

LUCHA: Building a Co-Governance Model for People-Powered Change in Arizona

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Prepared for: LUCHA (Living United for Change in Arizona)

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I. Executive Summary


Progressive policy is at a crossroads in Arizona. A Democrat governor is in office for the first time in 14 years. Republican politicians hold the State House and Senate but could lose their grip on either or both chambers in the upcoming elections in November 2024. The changing political landscape presents a unique opportunity for Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), a grassroots organization that has been at the forefront of pushing a progressive vision in the state for more than a decade.

LUCHA was born as a reaction to regressive immigration laws passed in 2010, grew power as a grassroots movement that saw victories around the minimum wage in 2016, and is now exercising policy influence as a respected political actor that champions the views of its members to bring about positive change for marginalized communities in Arizona. LUCHA is spearheading a co-governance model in the state that outlines a new way of working between elected officials and civil society.

This changing political landscape and revitalized progressive agenda spurs a series of pressing questions for LUCHA that are addressed over the course of this paper: How can LUCHA continue building and deploying its power through its co-governance model to deliver on the priorities of its base? As LUCHA grows, how can it ensure that its members remain at the heart of its policy and political decision-making? As Arizona's progressive platform becomes more prominent at the state-level, how can LUCHA strengthen its policy influence toolkit to ensure its policy priorities are delivered?

These questions are answered in three stages. First, we explore the concept of co-governance to understand where LUCHA draws on pre-existing models of civic-government relationships and where the organization has adapted these models to their own context. Second, we explore how internal processes have been developed in LUCHA to incorporate member views into policy decisions and what opportunities exist to strengthen these mechanisms. Finally, we examine the tools that LUCHA employs to shape state-level policies and how this policy influence toolkit could be reinforced.

We find that LUCHA's co-governance model considerably builds on pre-existing conceptualizations of co-governance. Extant studies focus on transactional relationships



between government and civil society. LUCHA's conceptualization of co-governance incorporates an understanding of power into this model. This takes as a starting point the fundamental importance of *who* governs as well as *how* people govern.

We find that LUCHA's internal processes involve deeply embedded democratic mechanisms that ensure members' voices are central to LUCHA's policy decisions. An Endorsement Committee gives members the power to choose the candidates LUCHA will endorse in upcoming elections. An Asamblea brings together members on a semi-regular basis to discuss and vote on policy priorities. Nevertheless, awareness of these democratic mechanisms is patchy among members and staff. There is an opportunity to codify LUCHA's approaches and thereby reinforce the democratic legitimacy of their policy prioritization process.

We find that LUCHA's policy influence toolkit has enabled the organization to play a critical role in shaping state policies, with the Housing Trust Fund serving as a powerful example of this in action. LUCHA's toolkit consists of mass mobilization, member testimonies, candidate endorsements, policy design, a Roadmap Series with legislators, and coalition engagement. External partners, including politicians, think tanks and nonprofits, look to LUCHA as a leader in the progressive space, though this can lead to their ideas being rejected outright by more moderate politicians. There is an opportunity to build on this power by formalizing relationships with think tanks and increasing internal capacity for long-term proactive policy design.

Taken together, these findings can bolster LUCHA's approach to co-governance over the next five years. Given the political landscape, this co-governance model presents a unique opportunity to shape landmark legislation and shape the way that legislation is made over the next decade. LUCHA is well placed to lead the coalition that defines this progressive moment. But to do so will first require articulating a vision for co-governance over the next five years with its members and operationalizing the model through iterative practice. Finally, our recommendations will require additional capacity for delivery. LUCHA should work closely with funders to ensure that it has the requisite staffing to deliver on its potential to shape the future of communities across Arizona.



II. Introduction


Problem Definition

Since its formation in 2009, Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), a grassroots organizing group in Arizona, has built tremendous power from an active and committed membership base. Its opportunities for influencing policy are shifting as LUCHA grows into a prominent policy shaping position in the state and as Democrats become increasingly competitive in Arizona elections. LUCHA's rising influence is reflected in several high-profile policy wins to date and its emerging relationships with members of the Governor's Office as well as elected officials. This is a pivotal moment for LUCHA. How LUCHA responds to this evolving context matters for both its own relationship with its members and for Arizona progressive politics.

Given these shifting dynamics, this is an opportune moment to take stock of how LUCHA relates to its members, and how LUCHA is positioned to influence external stakeholders. This stock-take is to assess how LUCHA can best identify its members' priorities and translate their interests into electoral and policy outcomes.

LUCHA's advocacy reflects the varied and interconnected interests of its broad membership base, which is largely Latino and working class but has expanded to include other marginalized groups in Arizona. This is one of LUCHA's key strengths. Consequently, there are several policy areas that it could conceivably work on at any one time. How LUCHA prioritizes issue areas determines the extent to which it genuinely reflects the diverse viewpoints of its members. How LUCHA ensures that it remains responsive to the changing interests and ideas of its growing base will remain fundamental to its mission as the organization develops.

LUCHA is not a unimodal activist; it has a range of tools in its toolkit. LUCHA mobilizes its significant and committed membership base. As a 501(c)(4) organization, it endorses candidates for elected office and bolsters their public profile. LUCHA collaborates with partners on designing bills and advocating for policy proposals. Which of its many levers



LUCHA chooses to exercise for different opportunities – be it publicly or behind the scenes – and how it continues to build its capacities, shape its potential for state-wide influence.

How LUCHA selects which policy areas to prioritize and what capability to build and deploy, therefore, are vital questions for its ability to deliver on its vision for co-governance, which we define below. These approaches can ensure that LUCHA meets the current moment, and that LUCHA embodies the democratic practices it seeks to spread in Arizona. In so doing, LUCHA can most effectively give voice to its members.

The central research question for this report is: **How can LUCHA continue building and deploying its power through its co-governance model to deliver on the priorities of its base?** Stated another way, how can LUCHA best leverage its influence to secure its members' interests?

To answer the overarching research question, the project will focus on several sets of sub-questions, outlined below.


Internal Analysis (primarily addressed in [Section V](#))

- What process does LUCHA employ to decide on policy priorities?
- How responsive is LUCHA's advocacy approach to the interests and perspectives of its members?
- How can LUCHA bolster its member-led approach?

External Analysis (primarily addressed in [Section VI](#))

- What is LUCHA's policy influence toolkit?
- How strong is LUCHA's policy influence currently?
- How can LUCHA strengthen its policy influence toolkit?

In doing so, this report examines how LUCHA can (1) strengthen its internal processes to more systematically reflect the preferences of its members and (2) more strategically



and proactively engage legislators and policymakers to ensure its issue-based priorities translate into tangible policy wins.

Methods

We have taken a mixed methods approach to understanding LUCHA's policy formulation process and its ability to effect change in Arizona state policy.

For our internal analysis, we reviewed grey literature from LUCHA's internal documents, reviewed academic literature on co-governance, conducted thirteen interviews with LUCHA members and staff, and conducted a quantitative analysis of existing LUCHA member data. The internal LUCHA member data was collected in 2022 and 2023, so a key limitation of these data is that they do not provide insights into member priorities over a longer time period.

For our external analysis, we reviewed academic literature on housing and tax policy, reviewed academic literature on partnerships between advocacy groups and think tanks, conducted fourteen interviews with legislators, policymakers, researchers, and advocacy leaders. We leaned on our Harvard Kennedy School peers to connect us with many of the external stakeholders we interviewed. The interviews, conducted between December 2023 and March 2024, are listed in Appendix A.

In March 2024, we participated in a cocreation session with the LUCHA policy team, sharing our findings and workshopping potential recommendations. The outcomes from that session are reflected in the analysis and recommendation sections of this report.

III. LUCHA History and Arizona Political Context

LUCHA History: Building power for progressive causes through grassroots organizing since 2009

LUCHA was established in 2009 in the wake of the draconian immigration law SB 1070, or the “show me your papers” bill, that allowed for racial profiling of immigrants and instilled fear throughout communities of color in Arizona. A generation of organizers was born out of the fight against SB 1070, including many current LUCHA staff and members. As Alex Gomez (current Executive Director) and Tomás Robles (former Executive Director) describe, LUCHA “serves as a political home for people of color”.

Since its inception, LUCHA has expanded its focus to include social and economic issues ranging from immigration advocacy, voter engagement, workers’ rights, housing affordability, tax reform, and broad-based community empowerment. Figure 1 highlights some pivotal moments in LUCHA’s history.

Figure 1 LUCHA Policy Wins Over the Years

Issue	Timing	Objective	External Outcome
"Know Your Rights" campaign and organizing in the wake of SB 1070	2010-2012	To fight against the strictest anti-immigration bill in the country which was terrorizing immigrant families and leading to racial profiling.	Recall of Senate President Russell Pearce, who was replaced with a more moderate Republican.
Minimum wage (Prop 206)	2016	To boost the economic wellbeing of low-wage workers through higher wages.	Increase in the Arizona minimum wage to \$12 by 2020 and provision up to 5 days of paid sick leave for all workers.

Bazta Arpaio	2016	To remove the key enforcer of SB 1070.	Ousting of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, a staunch anti-immigration law enforcer.
2020 U.S Presidential Election	2020	To mobilize liberal-leaning voters against the Republican grip on the state and prevent the re-election of Donald Trump.	Arizona election of a Democrat for president, which had not happened since 1996 and 1948 before that.
Paid Family Medical Leave	2023	To protect the financial stability of workers who historically have lacked protections.	Expansion of paid family medical leave from 40 hours to 480 hours (12 weeks) for state employees.
Housing Affordability	2023	To address housing unaffordability and homelessness by investing in affordable housing and providing direct assistance to renters.	Secured a \$150 million investment in the Housing Trust Fund for the FY2024 budget.

Arizona political landscape

Arizona has been a Republican-leaning state for most of the last 30 years. Between 1990 and the election of Katie Hobbs in 2022, Democrats occupied the Governor's Office for only 7 years. Over the same period, the State Senate and House of Representatives have become more conservative. The Shor-McCarty index measures the ideological leanings of U.S. state legislatures, with a lower score indicating more liberal and higher scores indicating more conservative. As Figure 1 below shows, both the State Senate and House have seen an increase in their index scores since 2000, with the Senate peaking in 2012 and the House in 2018.


With Republicans Jan Brewer (2009-2015) and Doug Ducey (2015-2023) as Governors, Republicans enjoyed a trifecta – control of the Senate, House, and Governorship – for 14 years. It was during this era of Republican dominance in Arizona that LUCHA achieved both of its flagship victories, helping strike down SB 1070 and passing Proposition 206. Success in such an adverse political environment helps explain the organization's rise to prominence, signaling the strength of rapidly growing and politically active progressive activists.

Figure 2 Ideology Score by Chamber in Arizona (2000-2020)



Source: Shor 2023, accessed through Harvard Dataverse.

The index dataset only includes information until 2020. To many, 2020 marked an inflection point for Democrats in the state, with Joe Biden winning the presidential election in Arizona against then-President Donald Trump, the first Democratic presidential nominee to win in the state since Bill Clinton in 1996. Since then, Arizona



has experienced a gradual turn towards more liberal politics, with 2022 wins in the U.S. Senate, Governor's Office, and Secretary of State elections.

Moreover, while Arizona continues to be majority-Republican in the legislature, the size of their majority has steadily decreased in the last decade, going from 21-9 and 40-20 majorities in 2011 in the Senate and House, respectively, to razor-thin majorities of 16-14 and 31-29 in 2023.

Several factors help explain this. First, the demographic composition of Arizona has changed substantially over the past 50 years, with the percentage of people of color in the state increasing from 28% in 1990 to 47% in 2022. Latinos, who comprise a majority of LUCHA's base, went from representing 12% of the electorate in 2008 to 22% in 2022 (Phillips, 2022). Beyond the demographic argument, Phillips (2022) highlighted the fight against SB 1070 as a moment that "catalyzed an entire generation of organizers, leaders and public servants" such as LUCHA. Lastly, the extremism of Donald Trump and his endorsed candidates such as Kari Lake and Blake Masters have alienated more moderate white voters who have turned away from a more radical Republican party.

In short, Democrats are closer to achieving a trifecta today than at any other point since they last achieved it in the 1950s. This positions organizations such as LUCHA to play a key leadership role in a rapidly changing political landscape. The feasibility of achieving Democratic majorities presents a unique opportunity for LUCHA to help promote policies that are core to its members' interests. Additionally, following Biden's victory in the state in 2020, all eyes will be on Arizona in the upcoming presidential and congressional races as a crucial battleground state, which has the potential to elevate LUCHA's presence at the national stage even further.

This opportunity makes it all the more crucial to develop a robust understanding of the concept of co-governance, drawing on both the academic literature and LUCHA's application of its own co-governance model in Arizona.



IV. Co-Governance

Before we answer how LUCHA can strengthen its co-governance model, it is important to establish how LUCHA conceptualizes the model in the first place. The term co-governance is not a new one, but social scientists have yet to coalesce around a satisfactory definition. This stems in part from the flurry of terms that exist to describe the varying relationships between the state and citizens, the state and civil society, or the state and nonprofits. Understanding the history of these terms can help us apply them to LUCHA. As one staff member put it to us: what does a “governing model that doesn't exist look like?”¹ This section will explore the research surrounding the interrelated concepts of coproduction, co-governance and cocreation and how they relate to LUCHA's work.

The term coproduction emerged first. It was coined by Elinor Ostrom following her research looking at the negative impact of centralizing public service delivery in the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast to the top-down relationship between public agencies and residents that was typical in many U.S. cities, Ostrom and colleagues explored alternative modes of service delivery (Ostrom, 1996). Since Ostrom's research, the typology of government-civic relations has expanded to include cocreation and co-governance alongside coproduction (Ansell and Torfing, 2021; Somerville and Haines, 2008). This expansion was driven by a recognition that coproduction did not necessarily cover the lifespan of public policy design and delivery (policy formulation, design, planning, implementation and management). These distinctions are not universally agreed (Sorrentino et al., 2018). Nevertheless, **we take as a useful starting point the notion of co-governance as a collaborative arrangement between government and civil society to formulate and deliver public policies.** The key terms are summarized in Figure 3.

