TO: **President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris Transition Team**
FR: **America Forward, Nonpartisan Policy Initiative of New Profit**
RE: **Top Policy Recommendations**
DT: **November 9, 2020**

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ABOUT US:

New Profit is a venture philanthropy organization that backs breakthrough social entrepreneurs who are advancing equity and opportunity in America. Since 1998, New Profit has partnered with over 150 social entrepreneurs who have created powerful ideas, organizations, and movements to turn the tide on entrenched social problems and advance opportunity for millions of underserved people across America.

America Forward is New Profit's nonpartisan policy initiative. America Forward unites social entrepreneurs with policymakers to transform local impact into national systemic change. Our Coalition of over 100 organizations advocates for public policies that advance equity, foster innovation, and reward results, and to date we have leveraged $1.7 billion for social innovation. Our members work in over 15,000 communities across America, touching over 9 million lives every year. This year, America Forward released a **2020 policy playbook** for the current presidential cycle, with thirty-five unique and detailed policy recommendations that reflect in-depth input from our Coalition members. A full list of our Coalition members is **here**, and a 1 page summary of America Forward's work is **here**.

Please feel free to reach out to America Forward's Executive Director Deborah Smolover at deborah_smolover@newprofit.org, or our Policy Director Roger Low at roger_low@newprofit.org for further information about any of the recommendations below.

OVERVIEW:

This memo lays out America Forward's key policy recommendations aimed at moving all of America forward. We believe the next Administration should:

- **Build an equitable, well-funded education system** that considers the needs of the whole child, and fully prepares the next generation for a post-COVID world;
- **Invest in our workforce development system to create economic opportunity** for all; and,
- **Make evidence and outcomes central to how federal funding is allocated**, driving inclusive impact across our society.

This memo presents specific policies the next Administration can adopt to strengthen our education and workforce systems, embrace innovation, and support our communities. A section at the end links to diverse leaders from across our Coalition, who we recommend convening for additional conversations about policy and personnel decisions relevant to the first one hundred days and beyond.

TOP AMERICA FORWARD POLICY PRIORITIES IN EARLY 2021:

Build Back Better: Recover from the Pandemic

In response to COVID-19, there is renewed urgency to **strengthen our education and workforce systems**, to make them more resilient, more equitable, and provide greater opportunity for all Americans. President-elect Biden released comprehensive [education](#) and [workforce](#) plans, as well as a 7-point plan to beat COVID-19. The below proposals fit well into these broader plans. **We recommend the transition team push to include the following key elements in a broader COVID-19 recovery bill early next year:**

Build an Equitable and Sustainable Education System:

- **Invest $1 Billion in an Education Equity and Preparedness Initiative and Task Force**: establishing our proposed **Education Equity and Preparedness Task Force** would bring relevant experts to the table, and be a critical piece of the White House-led initiative the President-elect has called for to identify evidence-based solutions that address gaps in learning, mental health, social and emotional well-being, and systemic racial and socioeconomic disparities in education exacerbated by the pandemic.

  The **Education Equity and Preparedness Initiative** would include funding to invest in research and advance evidence-based innovation to help guide us as we continue to respond to this crisis, and then pivot to standing up a stronger, more resilient education system that helps all students succeed in a post-COVID-19 world. Read more about this proposal **[here](#)**.

- **Invest $1 Billion in Trauma-Informed, Whole-Learner Supports for Youth:** President-elect Biden has called for more emergency resources for schools and unprecedented investment in school mental health professionals. We encourage you also to include $1 billion for trauma-informed, whole-learner supports, so that as students enter a new and challenging school environment, schools are equipped to focus on the holistic needs of all students and address traumatic experiences brought about by the pandemic.

- **Invest $270 Billion in our nation's education and job training programs to close widening opportunity gaps in the wake of COVID-19**: In addition to emergency funds already proposed, we need a bold infusion of predictable federal funding to address disruptions to learning and development and close opportunity gaps for all learners, during COVID-19 and beyond.

