

TECHEQUITY COLLABORATIVE

2024-2026

Strategic Plan

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Context, History, and Impact	4
Mission & Vision	7
What We Do	8
Theory of Change	8
Where We Focus	10
How We Do It	12
Areas for Future Exploration	15
How We Measure Success	16
What Makes Us Different	17
Our Values	19

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines our strategy for the coming three years, 2024-2026.

We arrived at this strategy by evaluating the last three years of our work and choosing how best to leverage our unique skill set, positioning, and experience. All of that has helped shape and sharpen this strategic plan.

While we remain nimble to address emerging issues, our strategic plan is anchored in our ongoing three core initiatives: the **Contract Worker Disparity Project**, the **Tech, Bias, and Housing Initiative**, and the **Housing Data Initiative.** To deepen these projects we will conduct original research, collect and amplify the stories of the people impacted by these systems, develop policy and industry recommendations, and focus on the implementation of policies and industry standards to ensure meaningful impact for generations to come. During this period, we also plan to incorporate two new program areas: the **Tech, Bias, and Labor Initiative** and the **Capital Markets Initiative.**

CONTEXT, HISTORY, AND IMPACT

TechEquity was founded in 2017 to answer a simple but ambitious question: what would it take for the growth of the tech industry to create economic benefit for everyone?

Tackling that question led us down many paths—some that became obvious very quickly, like the need to address the housing affordability crisis in and around Silicon Valley, and others that emerged as our work progressed, like raising awareness about the hidden inequities within the supply chain of tech's labor force. In that time, we proudly took on campaigns that address the roots of economic inequality: building and winning historic and first-in-the-nation legislation, developing civic tech tools to empower our communities, and offering comprehensive and practical recommendations to change the tech industry for the better.

We started with tech workers at our core. In late 2016, galvanized by election results in America and the UK, tech workers became newly conscious of their political influence and the responsibility they had for their industry's behavior. We leveraged that energy to focus their attention on issues closer to home—the impact that tech companies were having on the communities where they were based, and the role tech workers could play in ensuring tech's presence in these communities was creating opportunity rather than inequality. That early work had great success: we mobilized over 7,000 tech workers and added their voices to broader campaigns to address economic inequities in tech's backyard. That resulted in the passage of landmark legislation that we co-sponsored—the Tenant Protection Act of 2019—which was the single biggest expansion of renter protections in American history.

As Covid lockdowns forced a diffusion of tech workers away from the Bay Area and diverted attention to other more critical needs, we took the time to reflect on our purpose and refocus our attention. This caused us to grapple with economic equity issues that tech was perpetuating not just through their physical presence in our communities, but through their internal practices and the products and services they were releasing into the world.

That work resulted in the development of initiatives to tackle specific economic equity issues we learned about through our early work.

To understand the influence of tech on the housing system we launched the **Tech, Bias, and Housing Initiative**. To uncover workplace disparities in tech, we released first-of-its-kind research into the two-tiered employment system in the tech industry: the **Contract Worker Disparity Project**. In 2023, we kicked off our **Housing Data Initiative** to shine a light on the dynamics of the rental housing market and equip housing policymakers and advocates with the data and tools needed to ensure everyone has a safe, stable place to call home.

We know that any law is only as good as its implementation, so we also examine existing economic justice policies and explore how we can strengthen their impact.

We ground each initiative in thorough research, providing a foundation for public policy and corporate practice recommendations to put those findings into action. As a result, we led the passage of the strongest pay transparency law in the country; we supported multiple pieces of legislation to end discrimination and racial harassment in the industry including the Silenced No More Act and the End to Caste Discrimination in California Act; and we partnered through coalitions and campaigns on a variety of legislation focused on worker's rights, housing, racial and economic justice.

We know that any law is only as good as its implementation, so we also examine existing economic justice policies and explore how we can strengthen their impact. We discovered that the Tenant Protection Act of 2019 is only effective when renters know their rights and how to defend them. With a team of civic tech volunteers and in partnership with ACCE Institute, we launched the Tenant Protections Calculator, which has helped tens of thousands of Californians enforce their rights.

