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Reports

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UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation's Strategic Roadmap

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UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

Strategic Roadmap

JOIN US ON OUR JOURNEY TO INFORM EFFECTIVE
AND EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Our mission is to advance **effective** and **equitable** solutions to pressing environmental challenges through **actionable** research that engages UCLA scholars, policymakers, and communities.

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JOIN US

WE ENVISION

a just,
sustainable,
and healthy
future for
all.

**Our goal is for
everyone to have
clean, affordable,
and resilient places
to live, work, learn,
and play.**

Letter from the Director

All over California and the nation, people's everyday experiences are demonstrating the importance and urgency of the work we do at the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation. Heat, fires, drought, and floods — the impacts of environmental change are becoming more visible and reinforcing historic patterns of injustice.

Having spent my career studying the politics of the environment, it's disheartening to witness society's slow and inadequate response to the climate crisis and failure to close the disparities in environmental quality experienced across communities. But behind the tumultuous politics on the national stage is a growing recognition of the challenges before us and new opportunities for ambitious policy responses.

The Luskin Center for Innovation (LCI) brings research into action for effective, equitable environmental policy. Based at the nation's leading public university, LCI has long been at the forefront of innovative policies to confront our most pressing environmental challenges. It's been so gratifying to join LCI and launch a new era of influential research that builds on past successes and makes equity central to environmental solutions. In the near term, we will focus our efforts on several priority areas: the human right to water, community-driven climate action, strategies to address heat inequity, and clean energy and transportation, plus the innovation and learning that can be found at their intersection.

The environmental transitions we need require not only political will but also reliable research — about the nature of problems, the likely impacts of solutions, and the governance processes that will build trust and accountability for the long term. Our team has the expertise, experience, and creativity to shape policies that deliver for everyone, especially those who have benefited least from environmental policies of previous eras.

Our collaborators and donors are crucial partners in this mission. We hope this Roadmap will inspire you to reach out to us and explore how we can be on this journey together to advance a more just, sustainable, and healthy future for all.

Sincerely,



MEGAN MULLIN, FACULTY DIRECTOR



What Drives Us

The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation (LCI) informs solutions to environmental challenges to improve lives.

Our work is rooted in the vision of our founding benefactors. Meyer and Renee Luskin endowed LCI in 2008, and later endowed the School of Public Affairs where LCI is based, to unite UCLA scholars with civic leaders to solve society's pressing problems. Motivated by this commitment to learning from and collaborating with a diverse array of partners, we helped pioneer a research approach that deeply engages government agencies, nonprofits, community groups, businesses, elected officials, and others to tackle environmental challenges. Advocates and decision makers use our research findings and policy recommendations to advance new environmental solutions.

LCI prioritizes improving environmental conditions for marginalized communities and vulnerable populations.

Decades of environmental policy have yielded significant benefits in reducing pollution and enhancing people's quality of life. However, many communities haven't enjoyed these benefits and disproportionately bear the burden of rising hazards brought by climate change. Our research informs environmental policies aimed at addressing injustices experienced by historically underserved low-income communities and communities of color.



FROM LEFT: Meyer and Renee Luskin, LCI's benefactors; LCI's National Summit on State & Local Progress Toward 100% Clean Energy. (Photographs by Reed Hutchinson/UCLA; Rich Schmitt)

WHAT SETS US APART

LCI identifies problems, design policies, and elevate community-driven solutions that advance environmental equity.

What distinguishes us from environmental advocacy organizations is our laser focus on rigorous research, which establishes the evidence base for effective, equitable, and innovative environmental policy. What sets us apart from other research centers is our high level of engagement with community advocates, policymakers, and other civic leaders.

LCI's strength lies in the bridges we build.

With expertise in public policy and urban planning, we collaborate with scholars across disciplines — ranging from civil engineering to public health and sociology — to tackle intertwined environmental and societal challenges.

We also bridge scales, from the neighborhood to the local, state, and national levels. This allows us to promote best practices that should be replicated for broader transformative impact. Our work began and is most robust in California, one of the world's largest economies and a place that inspires global environmental leadership. Increasingly, our research is being scaled up nationally to influence new federal policy and investment approaches.

