

# GUARANTEED INCOME BLUEPRINT



September 2023



Guaranteed Income  
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The Guaranteed Income Blueprint was created through deep consultation with members of the Guaranteed Income Community of Practice (GICP), a network of 900+ policy experts, advocates, researchers, funders, practitioners and elected officials learning and collaborating in the maturing arena of unconditional cash programs. We are grateful for members who engaged countless hours through individual feedback and group exercises to shape the blueprint during the six-month consultation process.

This blueprint was led and authored by Shafeka Hashash, GICP Program Manager, with valuable insights from the Economic Security Project Executive Team along with KyungSun Lee, Gaurab Bansal, and Rajesh Parameswaran. We would like to especially thank Aisha Nyandoro, GICP Co-Chair, for her support. Michael Conti provided project design management support, Hannah Gregor provided ongoing GICP assistance, and Teal Media provided the design.

# INTRODUCTION

When visionary women like Johnnie Tillmon began advocating for guaranteed income in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—influencing bold leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to echo their call—they laid the groundwork for the movement that flourishes today.

Today's guaranteed income movement has expanded tremendously from its early days, gaining unprecedented momentum in recent years, with the potential now to dramatically change the way we live, work, and care in this country.

Contemporary pilots like the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration and the Magnolia Mothers Trust have demonstrated the power of guaranteed income to improve lives and create better outcomes for our families and communities. The success of early pilots has led to new programs, with more than 130 pilots over the past five years alone in diverse states and geographies, and over 40,000 participants gaining agency in their lives.

From people participating in guaranteed income programs, to community leaders, to policymakers, to the media, our collective movement has shown that direct cash

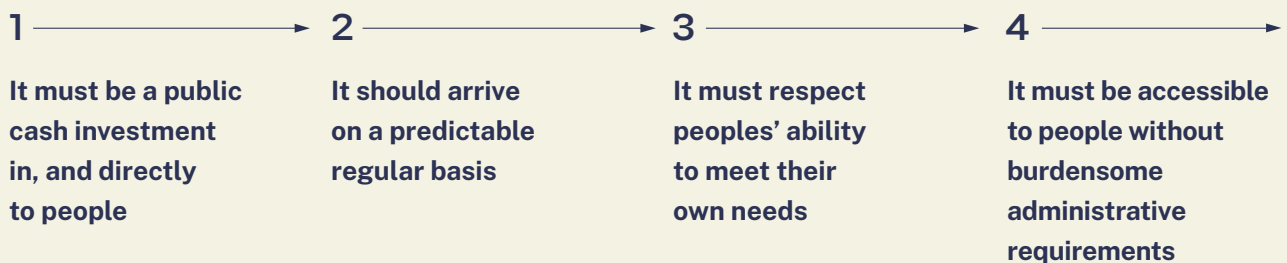
investments change lives. Direct cash fosters individual and collective economic advancement, empowers families and individuals in an uncertain economy, and builds stronger and more resilient communities. Establishing an income floor below which no one can fall produces outsized gains for equity, interconnectedness, and shared stability and wellness.

As of August 2023, the Guaranteed Income Community of Practice (GICP) consists of over **188 community-based organizations and pilots; 238 direct service, advocacy, and policy groups; 112 academics, evaluators, and research organizations; 141 funders; and 120 government officials and electeds.** The GICP is not just the largest network of guaranteed income organizations—it is the engine behind our movement's dramatic expansion. It is working to build our movement's momentum and expand its breadth, together with countless organizations focused on economic justice and fairness, inclusion, and equity.

This diverse movement is ready to move beyond local demonstrations, to create a new, modern social contract that provides the economic stability we all deserve. As demand from communities nationwide continues to increase, our movement is informing policy makers on how best to scale guaranteed income from single communities to local, state, and federal public policies.