We also launched tools that provide concrete, comprehensive, and actionable recommendations for companies to make their products and practices more equitable: the Responsible Contracting Standard and the Proptech Ethical Practice Standard. As we campaigned for corporate adoption of these standards, we found companies agreed in principle but ultimately were unwilling to make changes to incorporate the recommendations. We've reconsidered what it takes to change corporate behavior and adjusted our strategy to set and enforce industry-wide standards.

As we look forward, this strategic plan leverages the lessons we have learned from our past work, the relationships we have developed that span a multitude of constituencies and interests, and the credibility we have amassed as an organization that can effectively advance a structural change agenda.

The role of tech in the world has never been more consequential. We are facing a global inflection point where societies will decide whether the technologies of the future will enable human flourishing or empower exploitation and division. We know that to build the future we want, organizations like ours need to foster bold and innovative thinking, adopt a strong orientation towards partnership and consensus-building, and pursue a dogged commitment to achieving structural change—and following through on its implementation. Our history demonstrates that we embody all of those things, and we are excited about the role TechEquity will play in creating a future for tech that is more equitable than its past.

The role of tech in the world has never been more consequential.

OUR VISION

We envision a world where the tech industry is responsible for building widespread economic prosperity, and is held accountable for the economic harms it creates in our communities.

OUR MISSION

We raise public consciousness about economic equity issues that result from the tech industry's products and practices, and advocate for change that ensures tech's evolution benefits everyone.

WHAT WE DO

Theory of Change



THEORY OF CHANGE

To achieve our vision of a world where tech is responsible for creating widespread economic prosperity, and is accountable for its harms, we:

1 Raise public consciousness about emerging areas where tech companies create economic inequity.

We identify emerging economic equity issues within the tech sector and those caused by tech sector products and practices. We bring these issues to wider attention through public education, narrative campaigns, and original research that deepens our understanding of the impact of these practices.

We believe greater transparency is an effective tool to empower those who have been harmed and to hold accountable the companies that cause that harm.

2 Articulate and advocate for regulation and the adoption of industry-wide standards to address the harms and opportunities we identify.

Based on the understanding we have about these issues, through research that centers the experiences of the people most affected by new technologies, we articulate a positive vision for optimizing opportunity and mitigating harm through changes in public policy and tech company behavior.

We engage with policymakers and tech companies to apply these changes across the tech industry.

3 Support implementation and enforcement of these regulatory agendas and industry standards.

We follow through to ensure that the regulatory and industry behaviors we advocate for are effectively implemented.

We place a particular emphasis on ensuring the collection and publication of data that can help the public hold lawmakers and corporate actors accountable.



Issue Areas

We prioritize the economic issues that have the biggest impact on building a more equitable society and improving people's prosperity: where they live (housing) and the conditions under which they work (labor). These are also areas where tech is playing a significant role in determining outcomes.

We may also take on projects in other areas of the economy that we believe have a critical impact on the economic prospects of everyday people, and where the influence of the tech industry is being felt.



Geography

While our work has national and global implications, we are of and from Silicon Valley's backyard. We believe our work can have the most impact when it is done in the tech industry's birthplace: California. As the fifth-largest economy in the world, the home of most of the largest global tech companies, and a place where bold policy change is possible, we believe operating in California allows us to have an outsized impact that scales beyond our borders.

When our work calls for it, we work in partnership with organizations that hold expertise in geographies outside of California. This work may include partnerships on our federal legislative and regulatory landscape; as well as acknowledging and including, whenever possible, the global implications of these issues.



Public Policy and Industry Change

We recognize that tech companies are central actors in our work, and we believe our work is more powerful and impactful when we engage with the companies whose practices we are trying to change. As we focused on corporate practice change within individual companies over the last seven years, we learned the most effective way to support meaningful practice changes industry-wide is by influencing the context in which tech companies operate. Our strategy to influence company behavior is therefore to invest in changing the public conversation and advancing regulation that moves the entire industry to action. In parallel, we leverage our connections to the tech industry to develop tools that help companies adopt and implement better practices so that when the industry context shifts, they have access to the resources they need to implement change.



Partnership and Collaboration

We sit at the intersection of many movements and organizations that are doing important and interrelated work to build economic equity. We deeply believe that our work is more powerful when it is done in partnership with others. Since our earliest days, we have envisioned our role as bridge builders between our movement partners, the tech community, researchers, impacted people, and community members who are pursuing a more equitable economy and a more accountable tech industry. This spirit of collaboration is infused throughout our theory of change. We work through coalitions on all of our advocacy work. When we are leading campaigns, we seek to build a broad table to inform, amplify, and reinforce the work. Our education and research products are often done in collaboration with partner organizations. Our research and policy proposals are based in the experiences of those directly impacted by our issues and we intentionally seek ways to center their voices in our work.