FROM TOP: Tree planting near public housing in Watts (L.A.), a Transformative Climate Community that LCI supports; LCI at a community event in Pacoima (L.A.); Stockton Rising partner recruiting Climate Justice Leaders; water tasting test at the *What's on Tap* art exhibit organized by LCI's Edith de Guzman. (Photographs by Elena Hernandez; Silvia Gonzalez; Rise Stockton; Shanley Kellis)



Our Theory of Change

RESEARCH

Our team of experts creates the bridge between research excellence and policy impact. The leadership team includes LCI's co-founder Colleen Callahan along with Gregory Pierce and V. Kelly Turner, both faculty in the UCLA Department of Urban Planning. Our research, communications, operational staff, and students work across projects and with partners to conduct research for those who can use it to create policy change. In 2023, Megan Mullin, an Andrew Carnegie Fellow and scholar of environmental governance and politics, joined LCI as our faculty director. Mullin, who is also a professor in the Department of Public Policy and holds the Meyer and Renee Luskin Endowed Chair, brings her academic and policy expertise to LCI's next era of impact.

MENTOR

Student training and support are essential to how we bridge research with practice and guide the next generation of leaders. We cultivate environmental champions by supporting approximately 50 exceptional students each year to participate in our impactful research. We also provide fellowships and mentorship opportunities that connect students to civic partners such as environmental justice organizations.

PARTNER

Extreme inequality and environmental crises — among one of society's most complex problems — are intertwined. LCI takes a fundamentally collaborative and de-siloed approach to evaluate and advance solutions across different policymaking sectors and scales. We work with a diverse range of civic partners — from residents in the communities we serve to civic organizations and government agencies — to ensure that environmental policy innovations are equitable and evidence-based.

ENGAGE

Working with our civic partners, LCI brings evidence-based recommendations to policymakers. We have influenced dozens of public policies and elevated numerous community actions that advance environmental equity. Our work has earned recognition by President Obama's Climate Data Initiative, three national awards from the American Planning Association, and five state awards. Moving forward, we will build on our strong foundation.

IMPACT

The dozens of policies we have shaped not only address environmental problems, but improves lives. Our model of rigorous, actionable, and engaged research is needed now more than ever to combat the climate crisis and other challenges at the intersection of the environment and inequality.



Our Priorities

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE HIGHLIGHT

four bold **visions** in four priority **areas**.

In each research area, we are driven by a record of demonstrated impact. The following pages summarize this past progress and then chart our path forward with specific examples. The examples are organized in three steps: our work that is planned or proposed for near-term output, our broader purpose and outcomes that involve supporting the actions of civic partners, and the intended impact to advance our vision longer term. These examples are not exhaustive. We will add initiatives as new opportunities for impact arise because this Roadmap is intended to guide but not limit our ambition.

In reality, our work does not fit neatly into categories. This is a strength. Given the breadth and depth of the Luskin Center for Innovation's work across many policy sectors and scales, we are distinctively able to carry out analyses that draw broader, cross-cutting lessons from across our research areas and carry lessons from the local to the national levels. In the coming years, we plan to expand our work that identifies and uplifts best practices in governance, finance, and policy design. In the final section of this document, we provide examples of proposed work that will bridge policy sectors and scales for transformative benefit.

**Advancing
the Human
Right to
Water**

**Supporting
Community-
Driven Climate
Action**

**Informing
Cooling
Solutions and
Heat Equity**

**Ensuring
Access to Clean
Energy and
Transportation**



PRIORITY AREA

Advancing the Human Right to Water

Our vision is universal access to safe, reliable, and affordable water and wastewater management nationwide.

We all need access to clean water, but many communities struggle with aging infrastructure, costly rates, poor water quality, and distrust of their water. Drought exacerbated by climate change further threatens water reliability. Our research, including the recent launch of the Human Right to Water Solutions Lab, helps government agencies advance access to safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water, especially in underserved communities.

Impact to Date

Local Water Supply

As snowmelt diminishes under climate change, the western U.S. must rely less on imported water and better harness local water. We have informed and facilitated conversations with policymakers and advocates about ways to increase local water supply, especially recycled water. We also address how Los Angeles County can achieve equity goals when funding stormwater capture projects.

Wastewater Infrastructure

No one knows exactly how many of the 100,000 miles of sewer lines and more than 3,000 utility providers and treatment systems in California are operating well enough to protect public health — yet. With support from the California State and Regional Water Boards, we are conducting an ambitious, first-of-its-kind study to answer this question and advance equitable sanitation services.

Tap Water Trust

In working with communities stretching from Los Angeles to Detroit, we have found that if people distrust their tap water, they buy more bottled water or sugary drinks. This can be harmful to health, the environment, and pocketbooks, especially for those with limited incomes. One big reason people distrust tap water is issues with “premise plumbing” — pipes that move water from a distribution network to the taps in our homes,

schools, and businesses. We have identified actions that states, counties, water systems, property owners, and advocates can take to address premise plumbing issues and start restoring tap trust.