¹ Interview with Lena Avalos, conducted in-person on January 19, 2024

Figure 3 Defining Terms Related to Co-Governance

Term	Definition	Explanation	Example in LUCHA
Cocreation	The involvement of residents in the <i>design</i> of public services	Residents are initiators or designers. They lead or engage in the problem definition phase and the design phase. (Voorberg et al., 2015)	“The biggest piece is the base building and membership and ensuring that the policy solutions that we are advocating for are crafted and developed by and for the people that we serve in our membership.” ²
Coproduction	The involvement of residents in the <i>delivery</i> of public services	Emphasizes the role of residents in implementing or delivering services. (Branden and Pestoff, 2006)	N/A. LUCHA provides immigration services, citizenship and English classes to its members, but these are not funded by government and so not classed as coproduction.
Co-Governance	The involvement of residents in the <i>formulation</i> and <i>delivery</i> of public services	Occurs across the entire lifespan of policy formulation, design and delivery. Described as an “arrangement,” implying a <i>systematization</i> of collaboration between government and civil society.	“For us, co-governance is a constant negotiation of supporting them to be the best elected officials they can, but also to move our policies.” ³

² Interview with Chris Gilfillan, conducted over Zoom on February 2, 2024.

³ Interview with Abril Gallardo Cervera, conducted in-person on January 17, 2024.

		(Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006)	
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We can now build on this definition through reflecting LUCHA’s own interpretation of co-governance.

Firstly, LUCHA staff note that co-governance is not effective without elected politicians who are representative of the communities they serve: it matters *who* governs as well as *how* they govern. One staff member told us that co-governance is the “bridge” between what local communities say and the legislators passing policy in the statehouse.⁴ Another described co-governance as “changing who is governing and then changing the way in which they govern.”⁵ For the time being, “the legislator is the power center,” shaping the power arena that LUCHA works in.⁶ This acknowledgement of the importance of representation as well as policy outcomes helps to ground the co-governance literature in the political reality of state government.

Secondly, co-governance is framed by LUCHA as a relational process, replacing the transactional nature of contemporary politics. One staff member told us, “It shouldn't work that like, I'm giving you something, you give me something back.”⁷ Instead, politicians and community members should work together “making your governing decisions solely based on the people that you're governing.”⁸ This means that policymaking is bidirectional: “operating really well, politicians can be part of helping to shape and inform those campaigns.”⁹ This can create informational advantages, where politicians “kind of fill in the blanks of areas of what’s going on, what policies are heard.”¹⁰ It also creates powerful examples of human interaction, such as when one LUCHA staff member fell sick and received a card in the mail from the local mayor.¹¹

⁴ Interview with Faith Ramon, conducted over Zoom on February 22, 2024.

⁵ Interview with Lena Avalos, conducted in-person on January 19, 2024

⁶ Interview with Alex Gomez, conducted in-person on January 18, 2024.

⁷ Interview with Lena Avalos, conducted in-person on January 19, 2024.

⁸ Interview with Lena Avalos, conducted in-person on January 19, 2024.

⁹ Interview with Faith Ramon, conducted over Zoom on February 22, 2024.

¹⁰ Interview with Faith Ramon, conducted over Zoom on February 22, 2024.

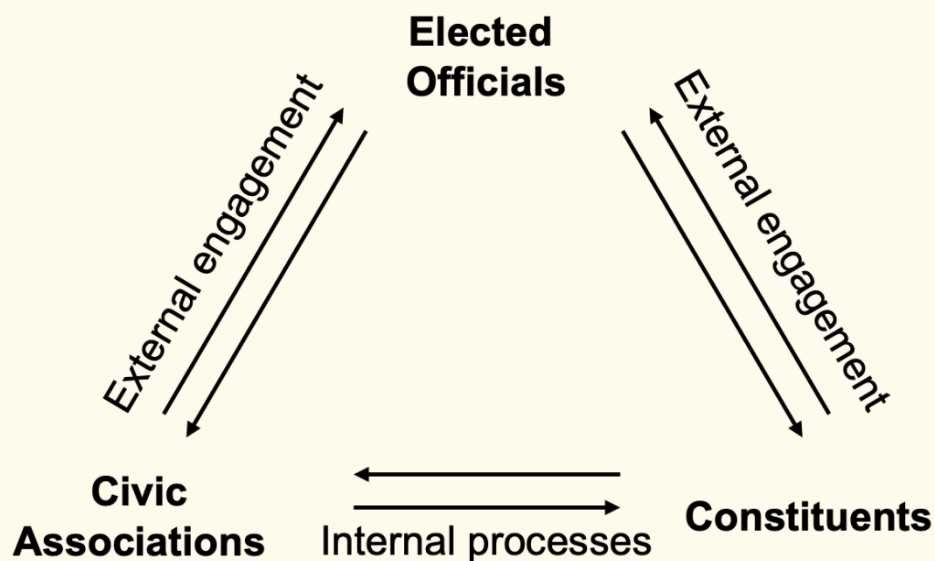
¹¹ Interview with Faith Ramon, conducted over Zoom on February 22, 2024.

More broadly, LUCHA's non-transactional relationships with elected officials grants LUCHA greater autonomy to respond fully to member's perspectives and interests.


This network of relationships is helpfully captured by the civic feedbacks diagram in Han, McKenna, Campbell (2022), which we have adapted to reflect LUCHA's approach in Figure 4 below.

Civic associations like LUCHA interact with their constituents, or base, through processes internal to their organizational structure. These dynamics are explored in [Section V](#) (Internal Analysis). Civic associations also interact with elected officials and policy makers, for instance when LUCHA deploys its policy influence toolkit, as explored in [Section VI](#) (External Analysis). Additionally, constituents interact with elected officials directly, without civic associations mediating. However, civic associations can support these interactions by empowering constituents and shaping prevailing governance arrangements.

Figure 4 Interactions Between Civic Associations, Constituents and Elected Officials¹²



¹² This diagram is an adaptation of the civic feedbacks diagram in Han, McKenna, Campbell (2022)



Finally, LUCHA staff see co-governance as a vehicle for deploying and shaping power. This varies from getting in the room where decisions are made to changing structures of governance. For the policy team, this includes “having a seat at the table when policy solutions are being debated and having an actual vote in that discussion.”¹³ But it also means going beyond “just moving policy within the same governing structure.”¹⁴ For Alex Gomez, LUCHA’s Executive Director, there is a need to shift from the legislator as the center of power to “the perspective of the member has to be in the driver’s seat.”¹⁵

None of our interviewees saw co-governance as a fully defined model that could be simply lifted off-the-shelf and applied in Arizona. All saw the idea of co-governance as something that staff, members and politicians are “all learning and building as we go.”¹⁶ This presents an opportunity to examine closely LUCHA’s practices and explore how LUCHA can strengthen the relationship between members and the organization (internal processes) and its influence on policymakers (external engagement).

¹³ Interview with Chris Gilfillan, conducted over Zoom on February 2, 2024.

¹⁴ Interview with Lena Avalos, conducted in-person on January 19, 2024.

¹⁵ Interview with Alex Gomez, conducted in-person on January 18, 2024.

¹⁶ Interview with Lena Avalos, conducted in-person on January 19, 2024.




V. Internal Analysis

This section explores the first set of research sub-questions about how LUCHA interacts with its members to determine its policy and electoral priorities. First, we will briefly argue that nonprofits engaged in effective co-governance must accurately reflect their member's interests and enhance their agency. Then we will describe the processes LUCHA employs to set organizational priorities in consultation with its members. Finally, we will evaluate the extent to which LUCHA's priorities reflect those of its members and explore the implications of these findings for LUCHA's co-governance model.

Why do democratic organizational structures matter for co-governance?

Base-building nonprofits like LUCHA derive their power largely from their membership. This power is therefore conditional on their ability to transmit and amplify voices from their base. Marshall Ganz observed that what “enables democracy to work” is “individual equal voices combining to create collective capacity in communities, organizations, and local, state, and national institutions” (Ganz, 2021). Creating this “collective capacity” requires mechanisms for bringing together individuals with “equal voices.” This speaks to the potential for democratic organizational structures - how organizations engage with their members internally - to enable organizations to shape the ‘external’ democratic environment.

Grassroots nonprofits have to move quickly, but a lack of transparency around processes can inadvertently exclude constituents from the organizations' decision-making. This dilemma is not new for LUCHA, who have navigated tensions around how best to organize themselves since their emergence in the midst of large-scale protests against SB 1070. Some mass mobilization movements, in seeking to oppose top-down autocratic decision-making disconnected from its base, reject formal organizational structures entirely. However, academic Jo Freeman theorizes that “for everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate in its activities the



structure must be explicit, not implicit. The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can happen only if they are formalized” (Freeman, 1972). It is therefore important to understand what decision-making processes LUCHA employs, and how those processes are communicated to its members.

Further, when organizations like LUCHA act in arenas characterized by uncertainty, the pipeline from constituents’ interests to political influence is not linear or unidirectional (Ganz, 2021). Instead, it is iterative, which requires organizational processes that are sufficiently flexible to empower constituents in dynamic political and social environments.

What process does LUCHA employ to decide on policy priorities?

At its core, LUCHA is a base-building organization. This ethos manifests in the ways that LUCHA members provide input into organizational priorities through multiple channels in a highly iterative fashion. LUCHA has not documented these channels in a single overview document. In Figure 5 below, we attempt to capture the feedback loops, information channels, and decision-making protocols between staff and members used in determining LUCHA’s priorities. The map is based on information gathered through interviews with LUCHA staff and members and a review of LUCHA grey literature.

LUCHA membership terms

- **Member:** A person who regularly pays member dues, collectively called the base or the membership.
- **Member Leader:** A designation by LUCHA organizers for members that exercise considerable leadership among their peers.
- **Volunteer:** A member that takes on additional organizing responsibilities, working with the organizing team.

Figure 5 Process Map of How LUCHA Determines its Policy and Electoral Priorities

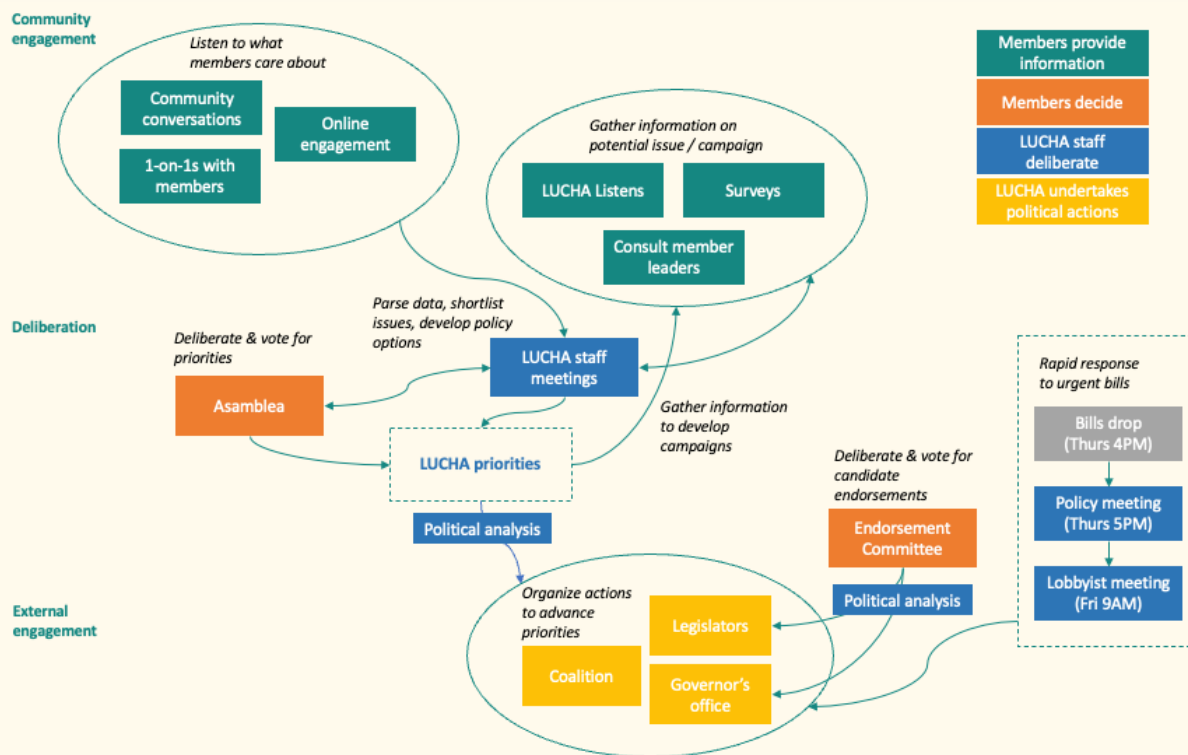


Figure 6 below summarizes the key activities that make up LUCHA’s prioritization process.


Figure 6 Key Steps in LUCHA’s Policy and Electoral Prioritization

Area	Activity	Description
<i>Listen to members throughout the year</i>	Community conversations	LUCHA gathers members of a community to discuss what matters most to them. Participants might focus on place-based or state-wide issues, depending on their priorities. These meetings also serve as recruitment for further 1-on-1 conversations and LUCHA membership.
	1-on-1s with members	LUCHA organizing staff reach out to individual members with whom they have relationships for 1-

Area	Activity	Description
		on-1 meetings regularly. These serve as check-ins to ascertain what's on members' minds.
	Online engagement	LUCHA's digital team and organizing team collaborate to engage members online. This principally takes the form of large-scale online campaigns to solicit member views. These can serve as both information-gathering and base-building tools.
<i>Gather information on specific issue-areas</i>	LUCHA Listens	Community members gather for discussions focused on specific topics, for example 'housing.' LUCHA staff facilitate the meetings, inviting members to deliberate on specific issues and policy questions.
	Consult member leaders	The organizing team occasionally gathers several member leaders and hosts discussions about particular topics. These are important testing grounds for early ideas about potential policy proposals or messaging.
	Surveys	LUCHA makes use of surveys to gather information related to campaigns. LUCHA does not run regular surveys with standardized questions, but instead runs issue-specific surveys on an ad-hoc basis. Like the online engagement mentioned above, these surveys are also used as base-building tools.
<i>Parse data, shortlist issues, develop policy options</i>	LUCHA staff meetings	Themes from these member discussions are distilled in regular staff meetings. LUCHA staff parse the data gathered from members, incorporate political feasibility analyses, and align their

Area	Activity	Description
		priorities. Staff then design campaigns and organize political actions to advance these priority goals.
<i>Members deliberate & vote for candidate endorsements</i>	Endorsement Committee	<p>The Endorsement Committee, comprised entirely of members, interviews prospective political candidates and votes on who LUCHA should endorse.</p> <p>At one point in time, Committee members were voted on by their peers. Now, to become a Committee member requires an application, with staff selecting membership based on regional representation and extent of member engagement with LUCHA's work.</p>
<i>Rapid response to urgent bills</i>	Policy team meets internally and with lobbyists	When bills drop each Thursday at 4PM, the LUCHA policy team reviews them immediately and then determines which require urgent action, bringing these to their meeting with lobbyists the following morning.
<i>Members deliberate & vote for policy priorities</i>	Asamblea¹⁷	LUCHA invites all members to large meetings, Asamblea, to deliberate on the political issues that matter most to them and put them to a vote. These votes will determine the top issue areas for LUCHA to focus on in the near-term. These meetings have not been held at regular intervals, with the most recent in 2022.

