Year One Goals [2025 – 2026]

Campaign Capacity and Translocal Strategy:
Refresh and Relaunch the Young People’s Agenda

Priority 2:

Capacity Building and Field Building

Strengthen statewide and regional youth organizing ecosystems by fostering deep relationships and strategic alignment among network partners, building the capacity of organizations, youth organizers, and leaders, and organizing funders to increase multi-year funding to the YO field.

Goal 1: Shared Core Curriculum

Goal 2: Youth Organizer Pathways

Goal 3: Organizational Cohorts

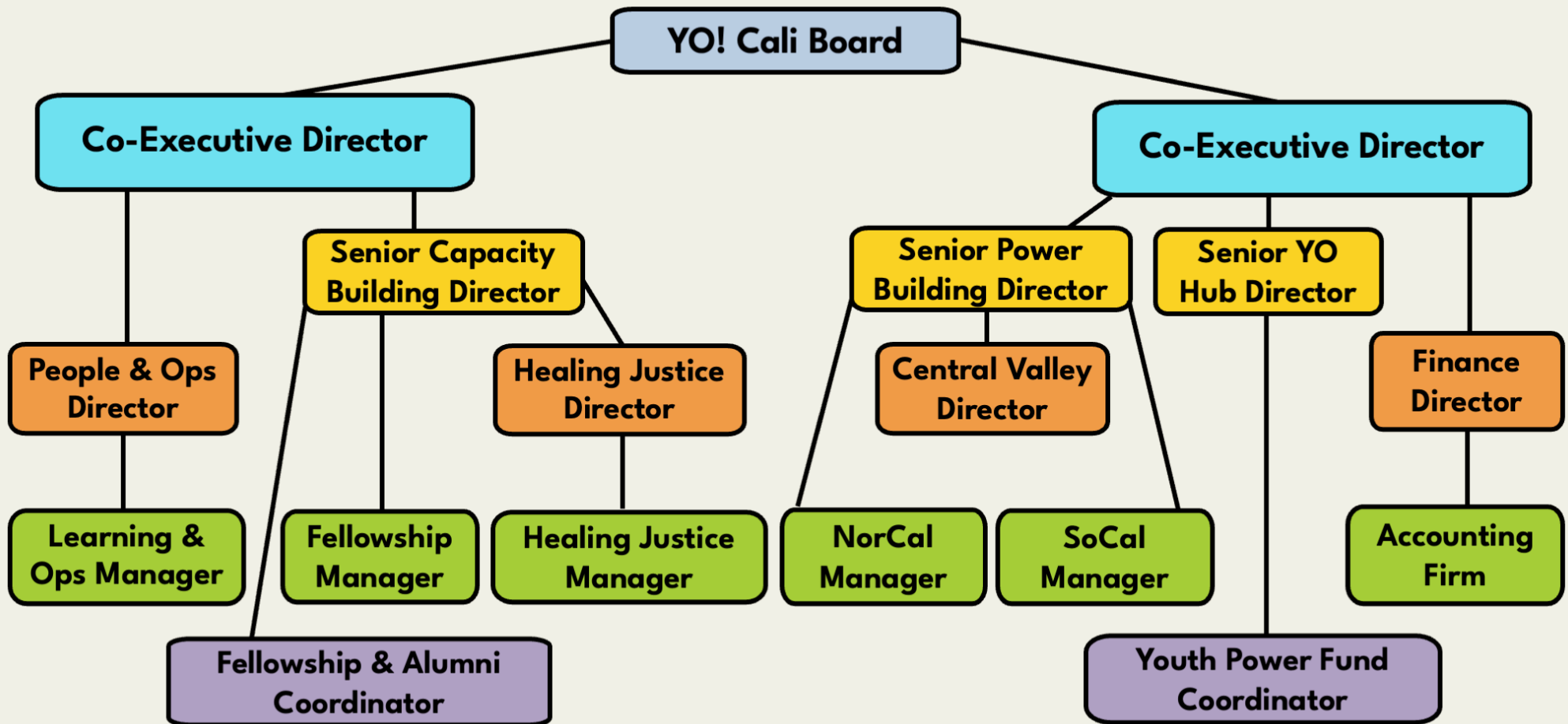
Goal 4: Multi-Year Funding to YO Groups

Shared Core Curriculum:
Develop and Pilot Standardized and Adaptable Core Curriculum

Organizational Cohorts:
Strengthen strategic alignment among network organizations through cohorts that build power in under-resourced regions and communities



Proposed Year One Organizational Chart (by early 2026)





Proposed Year Two Organizational Chart (by early 2027)