Drinking Water Quality

Community water systems, both urban and rural, vary widely in their capacity to provide safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water. Since 2014, we’ve mapped systems, identified vulnerabilities, and made recommendations for improvement in Los Angeles County. This led us to work with the State Water Board to complete the first-ever comprehensive statewide drinking water needs assessment, which informed investment decisions and now serves as a model that we will implement across states. Our national assessment framework with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will help prioritize solutions for the thousands of community water systems that are grappling with aging infrastructure and underinvestment.

FROM TOP: UCLA Luskin Lecture conversation between LCI faculty director Megan Mullin (left), water & sanitation justice leader Catherine Coleman Flowers (center), and Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the California State Water Resources Control Board; LCI’s Gregory Pierce (right) moderates a panel discussion at *What’s on Tap* art exhibit & education series; LCI’s Edith de Guzman (left) leading a blind water tasting test. (Photographs by Les Dunseith; Shanley Kellis (2))



INNOVATION THROUGH INTERSECTION:
We seek to identify synergies and lessons where our water work intersects with other research areas. For example, see [page 14](#) for insights into how we inform water-wise urban greening and cooling solutions.

Paths to Future Impact

OUR WORK



OUR PURPOSE



OUR INTENDED IMPACT

Local Water

Collaborate with local water utilities and advocates to design and evaluate local water supply options

Support local water supply as a feasible and equitable approach to future water supply management

Jurisdictions across the western U.S. increase the capture and supply of local water sustainably and equitably

Sanitation Access

Link California’s first-ever comprehensive assessment of wastewater infrastructure to national efforts to improve sanitation access

Develop recommendations to prioritize investments and solutions for failing sewer and septic systems

California establishes equitable sanitation services that protect public health and water quality statewide, with other states following California’s lead

Tap Water Trust

Advance the understanding of tap water distrust and assess strategies to enhance trust

Collaborate with advocates to improve tap water quality and trust in disadvantaged communities

States implement solutions addressing failing water systems and premise plumbing concerns, fostering community confidence in drinking water

Water Quality and Health

Develop a methodology and evidence base for evaluating compliance among drinking water systems

Equip advocates and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with the foundational elements to establish a national performance methodology for public water systems

Public water systems nationwide have the tools, capacity, and funding to deliver clean, safe, and affordable drinking water to all



PRIORITY AREA

Supporting Community-Driven Climate Action

Our vision is climate solutions that reduce pollution and provide transformative local benefits, especially for historically marginalized communities.

The climate emergency presents dangerous risks, as well as opportunities for change that can improve the lives of those most impacted by pollution and poverty. Our research guides climate investment programs that empower underserved communities to address climate change and its impacts while creating health, economic, and other local benefits.

Impact to Date

Climate Communities

California’s Transformative Climate Communities Program (TCC) is a model of comprehensive, community-driven climate action. TCC funds historically underinvested communities to advance their own visions for change through community engagement, collaborative governance, and infrastructure projects such as clean transportation, affordable housing, rooftop solar, and tree planting. This program is grounded in measurable outcomes. After creating the framework that guides the state’s evaluation of TCC efforts, we have been collaborating with residents, community organizations, and local governments across California to document their climate actions and track the resulting environmental, health, and economic changes.

Climate Investments

When California launched its Cap-and-Trade Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we led a collaborative process to help ensure that communities most impacted by pollution and poverty benefit from auction revenues and other climate investments.

Informed by our research, California’s model of prioritizing disadvantaged communities in climate funding has spread to other states. We analyzed best practices from across the U.S. to guide the Inflation Reduction Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the environmental justice initiative Justice40.

SYNERGIES ACROSS SCALES:

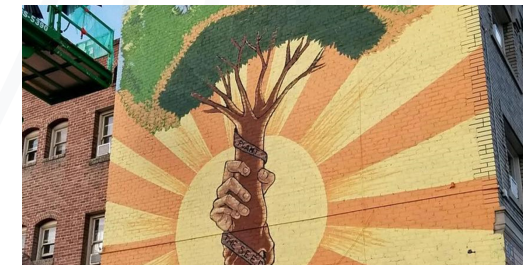
We bring lessons from grassroots climate action to state and federal decision makers. For example, the federal government modeled the Community Change Grants Program, a new national investment in environmental justice, after California’s Transformative Climate Communities. See the following page for proposed research to delve deeper into this model to support replication across different scales.

Climate Politics

Public opinion and electoral politics shape what’s possible for climate action. How can the stalemate from partisan division give way to changes that improve lives? Our research examines the politics surrounding climate change in the United States, informing how advocates strategize to enact policy. Recent work documented how three developments — changes in the Democratic Party, the growth of clean energy production in Republican-led states, and the vulnerability of Republican voters to flooding and wildfires — show potential for climate progress despite partisan divisions.