To achieve policy wins, we must absorb the lessons we've learned from pilots, and connect guaranteed income to widely shared values, aspirations, and concerns. Achieving success will also require us to confront ingrained biases — often based on race, gender, and national origin — that stymie progress.

**We must make sure the guaranteed income we fight for supports stability and expands economic security, while advancing dignity, and promoting racial, gender, and economic justice. The guaranteed income we work towards should have the following principles:**



# THE BLUEPRINT

**This blueprint is a guide to achieving a guaranteed income in the next decade.** We created it out of the yearning of members of our coalition to see the work of their individual organizations situated in a broader ecosystem, and from their desire to work in a more coordinated manner towards a guaranteed income.

The broad, diverse movement for a guaranteed income has reached a watershed moment, with the proliferation of pilot programs beginning to lead to policy advances at the state and federal level. Now is a critical time for those of us committed to this cause to situate our work within the broader movement, and to better coordinate our efforts, so that we can work strategically to capitalize on our momentum in the months and years ahead. Organizations ranging from pilots, to policy advocacy groups, to researchers, to foundations can utilize this tool to identify areas of need they are able to fill, and to help focus and guide their work over the next decade.



Our movement envisions three **Principles** that guide all our work, which are affirmed by three **Pillars** around which organizations can focus their activities.



# THE BLUEPRINT

## PRINCIPLES

**PRINCIPLE 1**  
Create a conventional wisdom and shared values around guaranteed income

**PRINCIPLE 2**  
Expand support for guaranteed income to new and diversified audiences

**PRINCIPLE 3**  
Expand cash policies to show the transformative power of cash on a local and national level



**PILLAR 1**  
Fight for policies that create government infrastructure to provide regular direct cash distribution

**PILLAR 2**  
Deploy the administrative approach to use guaranteed income to build an equitable, trust-based social contract

**PILLAR 3**  
Harness state and federal policies to build towards a national guaranteed income

## PILLARS

# PRINCIPLES

These shared principles should inform the organizing pillars and efforts towards achieving a guaranteed income:



1.



**Create a conventional wisdom and shared values around guaranteed income**

By generating local narratives about the effectiveness of guaranteed income, and how it empowers individuals, families, and communities, we can build momentum and public pressure behind guaranteed income policies, and begin to move from pilots to policy. Creating a conventional wisdom also allows us to expand support for guaranteed income, which is the second principle described below.

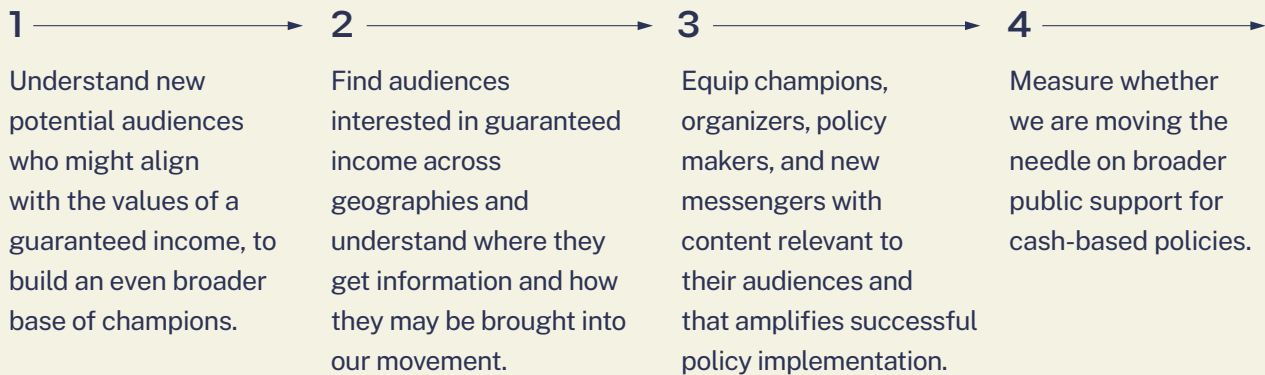
# 2.