¹⁷ LUCHA alternatively calls these meetings Asamblea or Congreso. For the purposes of this report, we use the term Asamblea to refer to either meeting, treating the terms as interchangeable.



How responsive is LUCHA's advocacy approach to the interests and perspectives of its members?

Alex Gomez describes LUCHA's co-governance model as bimodal: on the one hand, shape the policies that are passed and delivered in Arizona, on the other hand, affect *who* is carrying out policy at the state level.¹⁸ This section will examine how effective LUCHA's internal processes are at translating the perspectives of its members into both elements of this strategy.

First, we need an understanding of the policy priorities articulated by LUCHA members. As an organization, LUCHA is rich with data. As we have seen, the organizers, managers and communication team are constantly gathering insights from structured and unstructured meetings with their constituents. This is reflected in the strength of having an in-house data team within a relatively small staffing structure. Assessing the efficacy of LUCHA's internal processes requires a comparison between what members want and where LUCHA places its focus. Firstly, we will look at existing data sources already used by LUCHA to prioritize issues that are highlighted by communities. Secondly, interviews with LUCHA staff and members help to contextualize and highlight the personal stories underpinning these issues.

LUCHA Data Analysis

As we have seen, LUCHA uses two main methods to capture insights from members: surveys and conversations.

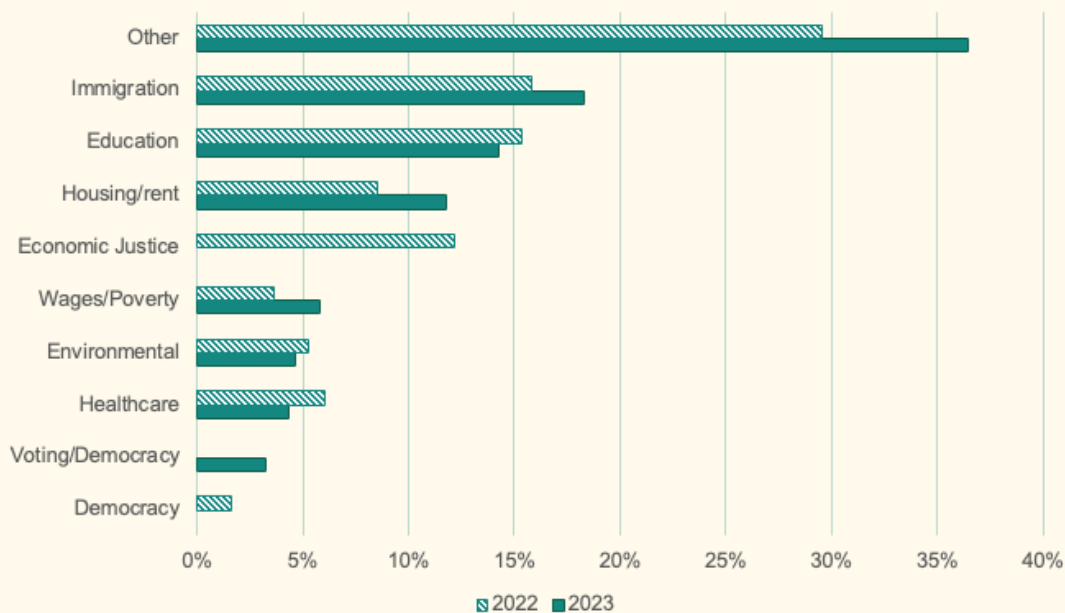
Surveys conducted in 2022 and 2023 reveal what a sample of LUCHA members view as the key issues facing their community (see Figure 7). In both years, Immigration, Education, and Housing¹⁹ were identified as top issues (LUCHA, 2023a). In 2022, Economic Justice was the third most commonly cited issue. The 2023 survey did not include Economic Justice as a category, and, perhaps relatedly, Wages/Poverty

¹⁸ Interview with Alex Gomez, conducted in-person on January 18, 2024.

¹⁹ The category related to Housing was called 'Housing Justice' in 2022 and 'Housing/rent' in 2023

received more responses than the prior year. Year-to-year changes in naming conventions make it harder to draw concrete conclusions about changing interests over time. Further, the fact that “Other” is the modal response in this instance also indicates a nuance of views around policy issues that is not captured by this categorical survey methodology. Nevertheless, the responses give an initial sense of members’ priorities.

Figure 7 Priority Issues 2022 and 2023 LUCHA Surveys, % of respondents²⁰



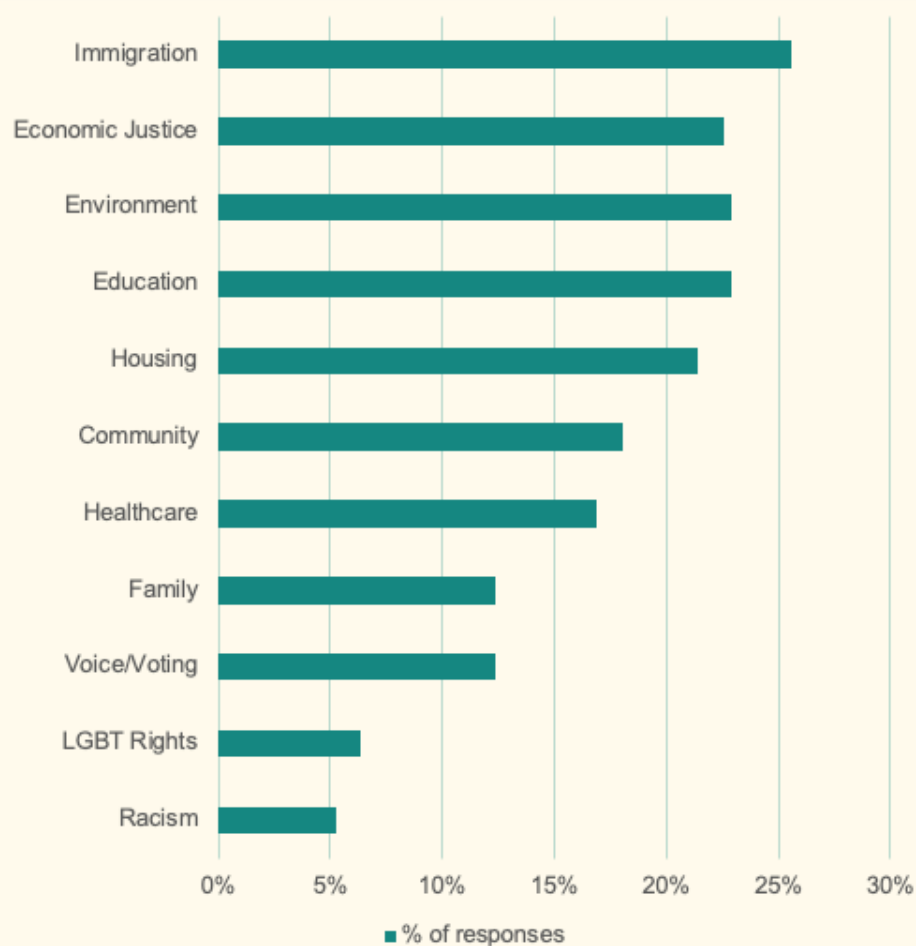
We supplement this quantitative survey data with information from member conversations. All 1-on-1 conversations follow a script; responses are captured and pooled centrally by LUCHA. We analyzed the responses of members to the question: “What are this person’s interests, and what do they care about? (self-interest)”. These


²⁰ Based on a total sample size of 247 in 2022 and 672 in 2023. Not all categories were consistent across the two survey years. For instance, in 2022, members could select ‘Democracy,’ which was changed to ‘Voting/Democracy’ in 2023. ‘Economic Justice’ a commonly selected category in 2022, was not an option in 2023. Finally, this chart combines two terms which the report authors deemed interchangeable: ‘Housing Justice’ in 2022 is here represented as ‘Housing/rent,’ the term used in 2023. The chart excludes two categories (‘Police Brutality’ and ‘Abortion Rights’) which had fewer than 10 responses across the two years.

responses were recorded and then paraphrased by LUCHA organizers, allowing for a degree of interpretation from the interviewers.

Nevertheless, the free text data give rich insight into why these policy issues are significant. For instance, one woman “shared that she had lived in 26 homes before her mother passed 3 years ago. Her family has always struggled with rent control and being taken advantage of by homeowners” (LUCHA, 2024). This moves beyond “housing” as a broad policy issue into specific questions of rent control, landlord-tenant relations and repeated failed interventions. We coded the responses by policy issue and summarized the insights in Figure 8. Issues with fewer than 10 counts have been removed.

Figure 8 Member’s Self-expressed Interests From 1-on-1s, % of responses






Several interesting themes emerge from these data. Firstly, the main priorities of members broadly mirror those expressed in the member surveys, though 1-on-1 conversations display a stronger focus on the environment. Secondly, 60% of 1-on-1 conversations identified *more than one* issue that was important to the member. This speaks to the importance of people-led, rather than issue-led, advocacy and is reflected in recent literature that shows multi-issue campaigning is often more effective than single-issue advocacy. Finally, within broad issues like Economic Justice, the concerns raised by members can often be quite specific. More than a third of members who signaled a concern around Economic Justice were preoccupied specifically with the question of wages. One respondent “currently works at Walmart and his older brother, mom and dad all work multiple minimum wage jobs to survive in this economy”. The next most important issue under Economic Justice was unemployment, particularly among immigrant communities, and the lack of jobs across Arizona. For instance, another respondent reported that “He want more jobs in Douglas because he need[s] to move to Tucson to get a job.” While the best available evidence in economics literature suggests there is no link between higher minimum wage and quantity of jobs, this may not hold true across all cases (Mincer, 1976; Card and Krueger, 1993). This speaks to some of the challenges that may emerge while prioritizing policies across a diverse community base.

Member Interview Data Analysis

We then interviewed members to understand the biggest issues facing their communities in 2024. Across six member interviews we asked, “What are the biggest issues facing LUCHA’s communities right now?” Across our interviews, the key themes that emerged were housing, immigration, the economy, and water.

Housing was most important to several interviewees. One member opened with: “Honestly, the biggest thing right now is homelessness, okay? ... it’s like no offense to California and that but it’s starting to look like Skid Row.”²¹ Another told us, “Estamos

²¹ Interview with Bryan, conducted in-person on January 17, 2024



peleando ahorita para que no le suban a las rentas más. Y que tengan piedad para que no estén tan altas las rentas.”²²

Immigration rights were often a backdrop to the journey into LUCHA for our interviewees. One told us how his cousins “were brought here when they were months old. Their mom applied for citizenship for all of them. And at the end of the day, she was the only one that got her residency. And she kept asking, why was that? Why didn't the rest of my family ended up getting residency? And so they kind of just messed up the paperwork... And so that's kind of where I feel like it just started as well.”²³ These negative experiences with the immigration system were a motivating factor for advocacy for many of the members we spoke with.

But responses were also strongly informed by place. Our interviewees were based across Phoenix and Tucson. Although most interviewees mentioned immigration and housing, residents in Tucson also placed a lot of weight on the importance of water. A major polluting incident in South Tucson had affected the health of many residents in the area and LUCHA launched a campaign in response. For one interviewee, the water campaign was the main reason they got involved in LUCHA: “Yo soy una defensora muy grande del clima y tienen una campaña muy grande del agua que a mí eso es lo que me llamó más la atención.”²⁴ Another interviewee noted that this campaign had helped them with generating interest in LUCHA’s mission: “when you bring up water, especially with people in South Tucson or on their Indian reservations, they really respond.”²⁵ This speaks to the importance of having flexible and responsive policy design processes.

²² Translated by authors: We are fighting right now so that they don't increase our rent even more. And for them to have mercy so that our rents aren't so high. Interview with Cristina, conducted over Zoom on February 19, 2024

²³ Interview with Luis, conducted over Zoom on February 9, 2024.

²⁴ Translation by authors: “I am a passionate advocate for the climate, and they [LUCHA] have a big campaign around water which is what caught my attention most.” Interview with Cristina, conducted over Zoom on February 19, 2024.

²⁵ Interview with David, conducted over Zoom on February 19, 2024



LUCHA's Policy Priorities

We can now turn to the policy issues that are prioritized by LUCHA through its campaigns and advocacy. To do so we will draw on existing LUCHA grey literature and staff interviews.

The People First Economy (PFE) campaign is currently LUCHA's most prominent policy campaign. The PFE campaign has three major priorities: "Paid Family and Medical Leave For All"; "Affordable Housing For All; and Affordable Childcare For All." A pamphlet in the form of a postcard, which shows the Arizona State Capitol against moonlit nightscape and a woman with a megaphone, reads "AZ Celebrates a People First Economy: Thank You for Working With Us on Affordable Housing & Accessible Higher Education Solutions."

In their 2023 'Policy Roadmap' LUCHA describes their "transformative, proactive agenda" focused on four issues (LUCHA, 2023b):

- *Economic equity*: targeting equitable redistribution of tax revenue and more progressive tax rates.²⁶
- *Multi-racial democracy*: ensuring that all residents in Arizona can participate in civic decision-making – from gubernatorial elections to school boards.
- *Freedom to move*: removing barriers that undocumented communities and DACAmented communities from participating in Arizonan society, such as through driver's licenses.²⁷
- *Water*: conserving the water supply in Arizona and ensuring public access to potable water.

²⁶ See Appendix B for a policy primer on fiscal policy in Arizona, including a discussion on how inequities are built into Arizona's tax code.

²⁷ DACAmented refers to individuals who have received protection under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

We can see some differences here between priorities of members expressed in surveys and the overarching missions in LUCHA's strategy. Education features less prominently and tax policy is rarely mentioned by members. But many of these differences are more tactical than substantive. Member interviewees spoke regularly about the need for representation, for getting out the vote, for increasing voice – all of which underpin the mission around a Multi-racial democracy. Economic justice is regularly prioritized by members in interviews and surveys, and LUCHA have identified specific policy tools that could achieve economic justice (e.g. redistributive policies). There is a translation that occurs between the conversations with the base and the policies that LUCHA proposes.

“Wow, out of all of these people that filled up the digital dollars, 50% of them said that they want more money for affordable housing. So that needs to be our number one priority.”

This process of translation becomes clear through our interviews with staff. We can see this in conversations with two different sides of the LUCHA team discussing the same policy design process around housing.