Climate Adaptation

As governments act — mostly at the local level — to protect lives and property and plan for a future with growing climate hazards, they are doing so in a context where disadvantaged communities bear disproportionate climate change impacts. By hosting a national climate adaptation symposium and a workshop on wildfire-managed retreat, we have built a network among climate adaptation researchers and decision makers to ensure that policies reflect lessons learned from past failures. We have aided local governments in planning for adaptation, developing models for financing coastal infrastructure and relocation, and guiding green infrastructure investments that reduce flood risk in under-resourced communities. See the following section titled “Informing Cooling Solutions and Heat Equity” for an overview of our related work specific to heat adaptation and mitigation.



FROM TOP: LCI’s Elena Hernandez (left) with community leader Beatriz Castro in Ontario, a Transformative Climate Community; mural representing the Stockton Rising coalition, a Transformative Climate Community grantee; Bike Safe Fresno event, part of a Transformative Climate Community effort; tree planting in Watts (L.A.), a Transformative Climate Community. (Photographs by Jason Karpman; risestockton.org; Office of Council Member Miguel Arias, District 3 Office; TreePeople)

Paths to Future Impact

OUR WORK



OUR PURPOSE



OUR INTENDED IMPACT

Climate Communities

Compile lessons from groundbreaking climate communities to develop a framework for sustaining long-term transformation

Support pioneering climate communities, help others take local climate action, and guide policies

Communities build a national learning network to scale up and accelerate climate action that reduces emissions and improves lives

Climate Investments

Identify best practices in designing and implementing equity-driven climate programs at state and federal levels

Provide policymakers, funders, and advocates with the evidence needed to improve climate programs and inform future investments

The federal government, states, philanthropies, and the private sector make enduring, effective, and equitable investments in community-driven climate action

Climate Politics

Deepen understanding of the evolving partisan climate divide and the growing public concern about climate impacts

Collaborate with advocates and the broader research community to develop feasible climate policy models in a polarized political environment

Federal and state decision makers act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and harm from climate impacts

Climate Adaptation

Investigate how economic and racial inequality influences local decision making on land use, infrastructure, and managed relocation in response to fire, flood, and other climate risks

Assist advocates and local governments in enhancing public participatory processes that disrupt historic and current biases in representation

Local investments in climate protection and adaptation reduce disparities in climate hazard exposure, fostering more just and resilient communities



PRIORITY AREA

Informing Cooling Solutions and Heat Equity

Our vision is heat-resilient communities that protect people's health and well-being where they live, learn, work, and play.

Temperatures are rising, and government agencies need to prepare. Our research guides new governance, policy, and program strategies to improve the health and well-being of communities and populations vulnerable to extreme heat.

Impact to Date

Urban Greening and Shade Infrastructure Planning

Most cities and public spaces were not originally designed to mitigate heat. We are helping to change that by demonstrating how trees and other forms of shade affect people’s heat experiences and measuring the impact of shade in places such as homes, schools, and streetscapes. To advance climate resilience, we have assisted municipalities from urban Los Angeles to rural Eastern Coachella Valley in heat planning and the implementation of tree planting and other shade infrastructure projects in underserved areas. Now we are expanding our efforts to a national level. Refer to the call-out circle for more information.

Heat Governance

We authored a landmark report revealing that state programs and funds leave gaps in protecting Californians from dangerous heat. The report introduced a heat exposure settings approach, which we disseminated more widely through a policy brief series, identifying actions for decision makers to prioritize. This research, along with other studies, has influenced legislation, the implementation of California’s Extreme Heat Action Plan, and the state Department of Public Health’s guidelines for managing heat risk in schools.

SYNERGIES ACROSS SCALES:

We are expanding our support for local heat planning by leading a new federal Center for Excellence for Heat-Resilient Communities. With a first-of-its-kind grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Integrated Heat Health Information System and in collaboration with 50 partners, we aim to assist governments in safeguarding public health and well-being from heat. Our approach is equity-centered and data-informed to mitigate and manage heat in diverse communities and heat-exposure settings.

Actionable Data, Tools, and Frameworks

Governments at all levels still have much to do to assess and respond to extreme heat. We provide the information, tools, and support needed to help cities and agencies take action. For example, we co-developed a mapping tool to comprehensively identify areas and populations across California that are most vulnerable to heat, enabling decision makers to focus on urgent needs and opportunities. Additionally, we created a resource kit for heat-resilient schools. To emphasize the importance of local context in heat planning, we will advise state and federal governments on the use of tools and other resources to assist communities with heat planning and action. Refer to the call-out circle to the left for an example.