## Expand support for guaranteed income to new and diversified audiences

We must continue to energize our base and expand our coalition to channel momentum forward, and build on the strong foundation laid by longtime champions. One way to expand support for guaranteed income is by targeting

new pilots strategically to expand awareness to new constituencies, develop new leaders, and answer new questions. Another way is by ensuring that people see themselves in our movement. To this end, we must improve the relevance of our messaging, articulate values people can connect to, and select diverse and powerful messengers who can build trust and draw in new constituencies. Accordingly, we should be continually updating research and leveraging our communications to:



# 3.



## Expand cash policies to show the transformative power of cash on a local and national level

State Tax Credits and guaranteed income pilots are catalysts for transforming lives and strengthening communities.

Participants experience profound impacts of cash assistance, while policymakers, media, community validators, and key stakeholders recognize the potential of these investments. This ignites hope and optimism, which can be harnessed to champion broader adoption of such policies. These smaller victories pave the way for larger successes in the future.



# PILLARS

The shared principles should be applied to the three Pillars of work that support our ultimate collective goal of achieving a national guaranteed income. Each pillar is vital, and we encourage organizations to identify which pillar they are best equipped to engage with. These pillars towards success are described below:



# PILLAR 1

## Fight for policies that create government infrastructure to provide regular direct cash distribution



In order to lead the way to guaranteed income policies, we must first begin to create policies that facilitate direct cash distribution. Such policies include State Tax Credits and Publicly Run Pilots:

### STATE TAX CREDITS

By enacting, modernizing and expanding State Tax Credits, we institute pathways to direct cash distribution. Enacting new state tax credits, and expanding existing ones, opens the way towards a guaranteed income by changing perceptions of the government as not only a one-time cash distributor during the tax season, but as a trusted distributor of regular, recurring cash. We have seen

unprecedented policy wins at the state level, which benefit people immediately, while also building momentum for national policy. This pathway includes enacting new state child tax credits; expanding state earned income tax credits; removing antiquated and unfair minimum income requirements that bar people from receiving cash; or adopting other forms of cash payments.

### PUBLICLY RUN PILOTS

Another way to build infrastructure for guaranteed income is by creating efficient, publicly run guaranteed income pilots consistent with our values listed in the Introduction. These programs build on the legacy of Social Security and the nearly half-century old Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend that provides income to Alaskans. More recent examples include: the Santa Clara

County guaranteed income program for formerly homeless youth transitioning into their next stage; the California Department of Social Services' pilot programming; and even the City of Chicago's program, led by guaranteed income advocates, to redistribute cash profits from the newly legalized cannabis industry to those affected by the "War on Drugs."

**To achieve these policy wins, the Guaranteed Income Community must continue to pivot from a focus on private pilots to a focus on public policy. They must continue to build state cash coalitions with guaranteed income organizations and economic justice groups in local communities—coalitions that can work on a range of issue areas that create the conditions for direct, unconditional cash policies as a coalescing end goal.**

## PILLAR 2

### Deploy the administrative approach to use guaranteed income to build an equitable, trust-based social contract



We can use the principles behind guaranteed income to change the way existing institutions administer benefits and deliver cash or other resources, making them more equitable and efficient, allowing them to empower people rather than tie them up in red tape, and bringing us closer to a guaranteed income through administrative change. For example, pushing for agencies to cut administrative burdens and utilize multi-lingual outreach to connect with overlooked constituencies can empower more people while also building support and trust in government's delivery of resources, helping pave the way for

guaranteed income policies. Guaranteed Income Community of Practice members have already partnered with disability, housing justice, and other organizations to modify our current public administrative systems based on lessons learned.