Stephanie Maldonado, who leads the organizing team, explained that a participatory process, called Digital Dollars, asking members to spend a hypothetical billion dollars on their community, was where the challenges around housing first emerged:

“Wow, out of all of these people that filled up the digital dollars, 50% of them said that they want more money for affordable housing. So that needs to be our number one priority.”²⁸

Chris Gilfillan, who leads the policy team, gave a parallel explanation:

“we held our LUCHA Listens where in which we talked to them about how they would spend a billion dollars... what bubbled up in that moment was

²⁸ Interview with Stephanie Maldonado, conducted over Zoom on December 5, 2023.



housing ...And so in 2019, 2020, we started to implement housing justice as something that we were going to advocate for. And it had always been something that we kind of were paying attention to, because historically, the Housing Trust Fund was always kind of like a pretty low hanging fruit for a piece of policy that the Democrats wanted to pass.”²⁹

These explanations show the intersecting processes underway. Both identify the same moment of member input as pivotal to the prioritization of housing by LUCHA. Both used quantitative data and conversations with members to reach this conclusion. But where the organizing team starts with constituents, the policy team concurrently has a policy framework to insert the ideas into. This is no less participatory but helps the LUCHA policy team create a “foundation of where we could help our members.”³⁰ The image of “bubbled up” shines a light on the process: it comes from multiple interactions between members and staff that coalesces into a policy position over time. The role played by the policy team is recognized by LUCHA organizers: “the policy team also does a really great job... of pulling the stories of what people are saying and being able to translate that.”³¹

What gives LUCHA staff the legitimacy to act as these intermediators? Most important is the quality of organizing and connections with the base. But staff members also point out that their lived experience plays a role here too. When discussing housing policy, one staff member notes that her brother needed the money that they were planning to win through the Housing Trust Fund.³² Finally, the Endorsement Committee and Asamblea can, though do not always, act as the final check-and-balance mechanism for members to have their voice heard on a given policy issue.

²⁹ Interview with Chris Gilfillan, conducted over Zoom on February 2, 2024.

³⁰ Interview with Chris Gilfillan, conducted over Zoom on February 2, 2024.

³¹ Interview with Stephanie Maldonado, conducted over Zoom on December 5, 2023.

³² Anonymous extract from interview with staff member, conducted in-person in Spring 2024.



LUCHA's Electoral Priorities

As we have seen, the Endorsement Committee plays an important role in identifying and confirming candidates that will receive LUCHA endorsements. We will examine the political value of LUCHA endorsements in [Section VI](#) (External Analysis). But here it is important to understand how the committee is formed and how LUCHA staff view its role.


One staff member describes the role of the Endorsement Committee as follows: “We’re a membership-led organization, and for us, it’s critical that our members get to decide who we endorse as an organization... our members bring issues like, hey, what would you do if... you were to make it to the office?”³³ Another staff member notes the additional time commitment that is asked of committee members: “we learned that when there’s a lack of buy-in and people don’t feel invested in it and they don’t see themselves to be part of it, it is harder to maintain their energy throughout. So we’ve actually asked them, like, if you really want this, we see you doing it, but it’s also up to you.”³⁴ In an election year, they are expecting the Endorsement Committee to meet once a week.

An important part of the endorsement process comes from the Endorsement Committee survey. This survey is used to test the political stance of potential candidates, but also doubles up as an opportunity to influence candidates’ policy positions in the first place. It therefore serves as a useful guide to the policy issues prioritized by LUCHA: these are the policies that LUCHA are most keen to press their allied politicians to support.

The survey outlines LUCHA’s “four pillars,” which differ from the policy priorities identified in the section above: Economic Justice; Fighting White Supremacy; Democracy; and Mass Liberation. The questions go into more detail: “do you support repealing preemptions on inclusionary zoning laws and rent regulation that keep cities from doing more on affordable housing?” This moves us from broad themes into

³³ Interview with Gina Mendez, conducted in-person on January 18, 2024.

³⁴ Interview with Stephanie Maldonado, conducted over Zoom on December 5, 2023.




detailed policy proposals. The four pillars in 2023 differ from LUCHA's 2023 Policy Roadmap; the specificity of the questions point to the active policy muscle that LUCHA works through the Endorsement Committee.

The Endorsement Survey received 62 responses in 2022. Another line of questioning that is particularly helpful for the purposes of this survey is a final section on co-governance. Respondents select which elements of co-governance they are happy to commit to with LUCHA. All respondents committed to “accept and attend invitations to lobbying meetings.” Eighty-nine percent of respondents committed to “attend a LUCHA Listens event to hear directly from LUCHA members.” Four in five respondents committed to “sponsor a piece of legislation in conjunction with Lucha membership on a Lucha issue (if applicable).” In a free text box, one respondent commented: “I would be ecstatic to accept invitations to LUCHA lobbying meetings.” Another suggested monthly meetings with LUCHA members.

Given the importance of electoral work to LUCHA's co-governance model, the Endorsement Committee and Survey play a pivotal role in shaping 1) who is endorsed and 2) what those endorsed politicians are likely to do if they win. This also means that the Committee is uniquely placed to influence future politicians. Given the positive response rates to the Co-governance commitments above, there is potentially space to extract more expansive commitments from candidates at this stage.

The Endorsement Committee also provides an example of LUCHA staff giving up power to reflect their members' views. One staff member told us, “we don't decide who our endorsements will be, it's for the committee of members who meet, interview, put together a questionnaire, review a questionnaire, interview with a candidate and then vote.”³⁵ Another spoke of how she found that sitting outside the room where members were making decisions was frustrating at first: “I remember the first time we ever had a government meeting, and we had different elected officials come in here, and I'm like, I wanna hear what's going on. I want to hear what... our members are saying. And I'm like, remember... I know I have my own opinion and, you know, I trust our membership.

³⁵ Interview with Abril Gallardo Cervera, conducted in-person on January 17, 2024.



And that's what governance should look like.”³⁶ This quote demonstrates the practice of giving up power to prioritize the views of the membership.

Nevertheless, it is not clear how well known the work of the Endorsement Committee is to members. One more recent member told us “I've heard about it vaguely, but I don't know any details... But I know that they definitely that's one of the ways that they exercise their influence.”³⁷ Further, the existence of the Endorsement Committee was not immediately evident to our research team. It was only when we began formal interviews with staff that we came across the role of the Endorsement Committee in the policy prioritization process.

Analysis of LUCHA responsiveness to members

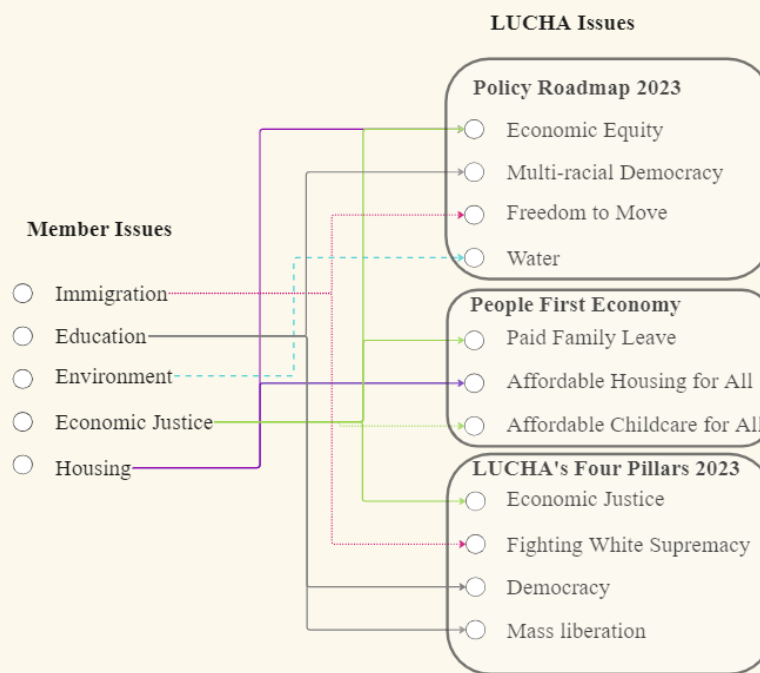
Finding 1: Member’s interests drive LUCHA’s policy priorities.

LUCHA’s policy priorities were all reflected directly in LUCHA-administered member surveys, LUCHA 1-on-1 conversations, and our member interviews. Figure 9 shows how the top issues among members are captured by LUCHA’s priority issue areas in their campaign literature. There is strong evidence of member involvement in every major policy position taken by LUCHA as an organization. The 1-on-1 conversations led by LUCHA organizers form the bedrock of this process, but as we have seen the organization has adopted numerous pathways for members to get involved in shaping LUCHA’s priorities.

³⁶ Interview with Gina Mendez, conducted in-person on January 18, 2024.

³⁷ Interview with David, conducted over Zoom on February 19, 2024


Figure 9 Alignment Between Member and Organizational Priorities



We also found several instances of LUCHA’s ability to adapt policy priorities according to the interests of its members. Alex Gomez described how a series of meetings with members in 2015 led to a change in policy focus from community safety to education: “we shifted completely from having a conversation around community safety and their relationship to police to now engaging in a very sort of like granular level with them around the challenges that they were having with their children's education.”³⁸ One member acknowledged that it was part of a process, saying that you are not “going to get everything you want. Yeah, but if it's a first step, then let's do it.”³⁹ This iterative policy prioritization process is key to sustaining the democratic interactions between members and staff.

³⁸ Interview with Alex Gomez, conducted in-person on January 18, 2024.

³⁹ Interview with Luis, conducted over Zoom on February 9, 2024.



Finding 2: LUCHA's policy priorities are not always straightforward to ascertain.

How LUCHA communicates its priorities varies across different platforms and contexts. For instance, the four priorities in the 2023 Policy Roadmap are different from the four pillars in the Endorsement Committee survey. The most reported issues in member surveys are reflected in the substance of LUCHA's policy priorities but occasionally harder to unpick from their overarching goals. The multiple overlapping connections in Figure 9 illustrate how the links between member issues and LUCHA's priorities are complex and slightly opaque. This is in part a result of the multi-issue nature of LUCHA's advocacy – with multiple strands of campaigning across many intersecting issues at once. It is also inevitable that with so many information sources, language around specific issues is, at times, diluted or framed within a specific, current policy debate. There is an opportunity for LUCHA to make its policy prioritization clear to members through consistent use of language across its literature, endorsement survey, and external communications. The same objective can also be achieved through a more standardized data collection process.


Finding 3: Some of the most democratic aspects of LUCHA's practice are less visible from outside the organization.

Members are not all aware of the full extent of LUCHA's co-governance practices. The Asamblea is a fundamental aspect of the democratic legitimacy of the organization. One staff member described the Asamblea as her “highlight of organizing.”⁴⁰ It brought together LUCHA supporters from across the state in one cafeteria: “everything from a little baby to an elder that was there listening and all walks of life.”⁴¹ And the conversations that they held were a testament to the impact that organizing could have: “So that was my proof. That was my proof.”⁴² Despite this powerful role, the Asamblea could be better enshrined in LUCHA's operational governance structure. One staff member told us “We hired someone and they were like: 'I just don't understand where

⁴⁰ Interview with Faith Ramon, conducted over Zoom on February 22, 2024.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.



this People First Economy campaign came from."⁴³ Members played a considerable role in cocreating one of the most prominent campaigns currently led by LUCHA, but this was not immediately apparent to someone with considerable interest and engagement in the organization.

The Endorsement Committee is a powerful example of co-governance in action but was rarely mentioned by members as an opportunity to have their voices heard or shape policy prioritization. This does not detract from the democratic legitimacy that LUCHA have crafted through their processes, but it speaks to an opportunity to make these processes more explicit and build the external power of their policies and endorsements as a result. LUCHA staff's willingness to give up power to prioritize their members' views through the Endorsement Committee is a testament to their commitment to co-governance and a powerful practice to celebrate internally and externally.

⁴³ Interview with Stephanie Maldonado, conducted over Zoom on December 5, 2023.



VI. External Analysis


The previous section outlined LUCHA's internal processes for gathering information from its members regarding key interests of working-class Arizonans and the policy solutions they wish to see. This section explores LUCHA's role in Arizona's policy ecosystem. To do so, it first explores how LUCHA characterizes its power and the goals of its advocacy. Then, we examine how LUCHA establishes and advocates for policy platforms that reflect member priorities. Finally, we evaluate the efficacy of what we call LUCHA's policy influence toolkit – their strategies for external engagement – and opportunities for further impact.

How does LUCHA define and wield power?

Before analyzing LUCHA's policy influence toolkit, we need an understanding of how civil society actors like LUCHA define and exercise power. We have seen how the organization views its co-governance model through the lens of power generated from its base. This relationship between its base and power is important to obtain a comprehensive and viable model of co-governance.

Defining Power

First, it is important to distinguish between access to power and power itself. Some social movement studies have focused primarily on the mechanisms through which social movements can gain access to policymakers and political leaders (e.g. Hansen, 1991). But Marshall Ganz writes that within democracies, “civil society is a vital source of autonomous power dependent neither on government nor on private wealth – but it is capable of influencing both” (Ganz and Reyes, 2020). LUCHA Executive Director Alex Gomez told us, “for me, it's not about building the Democratic Party. It's about building



our members' capacity to be able to impact anyone governing."⁴⁴ Strategic independence is therefore a key quality of power for civil society.

Secondly, it is helpful to think of power beyond terms of "influence." Han et al. (2021) write that "Power is not only about winning elections or passing policies; it is also about getting a seat at the decision-making table, shaping the terms of the debate, and impacting the underlying narratives that determine the way people interpret and understand political issues." A LUCHA staff member told us that "without the collective narrative we're pushing, then nothing of this work is going to matter."⁴⁵ Driving narratives and shaping the terms of the debate gives a stronger sense of the normative debate that nonprofits can participate in through an independent power base.

Wielding Power

Finally, it is helpful to examine how community-centered nonprofits look to exercise their power. This is often challenging to document because of the opaque nature of the political process and the long lag-times for policy wins to be realized (Cushman and McKenna, 2023). Nevertheless, approaches can be usefully split into two categories: "insider" and "outsider" tactics (Wagner et al, 2023).

"Insider" tactics rely on close relationships with political actors and seek to effect change through persuasion, lobbying and negotiation. "Outsider" tactics focus squarely on shifting public opinion for a policy issue outside formal political institutions, largely through protest, petitions and communication campaigns. An important conflict between the two approaches is that conflict is hidden from the public through "insider" tactics whereas conflict is intentionally made public through an "outsider" approach. This has important implications for maintaining lines of accountability between nonprofits and their base.