HOW WE DO IT

We execute our theory of change through three major initiatives.

1. Contract Worker Disparity Project

The Contract Worker Disparity Project illuminates one of tech's most pressing inequities: a heavy reliance on contract workers who are paid less, receive fewer benefits, and are disproportionately women, non-binary, and people of color. The practice creates a two-tiered workforce with troubling implications for workers' rights and diversity within the tech sector. The Contract Worker Disparity Project advocates for public policy and industry change to ensure all jobs in tech are good jobs.

Since 2021, we have published groundbreaking research uncovering the practice of contracting out. This research forms the cornerstone of a comprehensive public policy agenda that we are advancing in California. In 2022, we passed the Pay Transparency for Pay Equity Act which requires employers to report pay and demographic data about their contracted workers for the first time. This new law, the first of its kind in the country, will allow advocates and regulators to better understand the pay equity issues that contract work creates and begin to hold employers and staffing agencies accountable for their practices.

We also created a comprehensive Responsible Contracting Standard to inform employers about how to create high-road policies for hiring contract workers, along with a suite of tools and resources to help them implement the standard.



In the next three years, we will continue to champion a Tech Worker Bill of Rights and raise public awareness about contract work that will force employers to adopt higher standards and ensure that all jobs in tech—and beyond—are good jobs. Ultimately, we envision the creation of a certification system that will enforce these standards and support contract workers to find healthy, stable, family-supporting careers.

We execute our theory of change through three major initiatives.

2. Tech, Bias, and Housing Initiative

The Tech, Bias, and Housing Initiative examines the role of tech products and business models in the housing market to identify their potential to solve the housing crisis—and for creating harm. We raise awareness about new technologies like algorithmic tenant screening tools and tech-enabled alternative home financing products which present both opportunities and risks to renters and potential homeowners. Our research, policy advocacy, and corporate practice frameworks aim to shape these new tools and services such that they can lower barriers to affordable housing for everyone, rather than raise them.

Since 2021, we have raised awareness about the potential pitfalls of these new tools, educating lawmakers and housing advocates about how new technology is impacting their ability to ensure that everyone has access to affordable housing. We have met with dozens of Proptech (property technology) companies to help them understand the conditions in which they are deploying their tools and to encourage them to adopt practices that mitigate the risks of exacerbating inequality—and to stay accountable to providing recourse if harm does occur. We are partnering with housing advocacy groups across the country to ensure these new housing tools are abiding by fair housing laws, and developing innovative new research methodologies to see behind the algorithms that gatekeep access to housing for millions of Americans.

Over the next three years, we will build on this groundbreaking research to illuminate the role of technology in the housing market, enforce fair housing laws, and encourage Proptech companies to adopt practices that will ensure technology unwinds the injustices of the past rather than reinforces them so that stable, affordable housing can once again become the cornerstone of the American Dream.



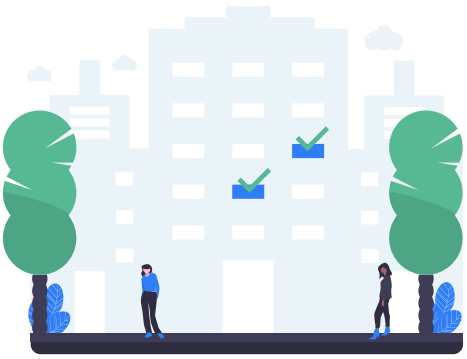
HOW WE DO IT

We execute our theory of change through three major initiatives.

3. Housing Data Initiative

Despite comprising over a third of our nation's housing supply, data about the rental housing market remains opaque and underreported. While mortgage providers are required to report data creating important insight into the homeownership market that helps prevent discrimination, data that would provide the same insight for the 44 million Americans who are renters doesn't exist. This opacity creates an information asymmetry that enables inequity in rental housing and makes it harder for advocates and renters to enforce fair housing laws. As the nation's housing crisis worsens and renters face increasing instability, we need data that will enable regulators to create better policy and provide advocates and residents more tools to help enforce their rights.