Increase Equity and Build Evidence Across our Workforce and Post-Secondary Systems:

The COVID crisis is disproportionately impacting [low-wage workers](#) and [people of color](#), and accelerating seismic dislocations across the American economy. We agree with President-elect Biden's [commitment](#) to "invest in community colleges and training to improve student success and grow a stronger, more prosperous, and more inclusive middle class," and to "make a $50 billion investment in workforce training, including community-college business partnerships and apprenticeships." As part of that commitment, we urge the President-elect and the new Administration to:

- **Create an Equitable Employment Outcomes Fund** and a **Higher Education Innovation Fund** to build evidence for and scale workforce development and post-secondary approaches that successfully increase access to economic opportunity, pay for improved wage outcomes, and incentivize data-driven performance management. You can read these proposals **[here](#)** and **[here](#).**

- **Invest in and scale proven approaches to put Americans back to work.** Apprenticeship, sectoral training programs and Employment Social Enterprises (ESEs) have all proven effective at connecting those facing barriers to employment with stable and sustainable jobs, and creating a path out of poverty for those who need it. Scaling these proven approaches with a major new infusion of federal funding will help millions of Americans who urgently need support right now to earn a living wage.

- **Codify the Jobs for Economic Recovery Act,** introduced this past summer, which subsidizes employment, builds evidence, strengthens the employment social enterprise sector, and improves outcomes for individuals facing barriers to employment.

- **Strengthen the SNAP E&T program.** Allocate new funding to increase state reimbursements to 100 percent for evidence-based activities or wage-based outcome payments. You can read our proposal **here**.

- **Increase funding for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program.** Dedicate funding to help scale effective workforce and reemployment approaches, and enable new employment-based outcome payments. You can read more about this idea **here**.

Advance Whole-Learner Education:

In light of COVID-19, taking a comprehensive approach to supporting our students is more important than ever. The science of learning and development tells us that taking a holistic, integrated approach to preparing students with a breadth of skills helps empower every learner to thrive. As President-elect Biden's proposal to support community schools and close educational equity gaps exacerbated by COVID-19 acknowledges, inequities in both material and non-material resources currently make it difficult for schools in many communities to meet the needs of all students. Based on this need, we propose the following recommendations to advance whole-learner approaches in our education system:

- **Reimagine and Support the Remodeling of Our Education System**: Prioritize the adoption of evidence-based whole-learner approaches across funding streams that support both early and K-12 education, to spur innovation and the adoption of best practices. You can read more **here**.

- **Foster Successful Systems Through Effective Partnerships:** Leverage national service corps members and partner with higher education institutions to provide additional capacity and expertise for the implementation of whole-learner approaches. You can read more **here**.

- **Support educators, engage families, and leverage science and evidence** to advance holistic, comprehensive supports that create high-quality learning environments for all students, including establishing the Office of Whole Learner Education in the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Create a safe, positive, equity-focused, student-centered school climate** by preserving and re-issuing rescinded federal guidance and trainings that support healing-centered policies to address exclusionary disciplinary practices, affirm Title IX protections, and protect our most vulnerable students, including undocumented immigrants and students of color.

You can read more about our overarching Whole-Learner recommended policy priorities **here**.

Reform Government to Catalyze Innovation:

Given the burden the current pandemic is placing on Black, Brown and low-income communities in particular — as the President-elect has repeatedly noted — the next Administration can prioritize innovative solutions that increase equity and improve outcomes for underserved communities by:

- **Building capacity for equitable outcomes across the public sector.** Reserve funding for data, evaluation and performance management, to measure the effectiveness of COVID response activities, pay for outcomes, and build state and local government capacity to measure success. We must invest in tracking workforce, education, health, justice-system and other outcomes, with specific attention to disparate racial and gender impacts.