**By aligning other government programs and institutions around our principles, we can begin to see cash programs become a reality through administrative changes alone, and ultimately pave the way for a government united in its thinking around how to empower people to meet their own needs.**

## PILLAR 3

### Harness state and federal policies to build towards a national guaranteed income



To get to a national guaranteed income, we can begin by advocating for building-block policies like tax credits or state-level guaranteed income policies. We can organize and enlist champions to advocate for cash policies like the Child Tax Credit, as well as for other policies that can serve as models for a federal guaranteed income bill, such as a negative

income tax, an expanded or modernized Earned Income Tax Credit, an expanded or modernized Social Security, or for specific legislation like the LIFT Act. **By mobilizing around these issues while simultaneously advancing state-level legislative wins that serve as blueprints for federal policies, we can open a path to achieving a nationwide guaranteed income.**

# KEY MILESTONES

As organizations work on various aspects of these three Pillars, we can measure our collective progress towards a guaranteed income against the key milestones listed below:

## Short-Term Milestones

1-3 YEARS

PILLAR(S)

↑ States that have the capacity have begun to build cash coalitions that expand beyond guaranteed income partners to include grassroots organizations fighting on other fronts for cash-based policies. ↓	1
↑ In the public policy debates leading into 2024, public figures explicitly name cash support as a positive intervention to support shared economic prosperity, fairness, and equity. ↓	3
↑ GICP members provide agencies like HUD, Social Security, or others with resources and support to modify procedures and policies towards disbursing cash. ↓	2
↑ Pilot research data identifies gaps in policy areas, to inform future messaging and future policy direction of cash coalitions. ↓	1,2,3
↑ The movement researches, identifies and applies values-based and economic security-based narrative and messaging to increase the public's understanding of guaranteed income and cash policies. ↓	1,2,3
↑ Coalitions are equipped with consistent terminology, narrative skills, and public messaging tools that empower our champions and energize and grow our base. ↓	1,2,3
↑ There is an expanded roster of influential champions promoting guaranteed income to their audiences. ↓	1,2,3

# Medium-Term Milestones

4-7 YEARS

PILLAR(S)

↑ ↓	The movement has generally created a shared strategy based on messaging research to neutralize opposition narratives around deservedness.	1,2,3
↑ ↓	A group of elected officials is focused on advocating for and introducing a federal guaranteed income policy.	3
↑ ↓	It is unpopular not to have a state Child Tax Credit.	1
↑ ↓	Every state has an established slate of “participant advocates”--participants in GI programs who advocate for guaranteed income policies. (1)	1
↑ ↓	Narratives around the effectiveness of guaranteed income are more prevalent in public discourse, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guaranteed income helps “all of us”;</li> <li>• Public benefits are actually trust-based investments that should respect individuals in meeting their own needs;</li> <li>• Guaranteed income is a pillar of the modern American social contract.</li> </ul>	1,2,3
↑ ↓	Cash coalitions with a diverse constituency proliferate into more southern/conservative states.	1
↑ ↓	The public has increased awareness of and support for guaranteed income.	1,2,3

# Long-Term Milestones

8-10 YEARS

PILLAR(S)

↑ ↓	A federal guaranteed income is a leading topic in the public policy debate among national figures.	3
↑ ↓	Lessons from the administration of guaranteed income programs—such as strengthening trust, reach, and efficacy—have influenced at least one social safety net benefit.	2
↑ ↓	Most states have cash coalitions using shared terms and messages.	1
↑ ↓	The movement has enacted shared strategies at the state and federal level to effectively neutralize opposition narratives around deservedness.	1,2,3
↑ ↓	Legislators propose a federal guaranteed income policy based on the blueprint of state-level administrative and legislative wins.	3

## These milestones are ambitious—and achievable.

To help us get there, ESP will continue to deploy our ideas advocacy toolbox, including research products; support campaigns behind particular policies; narrative work to shift the culture; grants; resourcing programs pursuing creative

interventions; and convenings, to encourage investment and action from others. We urge our partners to add their tools to this toolbox, and use this blueprint to find the most effective ways to make guaranteed income a reality.