FROM TOP: LCI, the Oasis Leadership Committee, and Kounkuey Design Initiative celebrate the opening of a community-designed shade structure; LCI’s Kelly Turner (right) being interviewed about extreme heat; Luskin Summit expert panelists discussing cooling strategies; a first-of-its-kind “cool” mural that uses solar reflective paint. (Photographs by Ruth Engel; Colleen Callahan; Les Dunseith; Mary Braswell)



Paths to Future Impact

OUR WORK



OUR PURPOSE



OUR IMPACT

Urban Greening and Shade Infrastructure Planning

Map, evaluate, and advise implementation of heat-mitigating infrastructure strategies at scales relevant to local planning and policy decisions

Empower communities to identify and advocate for strategies, such as urban greening, to reduce shade deserts and heat risk

Local and state governments prioritize and invest in green and engineered shade, especially in historically disinvested areas

Heat Governance

Analyze the settings, sectors, and situations that influence thermal conditions and heat risk where people live, learn, work, and play to inform policy recommendations

Equip advocates and policymakers with information about gaps, trends, and innovations in heat policy; for example, by tracking best practices in state heat legislation

Local and state governments enact policies anchored in equity and science that protect those most vulnerable to heat

Actionable Data, Tools, and Frameworks

Assist governments to launch, evaluate, and use frameworks, networks, tools, and programs to support heat planning and action

Provide decision makers with evidence about what works and what needs to change to advance community heat resilience

States and the federal government establish durable, science-based heat-management institutions responsive to local needs



PRIORITY AREA

Ensuring Access to Clean Energy and Transportation

Our vision is a clean and just future powered by 100% renewable energy and zero-emissions mobility nationwide.

During the most significant energy transformation since the Industrial Revolution, our research shapes policies, programs, and investments that prioritize equity while advancing the distinct but related transitions to 100% renewable energy production and zero-emissions transportation.

Impact to Date

Clean Energy

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) — the nation’s largest municipal utility — has ambitiously committed to a goal of 100% clean energy by 2035. We are assisting Los Angeles in making this transition while maintaining affordability and energy access, an effort being monitored by utilities across the nation. Our research has long informed innovative energy policy, including the design of renewable energy incentives such as DWP’s Feed-in Tariff Program and “community choice aggregation,” a model that allows cities and counties to purchase renewable electricity on behalf of their communities.

Zero-Emissions Transportation

Lower-income communities have largely been left out of the transition to electric vehicles. For more than a decade, we have built the research foundation to help change that pattern. For instance, we informed the design of California’s Clean Cars for All program, which makes electric vehicles more accessible to low- and moderate-income households. More recently, we collaborated with government, nonprofit, and business partners, led by the Los Angeles Business Council, to co-produce an agenda that centers equity across transportation decarbonization strategies.

SYNERGIES ACROSS RESEARCH SUBJECTS:

We identify synergies where our energy and transportation work intersects and connects with other research areas. For example, as part of our equity-based climate action work, we support the installation of no-cost solar panels on the homes of low-income households and access to electric car sharing and e-bike programs in underserved communities (see [page 11](#)).

Integrated and Equitable Access to Clean Technology

States and the federal government are investing billions of dollars in incentives for households and communities to adopt clean energy and transportation technologies, such as solar panels and electric vehicles, which can save users money while protecting the environment. However, the patchwork of programs is daunting to navigate, creating a barrier for households that would benefit most from access to clean technology. Our evaluations of one-stop-shop pilots in Los Angeles County and the San Joaquin Valley have identified effective strategies for delivering funding to the intended recipients. These lessons are now informing new federal funding programs designed to serve those who are hardest to reach.

FROM TOP: Watt’s electric car share program supported by a Transformative Climate Communities grant; speakers at the Luskin Summit: Equity & LA’s Clean Energy Future; Luskin Lecture discussion with clean air and transportation pioneer Mary Nichols. (Photographs by Elena Hernandez; Les Dunseith (2))



Paths to Future Impact

OUR WORK



OUR PURPOSE



OUR IMPACT

Clean Energy

Collaborate with the Los Angeles public utility and community advocates to design and evaluate local energy transition options

Equip Los Angeles to deliver on its commitment to 100% renewable energy while maintaining affordability and access for those most in need

Los Angeles establishes a successful model that other utilities follow for equitable energy transformation

Zero-Emissions Transportation

Evaluate California's zero-emission vehicle policies and identify opportunities for making vehicles more affordable and charging infrastructure more viable

Empower California advocates and policymakers with the evidence needed to close the electric vehicle and charging infrastructure gap

California adopts reforms so all households can achieve zero-emission mobility

Integrated and Equitable Access to Clean Technology

Design strategies to scale one-stop-shop approaches that help low- and moderate-income households nationwide adopt clean technologies

