



## 2019-2025 Strategic Plan Executive Summary Prepared for Key Partners June 2018

Founded in 1970 to support hundreds of newly elected Black officials, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (the Joint Center) has served as one of our country's most influential hubs for Black thought and policy development. The organization has nurtured thousands of Black political leaders, experts, networks, and organizations.

After a period of decline and facing financial challenges, in 2014 the Joint Center's Board of Governors brought on a new president, Spencer Overton, who has led the organization through a period of rebuilding. With full support from the Board and a grant from the Ford Foundation, the Joint Center undertook a strategic planning process in 2016-18. The goal was to create a blueprint for a revitalized, relevant, nimble, and impactful organization.

The strategic planning process affirmed that while America needs full participation by all, Black communities are not currently full participants. ***Black communities face distinct challenges, and key policy discussions are often incomplete because they overlook how policy options affect Black communities.*** The strategic planning process revealed that other think tanks lack the focus, diversity, and credibility to fully tackle the unique issues that affect Black communities, families, and children. Meanwhile, emerging and traditional Black advocacy groups lack much-needed research and policy infrastructure. A Black think tank is needed that is dedicated to data, analysis of how policy options affect Black communities, and strategic communications, and the Joint Center's brand and history position it to serve this function.

The Joint Center will divide its work into three stages: 1) becoming the "go-to" think tank with a Black lens on various key issues (2019-21); 2) deepening in-house expertise and communications (2022-23); and 3) building polling/survey research capacity and expanding communications (2024-25).

### **Stage One: Black Think Tank (2019-21)**

As national and state public policy debates escalate, the Joint Center will expand staff to become a comprehensive "go-to" Black think tank for data, analysis, and solutions on how the most critical economic and other policy issues affect Black communities, families, and children.



Using input from Black communities, nonprofit organizations, research institutions, and expert advisory boards, the Joint Center will use a Black lens to produce accessible briefs, fact sheets, and infographics on a variety of key issues (e.g., workforce, wages, economic development, infrastructure, government spending and taxes, poverty, health care, children, education, digital readiness, community empowerment, police violence, mass incarceration, access to guns, census). The Joint Center will also invest extensively in strategic communications, including earned traditional media, digital media, videos, and participation in targeted events and panels. Prime audiences will be decision makers (e.g., targeted local, state, and federal officials, and targeted private sector and philanthropic leaders) and key influencers (e.g., Black activists and elected officials, Black press, “ideas” press, and presidential campaigns). The work will emphasize user experience and engagement, accessible and functional data and solutions, and metrics to monitor impact.

In addition, the Joint Center will deepen its expertise on the *future of work in Black communities*. Technological innovations (e.g., artificial intelligence) and new ways of working are changing our economy. Automation threatens to displace or dramatically change the job functions of millions of Black workers (e.g., cashiers, drivers, retail sales, cooks, wait staff, security guards, and more). At the same time, innovation is creating new types of jobs. The Joint Center will provide data, analysis, best practices, and strategic communications to help workers in Black communities adapt and thrive in a transitioning labor market.

In Stage One, the Joint Center will also deepen its initiative that tracks and promotes *diversity in top congressional staff positions* (which has resulted in a 133% increase in top Black U.S. Senate staff since 2016).

### **Stages Two and Three: Deepen Expertise and Infrastructure (2022-25)**

In Stage Two, the Joint Center will add in-house policy expertise on various topics (e.g., community development, education, government budgeting, poverty, small business, technology, youth development), and also deepen its communications, development, and operations infrastructure (2022-23). In Stage Three, the Joint Center will create a survey/polling operation and deepen communications (2024-25).