Many contemporary community-centered organizations seek to employ both "insider" and "outsider" tactics simultaneously. Sociologist Kenneth T. Andrews (2001) proposes

⁴⁴ Interview with Alex Gomez, LUCHA Executive Director, conducted over Zoom, January 18, 2024.

⁴⁵ Interview with Stephanie Maldonado, conducted over Zoom on December 5, 2023.

a “movement infrastructure model” that draws on a sustainable base of supporters to switch between “mass-based tactics” and “routine negotiation with agency officials.” Han et al. (2021) recognize this blend of organizing and electoral actions exercised by LUCHA among others, noting the increased employment of lobbyists by community-organizing groups.

We can apply this understanding of power to our co-governance model. Co-governance must include a recognition of the power embedded in the interactions between nonprofits and governmental actors. Effective power held by nonprofits is independent, relational, and shapes the debate as well as influences it. How LUCHA can use this co-governance model to achieve policy change is explored further below.

What is LUCHA's policy influence toolkit?

To best analyze LUCHA’s engagement with external actors, we devised the concept of LUCHA’s “policy influence toolkit,” defined as the tools the organization has at its disposal for influencing policymaking. Fundamental to the strength of the toolkit is LUCHA’s longstanding focus on organizing and cultivating deep relations with its base. The following section describes LUCHA’s policy influence toolkit, and the subsequent section will examine the strength of this toolkit.

Figure 10 Policy Influence Toolkit

Tool	Description
Mass mobilization	LUCHA has been able to “activate a subset or constituency in Arizona that hadn’t had political access before, even to members of the legislature themselves.” ⁴⁶ As Alex Gomez mentioned, when asked about their ability to mobilize people and organize, “we are connected to local business owners that are part of our base, we are connected to partners, and staff, volunteers and members in the various counties.” ⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Interview with Andrew Sugrue, conducted in person, January 18, 2024.

⁴⁷ Interview with Alex Gomez, LUCHA Executive Director, conducted over Zoom, February 14, 2024.

Member testimonies	When fighting a bill in the state legislature, legislators will often turn to LUCHA to bring members to committee hearings or floor sessions to tell their personal stories about how that bill would affect them. LUCHA’s relationship with its members allows it to provide impactful testimonies on short notice. Interview findings show that member testimonies made LUCHA members feel empowered. One member shared, “I was able to join LUCHA for a bill drop in Phoenix a couple of weeks ago. That was pretty impactful because I had never been to the Capitol building before.” ⁴⁸
Candidate endorsements	LUCHA-endorsed candidates – chosen through the Endorsement Committee analyzed in Section V – are aligned with LUCHA’s values of social justice and equity and are willing to champion LUCHA legislation while in office. As Gomez emphasized, LUCHA’s goal is to center people and their lived experiences in the policymaking process and to build members’ capacity to influence their elected officials. ⁴⁹
Policy design	LUCHA also provides thought leadership in policy design in areas ranging from immigration, tax, and housing policy. ⁵⁰ This piece of the toolkit can be described as a “support service” for legislators. ⁵¹ The policy analysis support that LUCHA provides is important for legislators’ ability to make the most informed decisions possible, especially given that Democrats have roughly half of the legislative staff that Republicans do. ⁵²
Roadmap Series	LUCHA hosts a Roadmap Series with endorsed candidates to strategize for a shared progressive policy agenda and, more recently, begin preparing for the possibility of Democrats winning either chamber of the legislature or both. LUCHA intentionally provides a space for these kinds of conversations among progressive legislators to ensure stakeholders

⁴⁸ Interview with Kristina, conducted over Zoom, February 19, 2024.

⁴⁹ Interview with Alex Gomez, LUCHA Executive Director, conducted over Zoom, February 14, 2024.

⁵⁰ See Appendix B for policy primers on housing and tax policy in Arizona.

⁵¹ Interview with Chris Gilfillan, conducted over Zoom on February 2, 2024.

⁵² Ibid.

are united around shared priorities. Rep. De Los Santos highlighted the importance of such an initiative, and said, “practicing that governing muscle and getting in that mindset was extremely helpful because no one, I don't know anyone else that's doing it.”⁵³

**Coalition
engagement**

LUCHA is active in and leads progressive coalitions that include several like-minded organizations in Arizona. These are collaborative partnerships rooted in shared values and objectives to achieve more together than alone.

For example, LUCHA is part of Activate48, a progressive coalition of movement-building organizations that also includes Mi Familia Vota, Our Voice Our Vote, and Chispa Arizona. Another example of LUCHA’s coalition work is the PFE. The coalition includes approximately 26 different organizations and, as Alex Gomez put it, serves as the “North Star” for setting policy priorities regarding these three areas.

⁵³ Interview with Rep. Oscar De Los Santos, conducted over Zoom, January 18, 2024.

How strong is LUCHA's policy influence currently?

In examining the strength and efficacy of LUCHA's policy influence toolkit, we identified four key findings, as outlined below.

Finding 1: LUCHA is effective at influencing policy design and implementation in Arizona, largely because of its ability to organize and mobilize Arizonans.

Toolkit components used: mass mobilization

LUCHA is regarded as a central figure in shaping state politics and policies through its adept mobilization of Arizonans around progressive initiatives. Interviewees regularly expressed that LUCHA is a trusted entity they can turn to for advice on a given piece of


Interviewees regularly expressed that LUCHA is a trusted entity they can turn to for advice on a given piece of legislation particularly because they see LUCHA stances as “vetted by the people.”

legislation particularly because they see LUCHA stances as “vetted by the people.”⁵⁴ Policymakers, legislators, and research and advocacy leaders alike repeatedly recognized LUCHA as the organization that successfully fought against SB 1070 and strategically won a historic minimum wage increase for the state.

Such influence was originally built on top of LUCHA's organizing and mobilizing capabilities, ultimate outsider tactics that resulted in a spontaneous movement of people with limited access to political actors successfully influencing policy choices. LUCHA's expansion into a variety of policy issues has not only enhanced its influence but also cemented its role within Arizona's progressive space. Its strategic engagement in the state legislature and governor's office leverages its storied history and expansive capacity, earning recognition from Laura Dent of Activate48, who lauds LUCHA as the most substantial movement group in the state due to its exceptional capacity and political acumen.⁵⁵ This

⁵⁴ Interview with state legislator, conducted over Zoom, Spring 2024.

⁵⁵ Interview with Laura Dent, Coalition Director of Activate48, conducted over Zoom January 17, 2024.



ability to influence policy would not be possible without the organizing and the community leadership development that LUCHA has maintained as the cornerstone of its mission since its founding.

When asked about LUCHA's political power, House Assistant Minority Leader Oscar De Los Santos stated that LUCHA is "one of the most sophisticated advocates in the state of Arizona, period, and for several reasons. One is that they have people, and they can mobilize those people, second is they have money, and they wield it well."⁵⁶ LUCHA's grassroots organizing is recognized by Arizona policy experts as a driving factor behind the state's minimum wage increase. As a Democratic strategist recognized, "when you look at LUCHA's first major victory that I think most folks attribute to them, the minimum wage ballot initiative that was passed in 2016, they were able to go around the legislature and the governor, which was controlled by Republicans and didn't want a minimum wage increase, putting it on the ballot directly."⁵⁷ Similarly, policymakers in the Governor's Office will tend to be predisposed to collaborate with LUCHA rather than face public and loud opposition against them. The Housing Trust Fund win, as explored in more detail in [Appendix C](#), was a testament to this success, where years of advocacy work representing the interests of their base culminated with Governor Hobbs and legislators recognizing that such a historic investment was a way of fulfilling their commitment to LUCHA following its endorsement.


Finding 2: LUCHA's reputation and political network positions them to lead the development of a state-wide progressive policy agenda.

Toolkit components used: candidate endorsements, Roadmap series

Following LUCHA's flagship victories, the organization has grown its base and fundraising capabilities and thus its access to politicians and legislators, reflecting a robust insider tactic of deepening its influence over political actors' platforms. Its power

⁵⁶ Interview with Rep. Oscar De Los Santos, conducted over Zoom, January 18, 2024.

⁵⁷ Interview with Democratic political strategist, conducted over Zoom, Spring 2024.



to endorse candidates has allowed LUCHA to be present in most levels of political influence, ranging from U.S. Congress and the Governor's Office to state-level senators and representatives. In the most recent electoral cycle, LUCHA participated in over 50 electoral races (LUCHA, 2022). As such, while LUCHA's power stems from its base, its ability to endorse candidates has been a strong complementary way for LUCHA to channel such power into a more recurring influential presence in decision-making spaces.


Stakeholders are looking to LUCHA to prepare Democrats and progressive legislators for a possible Democratic trifecta. State Senator Sundareshan noted, "It's really important that everyone doing the advocacy is starting to think strategically and starting to make better assessments of our caucus overall."⁵⁸ This would be especially important in the event of a slim Democratic majority. In this context, Former Democratic Minority Leader Andrés Cano reflected, "I do believe that there will be a whole other level of engagement that's definitely going to be needed."⁵⁹ A common thread among interviewees was the opinion that Democrats and progressives generally are not currently well-equipped to lead a shared state policy agenda in the case of a Democratic trifecta. Laura Dent from Activate48, when asked about progressive's preparedness for a trifecta, answered: "just speaking frankly, no, I don't think we're ready. I think we would be ready if we flipped one chamber because then that would be like, okay, now let's start to practice."⁶⁰ This points to LUCHA's potential enhanced leadership role in the coalition.

In that vein, LUCHA has begun advancing work around unifying progressives in Arizona. Through its Roadmap Series, LUCHA organizes its legislative coalition into a cohesive group that stands for a unified set of issues. As a tool that leverages close relationships to endorsed legislators, the Series is a clear example of LUCHA wielding its power through insider tactics. Held before the start of the legislative period, these deliberations allow LUCHA to deepen its relationship and affinity with endorsed elected officials, who in turn become more attuned with LUCHA's priorities and act in line with their interests in

⁵⁸ Interview with State Senator Priya Sundareshan, conducted over Zoom, February, 12, 2024.

⁵⁹ Interview with Andrés Cano, Former Arizona House Minority Leader, conducted in person, February, 2, 2024.

⁶⁰ Interview with Laura Dent, Coalition Director of Activate48, conducted over Zoom, January 17, 2024.



the legislature. Recently, LUCHA's fight against Republican-led anti-immigration bills illustrated how it coordinates with its legislative coalition. Avalos noted that "with the anti-immigration bills introduced, we made an ask of them, we were like, please go organize, go seek out your contacts, go do what you have to do to help us kill this bill".⁶¹ Thus, the Roadmap Series has helped LUCHA mobilize its endorsed coalition in key instances.

There are two potential obstacles facing LUCHA if it were to pursue this leadership role. On the one hand, its endorsement strategy – including the unorthodox decision to endorse candidates in primary races – could potentially alienate non-endorsed legislators. As one legislator noted, "One, because you consider yourself to be a progressive and it's like, wait, I didn't get the LUCHA stamp of approval... and second, if there's a competitive primary, dollars that are going to your opponent are like a direct hit to you."⁶² On the other hand, LUCHA's reputation as an influential left-leaning organization can be a double-edged sword. LUCHA's support can automatically signal to moderates and conservatives when they should oppose a policy stance. Sugrue highlighted similar reactionary responses from non-LUCHA allies, "We are mindful that sometimes... when LUCHA signals support for us or support for something that we're doing, we know that that might prompt a response or people might say, 'Well, if LUCHA is for this I can't be for this'."⁶³

As LUCHA continues to build power, cement itself as a leader of Arizona's progressive infrastructure, and pass bills through a legislature with razor-thin margins, this finding raises questions about LUCHA's most effective political strategy (see more about this in [Recommendations](#) below).

⁶¹ Interview with Lena Avalos, LUCHA Policy Advisor, conducted over Zoom, March 5, 2024.

⁶² Interview with state legislator, conducted over Zoom, Spring 2024.

⁶³ Interview with Andrew Sugrue, Policy Advisor to Governor Katie Hobbs, conducted in person, January, 18, 2024.

Finding 3: LUCHA's partnerships with "policy shops" bolster its advocacy through rigorous analysis.

Toolkit components used: *policy design, coalition engagement*


LUCHA's ability to influence policy design is strengthened by rigorous policy analysis. While LUCHA has an abundance of expertise in setting policy priorities based on member input, there is an opportunity to formalize practices around the use of external data and research related to many of the social equity issues LUCHA focuses on. Beyond building more robust and evidence-based policy platforms, having systematic access to policy analysis and research can be a key part of power building, Warren noted. "Equipping people with a deeper understanding and the tools to allow them to take action that affects their lives, from a justice perspective, it the basic definition of liberation," she states.⁶⁴ For LUCHA to show up at the negotiating table as best as it can for its members, it should be equipped with the evidence needed to build robust arguments.

"Equipping people with a deeper understanding and the tools to allow them to take action that affects their lives, from a justice perspective, it the basic definition of liberation."

Prop 206 demonstrates how policy analysis expertise and think tank participation can help LUCHA develop more foolproof strategies that result in wins greater than the sum of their parts. Dave Wells, Research Director at the Grand Canyon Institute, discussed the experience of the minimum wage fight: "[LUCHA] were the main group behind the minimum wage increase back in 2016... we did research for free.... we tried to show how it wasn't going to have this dreadful employment impact and that which has been borne out."⁶⁵ This was important because the go-to Republican argument against minimum wage increases is that it will increase unemployment rates because low-wage workers

⁶⁴ Interview with Louisa Warren, CBPP, conducted over Zoom, February 26, 2024.

⁶⁵ Interview with Dave Wells, Research Director at the Grand Canyon Institute, conducted in person, January, 17, 2024.



will be more expensive to hire and therefore employers will hire less (Morgan and Witko, 2021). Wells's research provided evidence that helped counter this argument and bolstered LUCHA's organizing efforts. Wells also shared, "I think the grassroots groups are really important [because they] bring in their own members who can talk about their own... personal stories [and] personal stories combined with numbers are usually helpful."⁶⁶ This shows how through a symbiotic relationship, advocacy groups and think tanks can further both their missions more than if they were operating in siloes.


