



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE MINNESOTA EQUITY BLUEPRINT

Widening inequalities and climate change pose the most important and immediate challenges to Minnesota’s long-term economic prosperity and quality-of-life. The Minnesota Equity Blueprint is intended to serve as a comprehensive policy guidebook for the next decade, to address these demographic and geographic disparities, to build a more inclusive economy, to find more common cause between rural and urban Minnesotans and to restore our natural environment.

The Blueprint is a “open source” document co-facilitated by Growth & Justice and OneMN.org and created with the members of the Thriving by Design Network — Rural & Urban Together (TBDN). Over the course of 18 months, TBDN collected ideas, challenges, solutions, and action examples from over 300 Minnesotans at more than a dozen gatherings around the state, including two statewide gatherings. The process also included input from many professionals working in the public, private-and non-profit sectors. The Growth & Justice research team analyzed more than 700 recommendations obtained through this multi-stage work and distilled them into 141 recommendations, ranging from general strategies to specific policies.

The Blueprint has been designed not just for the Legislature or governmental decision-makers, but as a resource for individual and local community action. Story boxes throughout the document chronicle regional best practices and inspiring efforts to build a more equitable and inclusive economy.

Each of four chapters - Human Capital, Economic Development, Infrastructure, and Environmental Resilience - contain an analysis of the challenges and an array of solutions that hold promise for achieving equity or sustainability. The solutions fall on a continuum from innovative to established, large to small, immediately doable to long-term and aspirational. TBDN’s problem statements and some of the key solutions are:



Jane Leonard (left, President of Growth & Justice) and Brett Buckner (right, Managing Director of OneMN.org) welcome participants to the first statewide gathering of the Thriving by Design Network.

Human Capital

Image: Santi Vedri, Unsplash



TBDN's Problem Statement: Too many Minnesotans lack access to the economic security, education and skills, sense of safety, healthcare, and wages and benefits they must have to be able to fully contribute to their families, communities and the state's economy. These barriers to opportunity disproportionately burden communities of color, Indigenous people and households living outside of the state's urban areas.

Solutions

1. Improve the economic security of households through successful safety net programs and ensure that pay and benefits for workers provide a route out of poverty.
2. Disrupt the "school to prison pipeline" and keep children out of the juvenile justice system.
3. Reform drug laws and increase equitable access to high quality substance abuse treatment programs. Focus on the prevention and treatment of opioid addiction.
4. Increase investments in Cradle to Career educational programs, promoting Career Pathways into technology, trades and entrepreneurship.
5. Greatly increase the percentage of teachers who are people of color or Indigenous people.
6. Improve access to affordable health care, including a Minnesota Care buy-in and pursuing other pathways to universal coverage.
7. Expand voter registration and restoration of voting rights to former felons and restore faith in civic engagement by reforming campaign finance and lobbying laws.

Economic Development

TBDN's Problem Statement: Minnesota's economic vitality is immediately threatened by falling numbers of small businesses, a shortage of skilled workers and insufficient access to high quality and affordable child care.

Solutions

1. Expand access to capital for small business - support community banks.



Image: skeeze, Pixabay

2. Relieve regulatory burdens through greater efficiency.
3. Develop and support new markets for Minnesota's agricultural products.
4. Increase state bonding bill investments in local placemaking projects, particularly in Greater Minnesota and in communities of color.
5. Adopt Minnesota's Uniform Collateral Consequences of Conviction Act.
6. Issue driver's license for immigrants.
7. Invest in creating greater access to affordable quality child care and improve measurement of children's program participation and their outcomes.

Infrastructure

TBDN's Problem Statement: Minnesota's physical infrastructure systems are deteriorating or lacking across the state, posing threats to vulnerable populations and to long-term business growth.

Solutions

1. Improve drinking water and wastewater management through bonding and LGA increases.
2. Expand and increase funding for Broadband partnerships and the Border-to-Border Broadband Development program.
3. Maintain and preserve existing affordable rental housing while building thousands more homes each year for the next five years to meet demand.
4. Realign Governmental regulations and taxation structures to stimulate the creation of new housing and to permit subsidized housing that includes intergenerational housing and housing that permits former felons to live with their children.
5. Develop and fund a major, long-range transportation investment plan which includes transit, biking and walkable communities across the state, focusing on regional and racial equity.
6. Intensify renewable and high-tech strategies in public transit and road planning.
7. Invest in affordable transit for metro areas and mobility options for Greater Minnesota.



Image: Granite Falls City

Environmental Resilience

TBDN's Problem Statement: Rapidly accelerating climate change and pollution of our waters and lands pose huge long-term costs to farmers, urban and rural low-income households, businesses and governments

Solutions

1. Set new goals and create action plans for a 100 percent carbon-free power grid by 2050.
2. Enact Clean Car standards and provide incentives for electrification of vehicles.
3. Expand the Conservation Improvement program.
4. Devote all of Solid Waste Tax revenue to waste management programs that establish state-wide targets for reducing the volume of waste that ends up at incinerators or landfills.
5. Establish and pursue aspirational goal of 100 percent clean and safe surface water (lakes, streams, and rivers) by 2050.
6. Respect sovereign rights and help protect native lands and waters.
7. Support sustainable land management strategies that promote climate resilience, natural resource protection and a regenerative food economy.



Image: Pine River Backus Panels

For more detail on these and the other solutions recommended, please see the appropriate Minnesota Equity Blueprint chapter. As the Table of Contents suggests, each chapter is numbered anew beginning with page 1, Exhibit 1, and its own set of endnotes. This was done to make the Blueprint more useful across different situations. Each page number is preceded by a letter, for example A-1 is the first page of the Introduction and B-1 is the first page the Human Capital chapter.