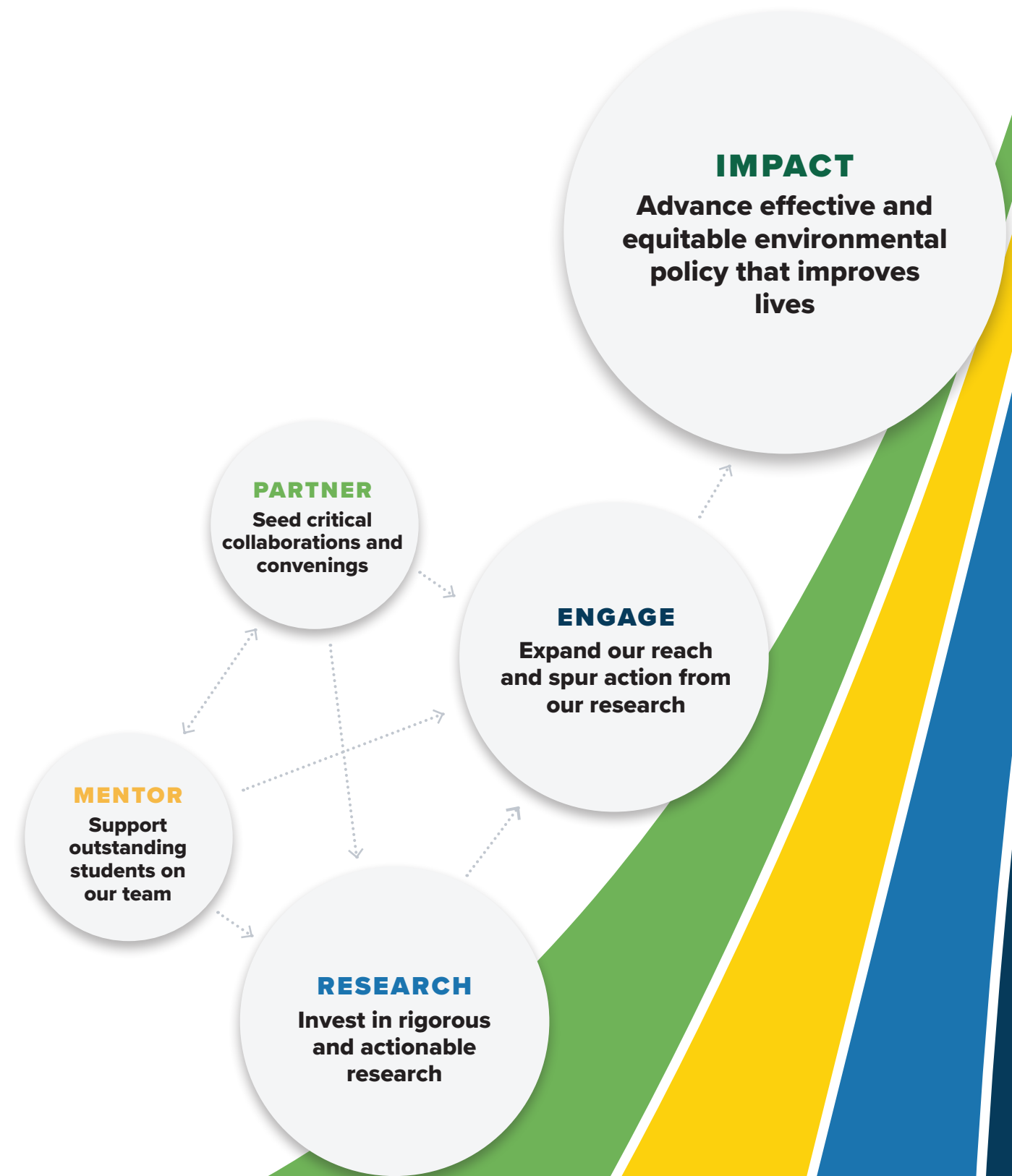
Help advocates and policymakers in prioritizing and investing in effective strategies to expand access to clean energy and zero-emission mobility

The federal government streamlines and scales approaches for equitable access to climate transition opportunities

JOIN US TO PURSUE OUR

four-part vision by **investing** in four strategies over the next four years.

We invite you to take part in the Luskin Center for Innovation's efforts to advance effective and equitable environmental policy that improves lives. Learn how in the following pages.



Invest in Rigorous, Actionable Research

In partnership with you, we can expand our cutting-edge research. Together we can design evidence-based policies that utilize the knowledge of community members and build capacity for a sustainable and resilient future. From in-depth interviews and focus groups to geospatial and statistical analysis of huge data sets, we will conduct actionable research that informs innovative and equitable environmental policy and uplifts community-driven solutions.