Another example of a successful partnership with a policy shop is LUCHA's collaboration with the Arizona Center for Economic Progress (ACEP) on the PFE and other areas. Former Executive Director of ACEP JoAnna Mendoza described the partnership as highly complementary and beneficial for both organizations because they played to each other's strengths, with LUCHA's capacities as an organizer and ACEP's expertise in policy analysis. She shared, "What I really like is when we come together and we strategize about a plan, there's different organizations that have different tactics. The AZ center is not going to go to the state capitol and cause a ruckus... But maybe an organization like LUCHA, because that's part of their brand and how they move things forward, will... Because if you only have one strategy... you're missing a whole other demographic of people."⁶⁷ Sugrue's insights complemented this point, which were that LUCHA was better equipped through its partnership with ACEP when lobbying the governor's office because ACEP helped LUCHA "right-size their expectations" regarding the \$150 million funding for the Housing Trust Fund, which ACEP calculated.⁶⁸

Interviews revealed two potential shortcomings in LUCHA's policy design influence strategy. First, there is an opportunity for LUCHA to better set expectations at the outset of its partnerships with policy shops and practice more effective communication throughout. Mendoza stressed the importance of these two elements for a partnership to be successful. She mentioned, "We needed to get information to the grantor with these

⁶⁶ Interview with Dave Wells, Research Director at the Grand Canyon Institute, conducted in person, January, 17, 2024.

⁶⁷ Interview with JoAnna Mendoza, Former Executive Director of Arizona Center for Economic Progress, conducted over Zoom, January 16, 2024.

⁶⁸ Interview with Andrew Sugrue, conducted in person, January 18, 2024.



quarterly reports. And it was really hard to get that from LUCHA and other organizations.” Building cross-organizational relationships takes time but has proven to be a worthwhile investment for LUCHA.

Second, LUCHA-aligned legislators trust LUCHA’s work on bills and are willing to support them but note that the language is more mature in some areas than others. Reflecting on their decision to carry a LUCHA-prepared bill, one legislator shared that “it’s been vetted by LUCHA, and I mean vetted not so much in a policy sense, but more so in a like this is what the people want since it’s been vetted for like popularity with marginalized communities.”⁶⁹ However, the legislator doubted whether they would actually take this bill to the chamber floor for a vote because they lacked confidence in its technical details. The need for vote-ready bills highlights an opportunity to continue building LUCHA’s policy analysis muscle.


Finding 4: LUCHA has limited capacity for proactive policy work because resources are often directed to fighting harmful bills or defending existing wins.

Toolkit components used: member testimonies

LUCHA leadership and staff feel a deep sense of responsibility to its members, and part of that perceived duty is both preventing harmful bills from being passed and, more recently, defending its flagship policy wins. This rapid reaction work, while incredibly valuable, now makes LUCHA incur a higher opportunity cost than before, since it takes away from more proactive policy advocacy now that it has direct access to the Governor’s Office.

Having grown accustomed to fighting bills in a majority conservative political environment since its inception, LUCHA continues to dedicate significant resources to fighting bills that are harmful to their communities, as was recently the case with the

⁶⁹ Interview with state legislator, conducted over Zoom, Spring 2024.



Arizona Border Invasion Act bill, which sought to increase local police officers' ability to detain suspected undocumented immigrants. This bill led to a new fight on LUCHA's front, since it touched on an issue historically essential to LUCHA's ethos. In this sense, Gomez argued that "the recent immigration bill was very jarring for newer members of our team. Because they're so egregious. And they're attacking, you know, piece of who we are. And at the end of the day, we're part of our community."⁷⁰ The bill, which ultimately passed, was vetoed by Governor Hobbs.

Following the Proposition 206 victory in 2016, LUCHA entered a new phase in its evolution as an organization, given the need to protect this achievement. Gomez, noting Republican opposition to this particular policy, remarked: "I knew that they were going to try to dismantle our victory."⁷¹ In response, LUCHA began to build up its in-house policy capacity as well as its relationship with legislators and lobbyists. Creosote Partners, a progressive lobbying firm with presence within the state legislature, has become a key partner to LUCHA in many of its legislative fights. A recent example of an attack on Proposition 206 that required a fulsome LUCHA response was a bill exempting Major League Baseball from Arizona's minimum wage requirements.

This suggests that as LUCHA delivers policy wins, it opens itself up to fighting defense on an increasing number of fronts. LUCHA now holds annual strategic planning sessions to define its priorities and key action plans for the year in question, but predictability becomes challenging because it is not possible to fully foresee the bills that will be introduced in any given legislative session. As a result, trying to balance these different roles leads to LUCHA staff capacity being stretched too thin and inevitably takes away from their work on more proactively crafting policy advocacy strategies and cultivating new relationships that enable such work to succeed. As Avalos acknowledged, "We have big dreams and we want to do... (sic) like really robust research policy papers... But oftentimes we don't have time and capacity to do it."⁷²

⁷⁰ Interview with Alex Gomez, LUCHA Executive Director, conducted over Zoom, February 14, 2024.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Interview with Lena Avalos, LUCHA Policy Advisor, conducted over Zoom, March 5, 2024.

VII. Recommendations


Internal Recommendations: How can LUCHA bolster its member-led approach?

Recommendation 1: Formalize LUCHA policy prioritization processes through Asamblea.

Finding: The Asamblea provides a forum for members to deliberate and vote on LUCHA's policy priorities. However, these meetings do not take place at regular intervals and their role is not widely known by members.

Recommendations:

- Treat Asamblea as Annual General Meetings where members vote on policy priorities for the year ahead. This would not require a radical transformation of these meetings, but rather a standardization of their frequency and scope.
- Communicate outcomes from each Asamblea to members so everyone is made aware of what was voted on and how LUCHA will carry member decisions forward.
- Alternatively, use Asambleas as vision-making fora where members set the direction of travel for LUCHA's priorities but not specific policies. In this case, LUCHA may seek to formalize the ways it incorporates member deliberation into policy discussions, perhaps through the establishment of a Policy Committee. This committee, analogous to the Endorsement Committee, could be comprised of members, tasked with deliberating policy options and reporting back to the wider membership. This might entail more process management, however, for which LUCHA may require additional capacity.




Recommendation 2: Formalizing LUCHA electoral decisions through the endorsement committee.

Finding: The Endorsement Committee is one of the most powerful tools for LUCHA members to shape the political landscape in Arizona, but its delegates are no longer elected, and its processes are not always clearly communicated to members.

Recommendations:

- Regularly communicate to members the activities of the Endorsement Committee. This could take the form of a section on LUCHA's website which details its role and current membership. It could also include a blog or updates written by delegates that go out in LUCHA's communications with members. One option would be to send the minutes of the Endorsement Committee meetings to all members so they can understand how the committee comes about reaching its decisions. Additionally, communicating to external stakeholders that endorsements come directly from members might further enhance the perceived value of a LUCHA endorsement.
- Shift from a staff-led appointments process to a mixed model where two-thirds of the Endorsement Committee delegates continue to be appointed through an application process tied to the applicant's leadership as a member and the final third are appointed at an annual election that takes place at the Asamblea. As noted in our Cocreation Session with LUCHA staff, it is also important that Committee delegates continue to represent the Arizona regions that make up LUCHA's constituency, and there is a clear through-line between LUCHA's leadership model for members and the Endorsement Committee.
- Introduce fixed terms for Endorsement Committee delegates to ensure that there are regular opportunities for other members to become involved.




Recommendation 3: Systematizing data collection processes to maximize insights.

Finding: Lack of consistency in data collection is limiting its potential impact. Member surveys are a crucial part of ongoing engagement with members and the insights database generated is an increasingly powerful tool.

Recommendations:

- Standardize the surveys sent out to members to create a longitudinal dataset that permits the team to follow trends in member experience over time. This will help inform language used in campaigns and direct attention to particularly pressing issues.
- Create a single pulse survey that is sent to members once every six months. The survey would include 7-8 questions that are consistent each time, with an additional 2-3 questions allocated to time-sensitive issues. This regularity of survey collection would help reduce survey fatigue of members and maximize response rates. It would also give the policy team a regular temperature check of the experiences of the base.
- Delineate between information-gathering and base-building surveys. In our Cocreation Session with LUCHA staff we learned that surveys are also seen as an important base-building tactic – allowing the organization to engage with constituents on an issue-by-issue basis and potentially expand their networks as a result. Both tactics merit a close working relationship between the Data team and Policy team to ensure the resulting insights are as useful as possible to all parts of the organization.



External Recommendations: How can LUCHA strengthen its policy influence toolkit?

Recommendation 4: Streamline efforts for proactive advocacy and policy planning.

Finding: LUCHA has limited capacity for proactive policy work because resources are often directed to fighting harmful bills or defending existing wins.

Recommendations:

- Systematize bill tracking through Creosote Partners: This could happen through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that require Creosote to weekly or biweekly send a report of bills introduced in the state legislature plus an assessment of bills' likelihood of reaching the floor and the number of votes it may have.
- Condition candidate endorsements: As part of its endorsement requirements, LUCHA could require legislators have a member of their staff track bills periodically and report periodically to LUCHA, providing an additional set of eyes in the state legislature.

By freeing up such capacity, LUCHA staff could more proactively work on crafting policy options on their own or with policy partners as part of its advocacy strategy. Doing so would allow LUCHA staff to strengthen their policy analysis and research skills and take on a more leading role in policy issues with legislators and policymakers. Implementing these actions would not entail that LUCHA staff stop working within the state legislature, but rather that it would more proactively work with its partners within that space to ensure LUCHA staff capabilities are used more effectively in mobilizing member testimonies and directly lobbying with legislators themselves and the Governor's team.


Recommendation 5: Strengthen policy analysis capabilities.

Finding: LUCHA's policy fights and advocacy work have been strengthened and complemented by rigorous policy analysis.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen and formalize partnerships with policy shops. We think the most immediate way LUCHA can systematically incorporate policy research into their work is to lean on policy research organizations that are already doing this work in Arizona. Partnerships with the ACEP and the Grand Canyon Institute have existed in the past, but they have not been formalized in a way that provides LUCHA with the assurance that rigorous policy analysis will be at their disposal as needed. This formalization could involve leaning on policy shops for ad-hoc data requests for both lobbying efforts and for informing the LUCHA membership base. It could also draw inspiration from the CBPP model, in which policy shops play a support role in providing policy analysis capacity and financial resources based on the needs of their advocacy partners.⁷³
- Establish a fellowship program. Another mechanism through which LUCHA can tap into policy analysis expertise is to leverage graduate students from Arizona State University. LUCHA's policy team can establish a fellowship program to bring in-house a graduate public policy student from the Watts College that is seeking grassroots advocacy experience and can provide the necessary policy analysis skills such as the ability to analyze raw quantitative data and write technical policy briefs and reports. We provide a draft fellowship role description in [Appendix D](#) for LUCHA to customize as they see fit.
- Invest in policy analysis skills of current staff through “sprint” and “marathon” teams. Louisa Warren, whose expertise is at the intersection of policy and advocacy in the nation's leading anti-poverty think tank said, “If I had my ideal budget for staffing, I would have a sprint team and I would have the marathon

⁷³ Interview with Louisa Warren, CBPP, conducted over Zoom, February 26, 2024.



team and they would be two different... competencies entirely.”⁷⁴ LUCHA can follow this model by delineating between a “sprint” policy team and “marathon” policy team. The “sprint” team would continue doing what LUCHA’s current policy team does (e.g., rapid response to bills, testifying, etc) and a “marathon” team that focuses on developing long-term policy priorities. The core part of this “marathon” team would be quantitative policy analysis skills that can collaborate with other researchers to ensure that LUCHA’s policy agenda is evidence-based.

Cross-Cutting Recommendations: How can LUCHA expand its role in advancing co-governance in Arizona?

Recommendation 6: Increase staffing capacity to deliver on emerging co-governance opportunities.

Finding: To fulfill its potential to advance co-governance models and progressive causes in the state, LUCHA needs more staffing capacity.

Recommendation:

- Expand LUCHA staff to take on (1) growing the membership base with ever-deeper engagement and empowerment; (2) advancing proactive policy initiatives; and (3) leading novel co-governance models. Recommendations 1-6 require additional staff capacity to implement effectively, on top of the already growing body of work that LUCHA takes on as its base and advocacy agenda grow.


⁷⁴ Interview with Louisa Warren, CBPP, conducted over Zoom, February 26, 2024.

Recommendation 7: Position LUCHA to lead a unified progressive agenda.

Finding: Democrats lack a shared state policy agenda in the case of a Democratic trifecta. LUCHA's reputation, expertise, and close relationships with policymakers and legislators position them to lead the development of a unified progressive agenda.

Recommendations:

- Complement Roadmap Series with recurring issue-based workshops with a wider set of legislators (and members), focused on a forward-looking progressive agenda. Hosting convenings based on specific issues may enable LUCHA to broaden the support they could garner for some of their policy priorities such as affordable housing, since it would be more plausible to find common ground on an issue considered critical to the state than on a broader, collective set of issues.
- Develop more robust and public-facing policy positions with progressive partners. This could be done in white papers or policy briefs published on the LUCHA website. These publications would explain the urgency of a given issue in Arizona, state LUCHA's stance, and detail LUCHA's proposed policy response or solution. The goal of these papers would be to shape the agenda around progressive issues and spark potential allies to work with LUCHA.
- Diversify relationships within Governor's Office to strengthen LUCHA's positioning within the policymaking space. Currently, LUCHA has key allies in the Governor's Office within the housing and social policy spaces but less so with more business-oriented policy advisors. Developing relationships with advisors across a wider range of policy areas better positions LUCHA to deliver on its growing policy platform.
- Spearhead the creation of a Progressive Caucus: Given LUCHA's robust relationship with endorsed candidates and widespread presence in the legislature, the organization could propose and lead the creation of a legislative Progressive Caucus to institutionalize a coalition of progressive legislators that have well-defined, shared positions on LUCHA priority areas.



Recommendation 8: Articulate a long-term co-governance vision.

Finding: LUCHA has put co-governance into practice but has yet to define a long-term vision for its model.

Recommendation:

- Develop a vision of co-governance for a 5-, 10-, and 20-year time horizon. It should do so in direct consultation with its members, potentially at the next Asamblea. This vision should include what role LUCHA members and Arizona constituents more broadly play in governing the state. It could also explore what institutional arrangements (e.g. Citizens' Assemblies, coalition organizing) might best serve these goals. Doing so could help direct LUCHA's work over the coming years, galvanize other progressive actors in the state, and inspire like-minded efforts across the country. LUCHA has the potential to be a national thought-leader in this emerging field.



VIII. Conclusion


Ever since its inception over a decade ago, LUCHA has played a critical role in protecting the rights of marginalized groups and advancing progressive policies in Arizona. In the current political environment that has seen the state turn purple – coupled with debates over crucial policy issues such as K-12 education, immigration, and affordable housing – LUCHA is at an inflection point. Having cut its teeth advocating in opposition to regressive policies, LUCHA is poised to tangibly influence policy outcomes by mobilizing its members and exercising its power within the halls of the state capitol.

