



AMERICAN CLIMATE
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Cooperation Jackson

cooperationjackson.org

This guide offers a successful stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the finalists of ecoAmerica's 2023 American Climate Leadership Awards.

OVERVIEW

Cooperation Jackson is a vehicle for sustainable community development, economic democracy, and community ownership in Jackson, Mississippi. It seeks to transform the current socio-economic system of extraction and exploitation into an alternative built on equity, cooperation, worker democracy/self-management, and environmental regeneration by developing sustainable methods of production and distribution that create living-wage jobs, combat environmental racism, promote universal access to common resources, and democratize ownership of the means of production.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Start with a vision. As the old Proverb states, "without a vision the people perish". In order to affect positive change in the world, you have to start with a clear vision that outlines in clear terms how things can be different, and what steps need to be taken to get there.
2. Establish a core. To move from vision to action, you have to find and nurture like minded people to help expand the vision and work on implementing it through the development of a clear set of agreements and principles.
3. Study your environment. Know your social and political ecosystem. In order to operationalize and implement your vision you have to start by clearly mapping and analyzing the context you aim to work in and impact. Get a clear sense of how it operates, what the relations of production and reproduction of the environment and context are, and where there are opportunities and gaps you can work in to make a critical intervention within to enable the possibilities of your vision.
4. Develop your strategy. After you've done your homework, develop a plan that outlines your operational objectives, the forces you need to work with to advance the work, and a plan and timelines of execution to bring it into being.



5. Develop clear organizational parameters and guidelines. Once you've outlined your strategy, it is time to clearly outline how you are going to organize yourself. What organizational form are you going to take, i.e. a not for profit, a social enterprise, etc., and clear as to why you are employing this form of organization as opposed to one of the others. Be clear on how you are going to secure the resources you need to do the work, are you collecting dues, fundraising, taking loans, etc. Be clear on what are the benefits and drawbacks. Once that is clear, move to layout the roles core members are going to play, how the division of labor is going to be, how the group is going to govern itself, and how it is going to materially support the work it seeks to execute.
6. Start small. Prove your concept. Once your strategy and organization are in place, start your implementation off with a small project with clear timelines, objectives and measurables. Give yourself sufficient time to execute your plan and learn from it. Be clear on what worked and why, and what didn't and why, so you can use that knowledge to grow and advance to the next stage of your development.
7. Scale up, based upon your strengths. Take your learnings, combined with a new assessment of your environment that now includes your organization, its work, and its impact, to reposition yourself to take on further work to advance your vision and mission.
8. Spread the word and make connections. After you have demonstrated the proof of your concept, based on the success of your work, do your best to share the word far and wide and recruit new members and allies to the work to affect an even greater impact towards the fulfillment of your vision.

Cooperation Jackson is an ACLA 2023 Finalist. For more information and replication guides, go to ecoAmerica.org. ecoAmerica's American Climate Leadership Awards (ACLA) recognizes, rewards, and shares best practices on climate change advocacy and action nationwide. ACLA provides \$175,000 annually in recognition of real climate leadership. Individuals and organizations selected as finalists have achieved demonstrated success in engaging a broader diversity of Americans for climate action at the local, regional, and national level. Finalists present replicable models while prioritizing diversity, inclusion, and justice.