True to our mission and history, our primary pursuit will continue to be high-quality, rigorous environmental policy research with a focus on:

- Advancing the human right to water
- Supporting community-driven climate action
- Informing cooling solutions and heat equity
- Ensuring access to clean energy and transportation

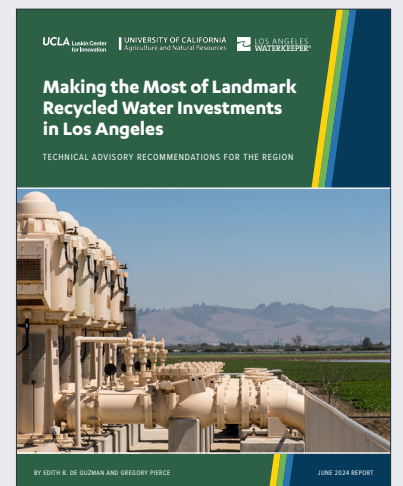
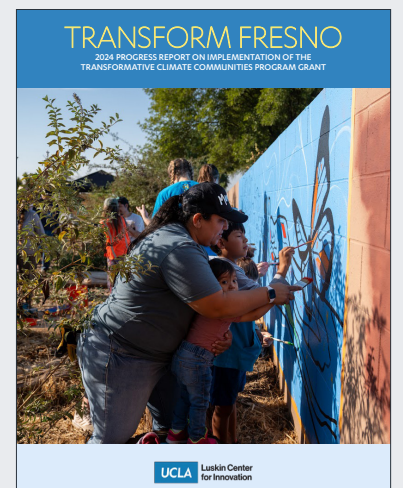
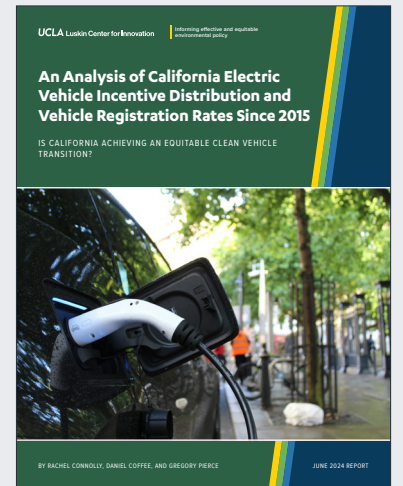
Enduring solutions to the climate crisis or any complex environmental challenge require governing institutions that foster collaboration, accountability, and representation. Building on our breadth of experience across environmental policy domains, we will develop governance tools that bridge policymaking sectors and deliver benefits to communities previously neglected by government actions. Your grants and gifts will support new innovations through intersection, including the following examples.

DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH INTERSECTION ACROSS ISSUES

- ▶ Urban cooling solutions that green the landscape while being water-wise
- ▶ Planning and decision support tools that address the imperative to electrify transportation
- ▶ Financing instruments that promote equitable, long-run investments in water service, climate adaptation, transportation, and other environmental infrastructure
- ▶ Community-driven environmental health monitoring that simplifies the communication of health risks from multiple sources of pollution

EXPORTING INNOVATION AND CREATING SYNERGIES ACROSS SCALES

- ▶ Drinking water needs assessment tools that we first developed for California and are now extending nationally
- ▶ Community-driven climate action policies and practices, drawing lessons from our evaluations of California's Transformative Climate Communities
- ▶ Local heat action planning support and assistance, through our new federally funded Center for Excellent for Heat Resilient Communities



Support Outstanding Students

With your support, we can mentor tomorrow's environmental leaders while engaging them today in research that advances environmental justice.

We employ students to work on our impactful research projects, and fund and mentor student projects that meet the research needs of our civic partners. We also offer an Environmental Justice Field Fellowship Program that places remarkable Bruins — typically first-generation students or students of color — with community organizations to advance climate action and environmental justice.

The cost of supporting graduate students has nearly doubled since before the pandemic, challenging our ability to provide valuable research experiences and benefit from students' skills and enthusiasm. We invite contributions that will allow us to expand our student opportunities. With your support, we can also deepen engagement with former students — many now visionary environmental leaders — to strengthen our alumni network of connections driving effective and equitable environmental solutions.

FROM TOP: UCLA student mixer; UCLA student mixer; Lana Zimmerman and Elena Hernandez, former graduate student researchers and now managers at LCI; Luskin Block Party for students. (Photographs by Rich Schmitt (2); Anthony Liebig; Les Dunseith)



Seed Critical Collaborations and Convenings

Together, we can bring information and leaders together to collectively and creatively solve problems.

All of our research projects have partners who inform and utilize the findings. As a research center at the nation's leading public university, we uniquely assemble diverse groups of scholars and civic leaders. We host or co-host about a dozen virtual and in-person events annually, ranging from large public lectures by inspirational speakers to intimate roundtable discussions with thought leaders.