This report explored how LUCHA operates, examining its strategy, organizational processes, and the effectiveness of its co-governance model in amplifying the voices of its members and influencing policy and electoral outcomes in Arizona. The purpose has been to investigate how LUCHA might bolster its member-led approach and strengthen its policy influence toolkit.

LUCHA's internal processes reflect a deeply democratic and iterative operation where members' interests and ideas shape the organization's priorities. Further formalizing and systematizing some of these processes could enable LUCHA to create more effective and timely feedback loops between their work and their base.

In parallel, LUCHA's has successfully leveraged its people power to get like-minded progressive candidates elected and cultivate strategic relationships within the executive branch. Building on such efforts, LUCHA could bolster its influence with external stakeholders by strengthening its policy research and analytical capacity and more proactively formulating policies that center members' priorities.

As it looks towards the future, LUCHA is uniquely positioned to become a unifying force within Arizona's progressive infrastructure. By convening policymakers and drawing on its base, LUCHA can lead the progressive coalition in crafting a shared policy platform and preparing actors for a possible Democratic trifecta.



LUCHA stands as a testament to the power of grassroots organizing. As Arizona continues to experience sweeping political change, LUCHA's co-governance model can act as a catalyst for progressive change. We hope this project can help the organization in the fight for a more just and equitable Arizona.

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Appendix A

List of Interviews for Internal Analysis

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization	Date of interview
Camille	-	LUCHA member (volunteer)	LUCHA	February 26, 2024
Cristina	-	LUCHA member (volunteer)	LUCHA	February 19, 2024
Kristina	-	LUCHA member (volunteer)	LUCHA	February 19, 2024
David	-	LUCHA member (volunteer)	LUCHA	February 19, 2024
Bryan	-	LUCHA member	LUCHA	January 17, 2024
Luis	-	LUCHA member	LUCHA	February 9, 2024
Lena	Avalos	Senior Policy Advisor	LUCHA	January 19, 2024
Chris	Gilfillan	Political Director	LUCHA	February 2, 2024
Stephanie	Maldonado	Membership Organizer	LUCHA	December 5, 2023
Gina	Mendez	Civic Engagement Organizer	LUCHA	January 18, 2024
Abril	Gallardo Cervera	Communications Director	LUCHA	January 17, 2024
Alex	Gomez	Executive Director	LUCHA	January 18, 2024
Faith	Ramon	Community Organizer	LUCHA	February 22, 2024

List of Interviews for External Analysis

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization	Date of interview
JoAnna	Mendoza	Former Executive Director	Arizona Center for Economic Progress	January 16, 2024
Laura	Dent	Coalition Director	Activate48	January 17, 2024
Dave	Wells	Research Director	Grand Canyon Institute	January 17, 2024
Alison	Cook	Research Director	Morrison Institute for Public Policy	January 17, 2024
Andrew	Sugrue	Policy Advisor to Governor Katie Hobbs	Office of the Governor	January 18, 2024
Oscar	De Los Santos	State Representative for District 11 and Assistant Democratic Leader	Arizona House of Representatives	January 18, 2024
Ian	O'Grady	Policy Advisor to Governor Katie Hobbs	Office of the Governor	January 19, 2024
Andrés	Cano	Former Representative for District 4 and House Minority Leader	Arizona House of Representatives	February 2, 2024
Ron	Ober	Principal	Policy Development Group Inc	February 6, 2024
Roy	Herrera	Founding Partner	Herrera Arellano LLP	February 6, 2024

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization	Date of interview
Priya	Sundareshan	State Senator, District 18	Arizona Senate	February 12, 2024
Alex	Gomez	Executive Director	LUCHA/ACE	February 14, 2024
Louisa	Warren	Senior Director for Advocacy and Campaigns	Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	February 26, 2024
Lena	Avalos	Senior Policy Advisor	LUCHA/ACE	March 5, 2024

Appendix B

Policy Primers: Housing and Fiscal Policy in Arizona


Arizona's Tax System is Regressive, Limits Revenues, and Perpetuates Inequities

Equitable tax policies are central to ensuring economic wellbeing for everyone because they cut through issues such as education, health, the social safety net, and other pillars of social justice and reducing income and racial disparities. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy argues in a 2021 report about taxes and racial equity that, “Taxing the rich at higher rates is arguably the most important thing state and local governments can do to improve racial equity in their tax codes both because of the direct effect of the tax on narrowing income divides and because of the public investments made possible by the revenue that such a reform can raise” (Davis and Wiehe, 2021). It is no surprise that revenue raising is one of LUCHA’s focus areas.

A key component of LUCHA’s proactive agenda is Economic Equity, which houses the PFE campaign. In LUCHA’s own words, the PFE “is passing community created public policy where tax dollars are going where communities need them the most and corporations and the wealthy are paying their fair share” (LUCHA, 2023b). This runs counter to recent Arizona tax policy.

Following the enactment of the state’s flat tax, Arizona went from having the 27th to the 13th most regressive tax codes in the country (ITEP, 2024). On its face, this may seem like an equal policy, but the distributional impacts say otherwise. The flat tax primarily benefitted the wealthiest households in Arizona, with the top 1% receiving an average tax cut of \$15,853 and the bottom 20% receiving an average tax cut of just \$4 (ACEP, 2022). This tax policy only exacerbates historical inequities baked into our federal and state tax codes.

This recent policy is also not what Arizonans wanted. In 2020, voters passed Proposition 208, Invest in Education, which would have added a 3.5% surcharge on




taxable income greater than \$250,000 for single filers and \$500,000 for married couples. The additional revenue (\$827 million) would have provided much-needed investment in K-12 public education (ACEP, 2024). However, this was challenged in the courts before it could be implemented, and the following year legislators adopted the flat income tax structure. This reduced state revenues by more than \$2.8 billion per year (ACEP, 2024). This was an especially bad policy because tax cuts are difficult to reverse and have longer-term, more significant impacts than a one-time budget cut or increase.

Affordable Housing Has Become One of the Most Pressing Issues in the State

Arizona has a severe housing shortage that is causing home prices and rents to skyrocket. Between August 2017 and August 2023, rents increased by 53% and the average monthly cost of homeownership increased by 73%, across the state, with even higher increases in the Phoenix area (Horowitz and Kansal, 2023). The Arizona Department of Housing estimates that the state is short 270,000 homes. However, it is difficult to obtain a clear understanding of the supply shortage because housing supply data is lacking (e.g., there is no reporting mechanism for how many homes are permitted compares to how many are denied).

The state is making efforts to address this issue, including establishing the Arizona Housing Supply Committee, which published a report in 2022. Key findings from this report include:

1. Zoning is the primary barrier to addressing the housing shortage. Zoning reform is a bipartisan issue.
2. It takes too long to build houses in Arizona which limits the supply of housing and exacerbates the affordability issue.
3. Starter homes both for sale and for rent have been regulated out of the state, meaning it has become more difficult to build a basic home or apartment.

- 
4. The most vulnerable populations are running out of housing options. For example, seniors are the fastest growing homeless population, and single room occupancies have been zoned out of cities.
 5. “NIMBYism” has become more organized and sophisticated and is dramatically impacting the housing supply (see more on this below)


(Housing Supply Study Committee, 2022)

Other evidence shows that other driving factors of the housing crisis in Arizona include (1) the downturn in the housing market during the Great Recession, (2) the economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, (3) low real wage growth, (4) high rates of investor purchases of homes, lowering supply for families, and (5) zoning policies (FSL, 2023).

These root causes have disproportionately worsened the housing issue for low-income households. Arizona is one of the top three states where low-income renters face the greatest challenges finding affordable housing. Specifically, 76% of low-income renters are cost burdened in Arizona (NLIHC, 2022). The Morrison Institute at Arizona State University conducted a 2022 housing study had similar findings, specifically that the scarcity of housing poses a severe challenge for people earning 0-30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), with only 26 rental options available for every 100 extremely low-income households (Tziganuk et. al, 2022).


This Morrison Institute study also found that approximately half of Arizona's land is designated for single-family use, and this is associated with negative economic outcomes. Communities embracing multifamily and higher-density housing experience heightened economic growth and vibrancy, drawing in and sustaining businesses, job opportunities, and amenities. On a national scale, research revealed that constraints and regulations on housing led to a 36% reduction in overall economic growth between 1964 and 2009.

So why is it so difficult to build housing in Arizona? Developers noted three main barriers: zoning, community pushback, and financing.

- 
1. Zoning: Most AZ land is not zoned for multi family use, so developers often have to go through the rezoning process which can take several months and even up to two years. Funding from the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) must be used within 2 years of receipt. Development standards such as parking and aesthetics can also be barriers.
 2. Community pushback (NIMBYism): Pushback typically arises during a rezoning or variance process, and concerns are over a variety of factors, such as decreased housing values, increased density, crime, traffic, and who is living in the housing. Developers are sometimes successful in building by engaging community leadership early in the design process and combating negative stereotypes about folks who live in affordable housing.
 3. Financing: Building costs have skyrocketed in recent years due to inflation and supply chain issues. Construction costs in particular can increase unexpectedly. Developers noted that finding ways to fund these gaps was perhaps the most common barrier to building, especially because federal LIHTCs are limited.


So what can be done? The literature shows that solutions fall into three main categories.

1. Zoning: Eliminating single family zoning and allowing for inclusionary zoning can significantly increase the diversity of housing. Inclusionary zoning in particular can increase the supply of lower-cost housing by requiring developers to designate a certain percentage of new projects as affordable housing. Another way policymakers can promote the diversification of housing is by allowing by-right development, which removes the need for additional approvals to build.
2. Capacity and political will: Developers recognize the importance of gaining buy-in from community members when it comes to new developments, which is why building relationships with local governments and community-based organizations is a key part of the solution. This could include increased education on tools such as community land trusts to build the political will necessary for new developments.

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3. Funding: There are several mechanisms through which funding could be increased. The first is through an expansion of the LIHTC program, which lies with Congress and outside of Arizona's direct control. In 2020, Arizona created its own state-level LIHTC through S.B. 1124, which appropriated \$4 million over four years (NLIHC, 2021). Other mechanisms include general obligation bonds, impact fee waivers, and property tax abatement or exemptions.

Senate Bill 1117, which would have reduced city control over housing projects and sped up building by eliminating a lengthy review process, was a recent attempt to address the housing crisis that failed last year (Sievers, 2023). This bill was a direct response to and a result of the Housing Supply Study Committee mentioned above. There were mixed views on the legislation. Phoenix Democrat Raquel Teran opposed the bill because it did not guarantee affordable housing for low-income households. She said, "There's no assurance that these new units that are built will be affordable. We're paving the way for more luxury" (Sievers, 2023). Meanwhile Tempe Mayor Corey Woods, who was a member of the study committee, was disappointed that the bill did not include the elimination of the state law that bans inclusionary zoning (inclusionary zoning requires a share of new housing to be affordable housing, and Arizona is one of 7 states that bans this) nor the elimination of the state ban on rental control.

In the near term, it will be critical to monitor and evaluate the considerable increased investment in the Housing Trust Fund to understand the impact it has on addressing this pressing issue.



Partnerships Between Grassroots Advocacy and Policy Research

Research Shows that Partnerships Between Grassroots and Policy Organizations Can Help Improve the Efficacy of Both

Undoubtedly LUCHA is foundational to the progressive infrastructure in Arizona. In addition, it is important to recognize that think tanks or “policy shops” can and should also be major players in social and economic justice movements in the state.

Collaboration between grassroots mobilizing and well-researched policy analyses can lead to significant benefits. Too often both entities operate in siloes despite alignment in their missions. The main benefit for think tanks is that it allows them to ground their research in real-life experiences of people who would ultimately be impacted by the policy changes they recommend. It bolsters their analytic findings with anecdotal evidence that can make their work more influential. The main benefits for grassroots advocacy organizations such as LUCHA is that they can access rigorous policy research and data analysis which is likely to strengthen their advocacy strategy with policymakers and legislators. Further, access to high-quality information can empower a membership base and better equip them to navigate complex policy landscapes.

Research from On Think Tanks finds that, “Partnerships between think tanks and social movements might, then, appear a marriage made in heaven, given that the latter are representative of subsets of the public (Datta and Baertl, 2020). Think tanks get to understand and engage with the lived experiences of the public and increase their impact, while social movements benefit from specialist knowledge and access to formal policy processes.” Their research suggests that grassroots advocates choose to partner with think tanks because they want to: “acquire knowledge and insight; engage government officials; translate their demands into a language understood by policy elites; be seen as credible; and to connect with organizations with shared objectives and values.” Overall, leveraging policy analysis expertise could allow social movements to articulate a social demand into concrete political and policy actions.

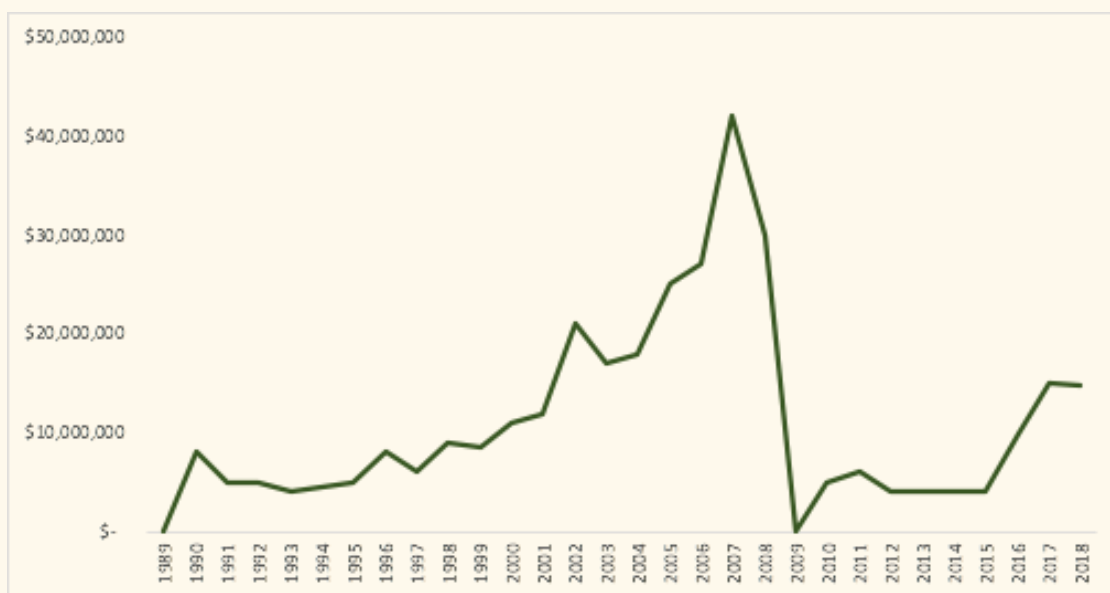
Appendix C

Internal and External in Action: The Housing Trust Fund


The Housing Trust Fund case is worth focusing on in-depth because it represents LUCHA's biggest policy win since the 2020 presidential election. In order to best illustrate LUCHA's internal and external processes in practice, it is crucial to look back at how they worked on the issue with their members and were then able to collaborate with legislators and the Governor's office to secure that win.