The Housing Data Initiative is undertaking a bold effort to create the same level of transparency for the nation's rental market that we have for the mortgage and homeownership market. Building on the years of work TechEquity has done to establish a statewide rental registry in California, we will begin to knit together a comprehensive collection of all publicly available rental market data across the country. We will advocate for the creation of new data where it doesn't exist. And we will work with regulators and advocates to breathe life into the data, finding ways to use it to inform policymaking, enforce and strengthen housing rights, and advocate for the growth of affordable housing stock across the country.



Tech, Bias, and Labor

2024

TechEquity will launch our Tech, Bias, and Labor Initiative in 2024 to examine the evolution of workplace tech since the pandemic and the rapid integration of AI following the launch of ChatGPT. Learning from and building upon the work of some of our partners like Coworker.org, Data + Society Research Institute, and the UC Berkeley Labor Center, we hope to identify the areas that have the most potential for harm and that most urgently require public policy intervention.

We will examine many of the emerging technologies and their impact on workers, including technology that automates or predicts key stages in the workplace cycle from hiring, performance management, productivity rates, discipline, and firing. In particular, we will focus on companies that have taken a dominant position in the workplace tech market and what their collection of worker data could mean for the future of worker power. We will also examine the way these new technologies, when developed with workers and appropriate guardrails, can create safer workplaces, open up new career opportunities, and improve products and services.

Capital Markets

2025

As we embarked on the work of advocating for a tech sector that creates opportunity for all, we came to understand that it isn't enough to focus solely on tech companies alone, or the products that they build. We must also address the economic structure that underlies the industry, and that lies at the root of the problems we attribute to tech—venture capital. The winners-take-all, growth-at-all-costs approach that venture capital demands is largely responsible for the erosion of labor standards and the speculation in the housing market that we address in our other initiatives. We believe that for our work to have a sustainable impact in those areas, we must focus our attention on the broader economic context out of which the tech industry has emerged.

Building off of the ideas presented in TechEquity Founder and CEO Catherine Bracy's forthcoming book on the subject, we will develop a program that addresses the venture capital system as a critical enabler of the tech industry's negative impact on the broader economy.

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

We will know our work has an impact when the following things are true:

1. The public conversation reflects an understanding of our issues, and people can connect our work to the larger effort to achieve a more equitable economy

2. Public policy is changing to address the harms we identify in our work and to hold tech companies accountable for their practices

3. Companies change their behavior as a result of industry-wide recognition that ethical practice benefits business and society

4. Renters and workers experience the benefits of our work through increased prosperity and access to greater economic opportunity

5. TechEquity has a strong and healthy culture that can operate sustainably to carry our work forward for the long term

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

We are cross-pollinators who value the contradictions and complexity that a both/and mindset presents

As an organization, we embrace complexity and value different perspectives. We often wear multiple hats, cross different streams, and occupy a variety of spaces at once. We value connection and have, from our first days, worked to stake out common ground and build relationships of trust between groups that haven't always seen eye to eye. In our early days, this meant helping to foster relationships between tech workers in the Bay Area and their neighbors who felt threatened by tech's growth, articulating policy agendas for housing that placed equal importance on both protecting renters and promoting new development, and engaging with tech companies even as we staked out positions on the issues that were often at odds with theirs.

As we matured, our role as a connector naturally evolved into a comfort with holding different identities at the same time—we are an advocacy organization that also produces original research; we bring knowledge about tech into rooms with people who are affected by tech's harms and the voices of those who are harmed into rooms with technologists; and we actively seek to understand the internal dynamics of the tech industry even as we work to hold it accountable. While that multi-modal approach has sometimes presented uncomfortable tensions, our ability to be multiple things at once and hold multiple conflicting truths at the same time has created a capacity for us to look around corners and identify issues that other people aren't addressing, develop innovative new research methods that surface previously-unknown data, and build coalitions across a variety of perspectives that makes it possible to move a systemic change agenda.

Our both/and approach infuses the organization with a depth of diversity—of experiences, perspectives, and demographics—that sets us apart in an age of division and polarity.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Our ability to pull disparate threads together makes us effective agents of systemic change

Beyond just pulling different streams together, we have developed a track record of leveraging these connections to make actual change on the ground. We punch above our weight in the halls of power in California because we have developed trusted relationships with a variety of constituent groups, and have proven to be reliable and effective partners when it comes to putting important issues on the agenda and navigating the process of getting them adopted.