- **Bringing diverse new talent into the public sector.** Reform and modernize the way we recruit, hire and retain talent at all levels of government to make our public sector more outcomes-oriented, more hospitable to systems change, more diverse and more inclusive. We propose a **new pilot program of competitively selected mid-career leadership fellows** to provide the needed expertise, and expose individuals with experience in other sectors to opportunities within government. Read more about our proposal **here**.

Take Immediate Agency and Executive Action to Advance a Talent, Innovation and Outcomes Agenda:

Talent Strategies and Innovation. In line with President-elect Biden's commitment to "Encourage diverse hiring and promotion practices," **the next Administration should**:

- **Pilot new talent models**. Leverage existing agency authorities, including Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) partnerships, to stand up our proposed **interagency fellowship pilot** to support coordination across departments and across different levels of government, promote innovation, and increase diversity, equity and inclusion at the senior levels of the public sector.

- **Appoint a White House Chief Social Innovation Officer**, **to lead innovation and inclusion across the Executive Branch.** Create a new White House Office of Innovation, Outcomes, and Engagement, led by a Chief Social Innovation Officer reporting directly to the president, with the authority both to help set budgetary priorities through OMB, and to convene and direct policy through the Domestic Policy Council. Staff with working knowledge of government, business, and the nonprofit sector will bring valuable perspectives to this office. A similar office should be established in every major executive branch agency. This office should champion outcomes-based approaches and innovative, diverse and inclusive talent strategies, measurably dismantle barriers to equity across government, coordinate impactful place-based initiatives, and develop cross-sector partnerships. Read more about this proposal **here**.

Evidence and Outcomes. In line with the Democratic Party Platform's repeated support for evidence-based approaches, the next Administration should:

- **Launch a new Innovation Agenda, harnessing the full potential of data and evidence.** Fragmented public program structures too often inhibit effective coordination across government agencies. Via executive actions, administrative tools and budget planning, the next administration can do much to create the conditions for federal, state, and local decision-makers to adopt modern data analytics tools and practices. Read detailed recommendations on this **here**, via the Day One Project from our partner Kathy Stack, and **here**, from our partner Results for America's "The Power of Evidence and Data to Advance an Equitable Economic Recovery: An Implementation Guide for the 2020 OMB Transition Team."

- **Revise OMB Guidance for Grants and Agreements** to encourage federal, state and local governments, and nonprofits to apply evidence and outcome-based models to decision making to ensure that communities get the services that will work best for them, especially in times of crisis. Read our more specific recommendations **here**.

- **Build a federal-government wide approach to allocating funding to outcomes that can scale.** As we look toward recovery from a global pandemic and national economic crisis, it's more essential than ever to get the most out of government spending—and it's time to create a more cohesive and strategic federal approach toward outcomes funding. The next Administration can build on the bipartisan Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act (SIPPRA) by making the Interagency Council on Social Impact Partnerships permanent, and empowering it to identify, co-create, and co-fund projects that drive state and local government effectiveness. Read our recommendations in a letter America Forward led to SIPPRA Commission Chairman Paul Edgerley in April **here**, and additional recommendations in an issue brief we recently co-authored with our Coalition member Social Finance **here**.

Engage with a set of Diverse, Innovative, Forward-Thinking Social Entrepreneurs and System Change Advocates and Convene Conversations on Policy and Personnel Decisions

As President-elect Biden's team moves forward with planning for the first hundred days and beyond, we urge you to hold conversations with key thinkers, doers and innovators about the priorities we've summarized above, to help the transition team build out its policy and implementation plans.

Here is a catalog highlighting a broad range of nonprofits across the 100+ member America Forward Coalition, with a snapshot of how these innovative, results-driven organizations are adapting and working tirelessly to serve their communities in response to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, you can review the full America Forward Coalition of over 100 members **here.**

A diverse mix of social innovators and systems thinkers lead these organizations. America Forward can rapidly convene a virtual discussion to connect planners or policy staff within the transition team to a select group of these thinkers and doers, organized by issue area on any of the policy priorities we summarize above. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us to facilitate such a conversation.