As mentioned previously, the state legislature passed a budget for FY2024 that included \$150 million for the Housing Trust Fund, an unprecedented investment that will primarily be allocated to helping people struggling to pay rent, incentivize homeownership, and improve care for homeless people throughout the state. This is a particularly impressive achievement given that the maximum investment in the HTF in its more than 30-year history had been \$60 million in FY2023, and much lower in most of its existence (see Figure 11).

Figure 11 Arizona Housing Trust Fund Revenues



Source: Arizona Department of Housing (2019)



When asked about where this fight started, Senior Policy Advisor Lena Avalos mentioned how “the policy solution in itself was very much informed by both the listening sessions and then by actual policy decisions that were made, which was to defund the Housing Trust Fund.”⁷⁵ LUCHA hosted listening sessions and put out surveys with members to prioritize policy issues in their fights, going as far back as 2018. In those exercises, housing emerged as a top-of-mind issue for LUCHA members.


In order to organize people around the issue, LUCHA staff then “walked people through the history of housing policy in Arizona. We knew people couldn't afford rent, like it was skyrocketing, but how do we actually put it into perspective of like, X amount of people are severely burdened by housing by the by rising rent costs, like also to know that you're not alone. This is a structural large issue. Therefore, we need large, massive engagement from community members.”⁷⁶ In that sense, LUCHA was able to gather critical feedback from its member base on an issue that was urgent statewide and combine a pressing policy issue with their members' concerns.

As for the actual policymaking process, LUCHA ably relied on a combination of partnerships and lobbying in the state legislature. Avalos noted that the actual \$150 million figure came from the Arizona Center for Economic Progress, a local think tank, which had calculated the figure based on making up for years of Housing Trust Fund defunding and the current housing infrastructure deficit in the state. Sugrue, now an advisor to Gov. Hobbs, worked at the Arizona Center for Economic Progress prior to joining the Governor's team. This partnership between LUCHA and ACEP – stemming from close working relationships between Avalos and Sugrue – allowed LUCHA to equip its broader policy fight for affordable housing with figures and data as it geared for a specific ask in the upcoming budget.

Avalos also highlighted how by 2022, housing had become a key issue within the Democratic Caucus. In November of 2022, together with ACE, LUCHA held a lawmaker

⁷⁵ Interview with Lena Avalos, LUCHA Policy Advisor, conducted over Zoom, March 5, 2024.

⁷⁶ Ibid.



housing policy information session – similar to its Roadmap Series – to explain what they understood as progressive housing policy and what that should look like in the upcoming budget year, setting the stage for the discussions that would be held shortly thereafter.⁷⁷

In that sense, Sugrue elevated LUCHA's role in securing the investment. "When you look at this past budget, for example, and you see the massive housing investment that they were able to achieve. I think a lot of that is attributable to them in the sense that they were able to raise the salience of that issue with the members that wanted that."⁷⁸ In that vein, he described that LUCHA were consistently holding strategic meetings with LUCHA-aligned legislators and the broader Democratic caucus to make the \$150 million a top priority.

There are two caveats that must be highlighted in the context of the Housing Trust Fund win. First, it occurred in a fiscal year where the state of Arizona had a significant budget surplus. On this note, discussing how the funds were allocated, a Democratic legislator noted that "there was a \$2 billion surplus and we knew that the money was going to be divided in some way, shape or form that Democrats and Republicans would have a pie. And when Democrats got their pot, it was like pretty easy to rally around as a caucus. The things that we want to spend the money on, education and housing, that is where the vast majority of our money went".⁷⁹ Regarding the specific \$150 million ask, he argued that "it was not a particularly difficult negotiation inside the Caucus."⁸⁰ Nevertheless, even with billions in surplus, the consistent advocacy for affordable housing and pressure by LUCHA were instrumental in both the Governor's team and legislators agreeing to allocate the \$150 million in the first place. Without such pressure, the investment could have potentially been lower, perhaps similar to the \$60 million allocated the year prior.


Nevertheless, while LUCHA fought long and hard to secure a historic investment for affordable housing in Arizona, it should not yet conclude they have a playbook that can

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Interview with Andrew Sugrue, conducted in person, January 18, 2024.

⁷⁹ Interview with state legislator, conducted over Zoom, Spring 2024.

⁸⁰ Interview with Rep. Oscar De Los Santos, conducted over Zoom, January 18, 2024.



be replicated step-by-step in the future, as more challenging contexts will require deeper and longer-term engagement with policymakers and legislators.

The second caveat is that the \$150 million was a one-off investment, and the fight to restore the permanent funding of the Housing Trust Fund continues. At one point, the HTF had a permanent revenue stream in the form of 55% of unclaimed property collections, which reached as much as \$40 million in 2007 (Arizona Department of Housing, 2020), but this was redirected towards general use during the Great Recession following waning tax revenues. Thus, LUCHA will potentially need to adopt new strategies to build on its HTF win and ensure sustainable investments for affordable housing in Arizona.



Appendix D

Example of Fellowship Role Description

Position Title: Policy Analysis Fellow, Arizona Center for Empowerment (ACE)/LUCHA (Living United for Change in Arizona)

Reports to: Lena Avalos and Chris Gilfillan

Job status: Full-time or part-time


Location: Phoenix, Arizona

About⁸¹: Arizona Center for Empowerment (ACE), is a community-led and driven organization committed to raising new leadership in Arizona through confronting the most pressing needs of its often-under-served communities. Its sister organization, Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), is an organization led by changemakers fighting for social, racial, and economic transformation.

At ACE, we seek to create a more inclusive and just standard of equality in the state of Arizona through civic engagement and strategic efforts regarding issues such as immigration, democracy and voting rights, living wages, and education. By increasing opportunities for education, leadership development, technical assistance and training, ACE supports the work of community organizations and leaders who are transforming their communities to create a more sustainable future for all Arizona families.

At ACE, we organize low- and moderate-income and minority families to take action on the issues most important to them and advance the cause of social and economic justice for all.

⁸¹ This "About" section was copied from currently-posted positions on LUCHA/ACE's website. The paragraphs that are specific to ACE will need to be adapted to the LUCHA context.




Why you'll love this job: Policy research and advocacy go hand-in-hand. This fellowship offers an exciting opportunity to work closely with our organization to conduct in-depth policy analysis on issues central to ACE/LUCHA's mission and the priorities of its members. The policy analysis you conduct will allow us to set a robust policy agenda that is supported by reliable external evidence. This role will elevate critical evidence-based research for Arizona's underserved communities and will allow you to contribute to LUCHA's next historic policy win. Your work will inform key state policy debates during a pivotal time for Arizona.

What you'll do:

- Conduct comprehensive policy analysis on issues relevant to LUCHA's advocacy priorities, including economic security, immigration, housing, education, health care, and criminal justice. This will involve analyzing data using Excel.
- Collaborate with LUCHA community organizers to develop member-driven policy proposals.
- Help produce high-quality policy documents, reports, and briefs that effectively communicate research findings to diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, community members, and advocacy partners.
- Track and evaluate pending legislative proposals and policy options pertaining to LUCHA's priority areas.
- Provide rapid-response analyses to external legislative proposals.
- Provide support for coalition-building efforts, including attending meetings, coordinating with partner organizations, and representing LUCHA in collaborative initiatives.

To succeed in this role, you'll need:

- Enrollment in a graduate-level program at Arizona State University's Watts College (Master's or PhD), with a focus on public policy, public administration, or a related field.

- 
- Demonstrated commitment to social equity, racial justice, and community empowerment.
 - Strong analytical skills and experience with qualitative and quantitative research methods.
 - Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to translate complex policy concepts into accessible language for diverse audiences.
 - Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced, dynamic environment.
 - Commitment to accuracy, even in a fast-paced environment.

Your earnings and other perks:

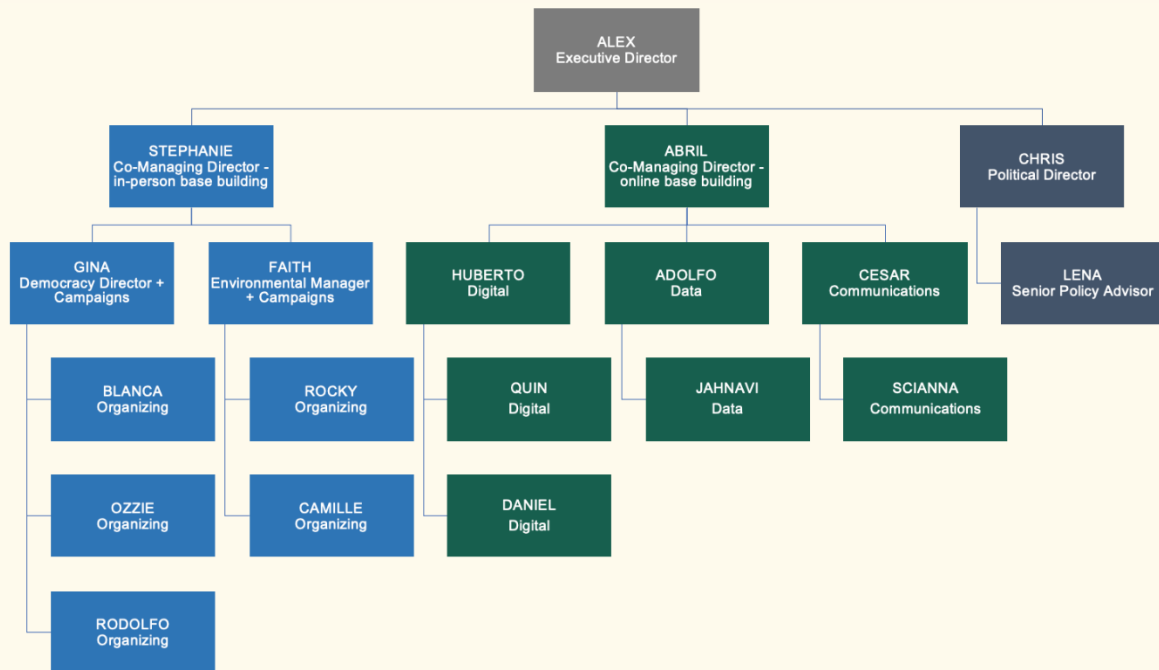
- \$24/hour
- Hands-on experience working with a leading grassroots advocacy organization in Arizona.
- Mentorship and professional development opportunities to enhance policy analysis skills and deepen understanding of social justice issues.
- Networking opportunities with policymakers, community leaders, and advocacy partners.
- Flexible scheduling options to accommodate academic commitments.

How to Apply:

To apply, please visit www.luchaaz.org/apply and submit your application directly through our website. Please attach a resume, cover letter, and list of professional references to your application.

Appendix E

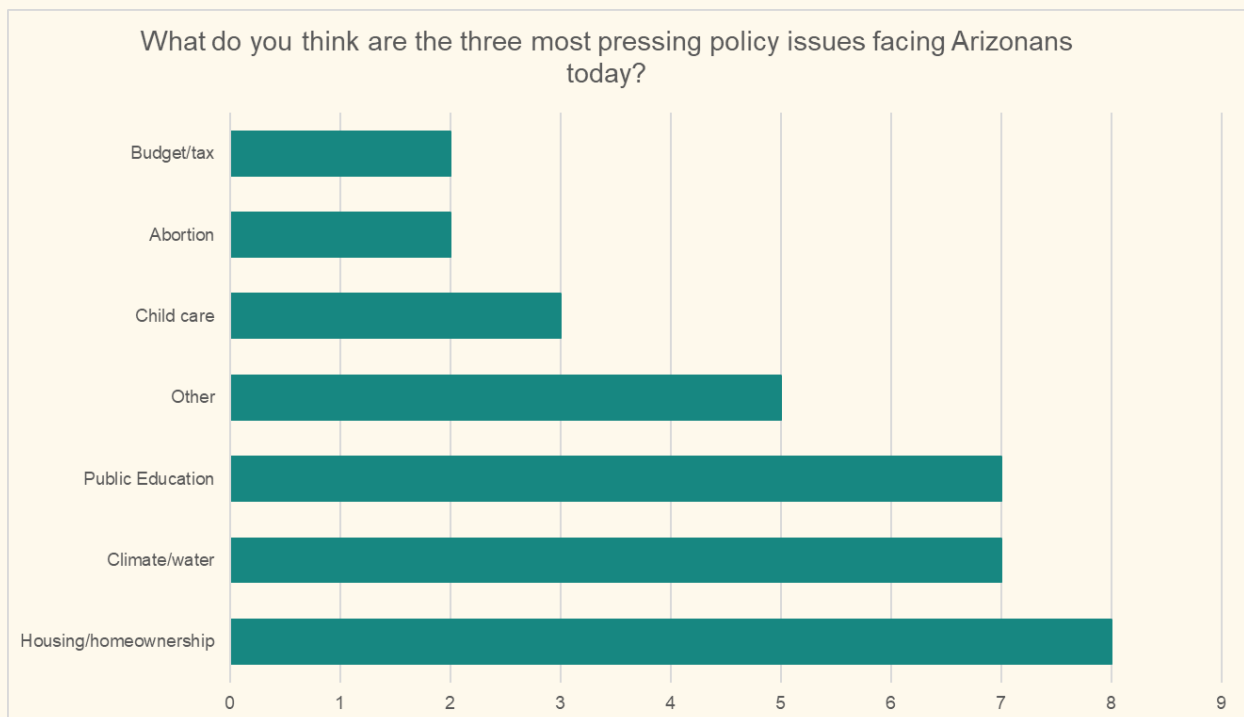
LUCHA Organization Chart



Appendix F

Findings from Interview Question: What do you think are the top three most pressing policy issues facing Arizonans today?

We asked most external stakeholder interviewees what they, given their expertise, thought were the top three most pressing policy issues facing Arizonans today? Here is what we gathered:



Data reflect responses from 10 interviewees. “Other” includes: (1) political polarization, (2) immigration, (3) health care, (4) overall economic growth, and (5) election integrity.