By connecting advocates with technologists, policy researchers with grassroots activists, and regulators with issue area experts we have been able to pass some of the most high-profile and groundbreaking statewide legislation of the past several legislative cycles. This includes first-of-their-kind bills to outlaw caste discrimination, expand tenant protections, and require transparency from companies about the contract workers they employ. Our approach proves that moving together does, in fact, get us further than going alone.

OUR VALUES

Our core values make up the organization's belief system, which guides our approach externally and internally.



We Are Anti-Racist

Racism is embedded in our economic, political, and social systems. It's embedded in us all. As we pursue our mission, we practice anti-racism both internally in our organizational practices and externally in our education, our public policy advocacy, and our industry recommendations. That means being explicit about how racism and racial bias are produced and maintained in our issue areas, and crafting policy solutions that build racial equity in response.



We Are Solutions-Oriented, but Not Solutionists

We know that in order to achieve true economic justice and resilience for all, we need bold solutions to our urgent problems. At the same time, our approach to developing these solutions must be grounded in a deep understanding of history and strong trusted relationships with the most impacted communities. We can't hack our way out of these problems; we need to work together to enact thoughtful, long-term solutions.



We Work In Partnership

We recognize that our organization and much of the tech community come from a place of privilege. We know that we're working alongside people and communities that have been under-resourced and actively marginalized for decades. We show up conscious of the space we take and use our power to center the voices of those who are closest to the problems.

We see ourselves as adding capacity to existing movements while providing leadership in the spaces where we're best suited to lead. We believe in the adage "if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

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We Are Independent

Our policy positions are determined through consultation with our community partners, our expert advisors, impacted people, and our staff. These positions are informed by our research which relies heavily on the lived experiences of the workers and renters who are most directly impacted by the issues we work on.

While we value our institutional funders and the experiences of the industry representatives that we work with, they do not have a say in the development of our policy positions. We engage with companies and industry tables to ensure our recommendations and guidance reflect an understanding of their context, their goals, and their challenges—but we may disagree on key points of policy. We have taken—and will continue to take—publicly divergent stances on key issues. We view our independent, honest, and often contrary voice as a value to the tech industry.



We Build Transformative Connection

For us, both/and has always been a more powerful perspective than either/or. From our beginning, TechEquity has focused on making connections, building bridges, and staking out common ground that didn't exist before. This has taken the form of connecting tech workers with their neighbors who are at risk of displacement; anti-displacement advocates with pro-development YIMBYs; and traditional grassroots equity advocates with technology experts.

This belief in connection has led us to evolve into a hybrid organization. We aren't just one thing: we're an advocacy organization that also does research, we span the worlds of both tech and economic equity, and we value connection with companies even as we push bold policies to hold them accountable. Our hybrid nature can sometimes cause ambiguity that results in tensions. But we believe that our work is more powerful and effective because of it.

OUR VALUES

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We Welcome Everyone

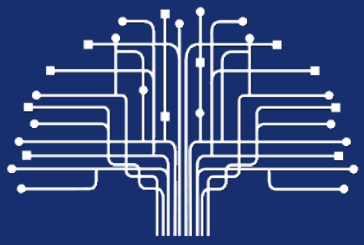
We are a community that appreciates a wide range of perspectives—as long as those perspectives respect everyone's humanity. We know that we each come into this work from different experiences and that learning from our differences is a generative process.

We strive to create a safe space for learning. That means fostering sometimes-difficult conversations that are always held in good faith and assuming the willingness of participants to reach clarity and understanding, if not consensus.



We Engage in Systems Change, Not Charity

While charity work has value, it isn't what we do. Our work focuses on addressing the root causes of inequity, the upstream forces that create the need for charity in the first place. We believe that those root causes are fundamental power imbalances and that in order to achieve our vision, we have to rebalance power through systems change and policy advocacy.



TECHEQUITY COLLABORATIVE

info@techequitycollaborative.org

techequitycollaborative.org

/techequitycollaborative

@TECollab

@techequitycollab

/techequity-collaborative

@techequity

@TechEquityCollab