With your financial support, we can do more. Enhanced capacity to convene and collaborate with local, state, and federal policy makers will help to maximize the impact of our research.

We also seek to expand partnerships in underserved communities that would not otherwise have the resources for engaged research. These partnerships help shape our research questions and inform our findings. By listening and learning from the lived experiences of more community leaders and people experiencing environmental impacts and change, we will find creative solutions to environmental problems along with new, innovative ways to pursue community-engaged research. For example, we plan to integrate a community-based fellowship program into our Transformative Climate Communities Program research, empowering residents to document climate action and local partnerships and institutions that can sustain transformative change.

FROM TOP: Touring affordable housing in a Transformative Climate Community; U.S. Senator Alex Padilla speaking at a water affordability event; California Governor Gavin Newsome speaking at a UCLA Luskin event; discussing investment justice from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. (Photographs by GRID Alternatives; Ikenna Okoye; UCLA Luskin; Rich Schmitt)



Increase our Capacity to Share our Research and Produce Action

In partnership with you, we can expand the reach and impact of our research locally and nationally. We seek gifts and grants to allow us to increase our capacity for strategic communications, education, and engagement to maximize impact.

The Luskin Center for Innovation’s (LCI) core outputs are our research products and amplification of the work is how we ensure impact. We publish more than 20 reports, policy briefs, tools, and fact sheets annually. These are shared with our listserv of more than 10,000 people and amplified by the larger networks of the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and the university. With earned media, we reach even broader audiences. Our experts are quoted about 150 times annually in USA Today, The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Public Radio, and other renowned media outlets. Our researchers also present at numerous events and conferences each year, reaching policymakers, advocates, and other influencers. Moreover, our project partners promote our research findings in their advocacy and policy making.

Enhancing the visibility of the center as a whole will maximize our impact. Our researchers are not only experts in their research areas but also break down silos and draw connections across environmental policy domains. Our goal is to ensure civic leaders know LCI’s capacity extends beyond specific report topics; our researchers have broad expertise and can be nimble advisors on various environmental challenges. To communicate our environmental expertise, LCI redesigned our brand to be more cohesive, recognizable, and bold. This Roadmap highlights our new brand identity.

Our experts are regularly featured in major news outlets including the following:

The New York Times

USA TODAY

The Washington Post

npr

We seek funding to increase the scale and impact of our work in the media, in communities, and in conversations with decision makers to drive effective and equitable policy. For example, we aim to consistently provide Spanish translation and data visualization, proactively seek media coverage, and enhance our social media presence. We also aspire to deliver tailored research products accessible to diverse audiences. When we are able to summarize our research into concise and compelling products (such as policy briefs, fact sheets, and story maps), advocates and decision makers use them to place issues on the agenda and drive positive policy change.



FROM TOP: LCI water researchers at the California Capitol (left to right) Ariana Hernandez, Greg Pierce, Edith de Guzman, Grace Harrison, and Megan Mullin; LCI’s Edith de Guzman speaking to ABC News. (Photographs by Greg Pierce; Shanley Kellis)



For over a decade, The Luskin Center for Innovation has provided the research foundation for innovative environmental policy that prioritizes equity and improves lives. Our commitment to rigorous scholarship, conducted in partnership with civic leaders, remains steadfast. As LCI has grown, our capacity for ambitious projects and impactful outcomes has expanded. Partnerships will continue to be critical to our success. This Roadmap outlined how, with your partnership, we will advance our commitment to:

Engaged research in four priority areas and their intersections

Enhanced support for student scholars as part of our broader team

Expanded partnerships in underserved communities with the lived experiences of community members

Amplified impact through communications, convenings, outreach, and education

How to Join Us

Every gift of any size matters. Whether supporting students, investing in research, or amplifying research findings to policymakers and the public, opportunities abound to make a positive impact. Learn more at innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/giving-opportunities.

Join our listserv for interesting and actionable research news, event updates, and other engagement opportunities: bit.ly/subscribe-to-the-LCI.

Communicate with us. We would like to hear about your priorities and explore synergies. Contact Colleen Callahan, co-executive director, at ccallahan@luskin.ucla.edu.

We look forward to partnering with you. Together we can achieve a more just, resilient, and healthy future for all.



UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

Informing effective and equitable
environmental policy

The Luskin Center for Innovation conducts actionable research that unites UCLA scholars with civic leaders to solve environmental challenges and improve lives.

Our research priorities include the human right to water, community-driven climate action, heat equity, clean energy and zero-emission transportation. We envision a future where everyone has healthy, affordable, and resilient places to live, work, learn, and play.