



*Application Form submitted by the initiatives to participate in the Transformative Cities People`s Choice Award*

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	Jackson, Mississippi (USA)
<b>Title of the Transformative Initiative:</b>	Transition City Initiative (Jackson Just Transition Plan)
<b>Name of organization:</b>	Cooperation Jackson
<b>Type of organization:</b>	Cooperation Jackson is an emerging cooperative federation and solidarity economy catalyzer.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://cooperationjackson.org">https://cooperationjackson.org</a>
<b>Category and Edition:</b>	HOUSING. Transformative Cities Award 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition (2019).
<b>STORYTELLING</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>The Jackson Just Transition Plan is an effort to transform Jackson into a city that is ecologically regenerative; centered on economic relationships rooted in equity, solidarity and mutual aid; technologically advanced and democratically employed; and grounded in the protection and fulfillment of everyone’s fundamental human rights.</p>	
<b>Context and problem definition</b>	
<p>Jackson, Mississippi is the capitol of the State of Mississippi. It has a population of roughly 200,000 people. Over 80% of the population is Black/African American, with the vast majority living at or below the states poverty line. Chronic un and underemployment is a major issue in our city, leading to negative health outcomes, such as chronic hypertension, diabetes and heart disease. Despite the demographics, the wealth gap between Black and white in the city is one of the worse in the country. This is primarily due to an apartheid-like economy and social order.</p>	



Our aim is transform this social order by building a democratic economy that can serve the needs of everyone in the community. In order to accomplish this mission, our founders played a key role in developing a comprehensive organizing strategy over a decade ago called the Jackson-Kush Plan. This plan involves building people power through the building of people's assemblies, developing an independent electoral force, and build the social and solidarity economy. To date our strategy has resulted in the birth of Cooperation Jackson and the election of Mayor's Chokwe Lumumba (2013) and Chokwe Antar Lumumba (2017).

### **Design and Initiation**

The Jackson-Kush Plan, which is at the root of our initiative, was designed and developed by three related organizations: the New Afrikan People's Organization, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and the Jackson People's Assembly. The New Afrikan People's Organization is a political organization born of the Black Power movements of the 1960's and 70's. The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement is a mass-based organization that focuses on defending the human rights of people of African descent. The Jackson People's Assembly is broad, predominantly Black working class political force that focuses on holding municipal, county and state government accountable and organizing autonomous community projects and programs. The Jackson-Kush Plan was developed mutually by these organizations between 2005 and 2009, in large part in response to Hurricane Katrina and the economic and social upheaval and dislocation it caused in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Cooperation Jackson is an instrument specifically created to execute a plank of the Jackson-Kush Plan, specifically to build a vibrant social and solidarity economy in Jackson. The organization was launched in May 2014 at the historic Jackson Rising: New Economies Conference. In the effort to build this instrument, we have drawn a various forms of knowledge and skill from a variety of sources, including: The Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the Southern Grassroots Economies Project, the New Economies Coalition, the Right to the City Alliance, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, the Climate Justice Alliance, the Black Urban Farmers and Gardeners Alliance, Why Hunger, Democracy @ Work, Incite Focus, and many, many others.

The initial resources to execute the Jackson-Kush Plan and the launch of Cooperation Jackson were all drawn from volunteers and self-financing initiatives. Over the course of the last several years, Cooperation Jackson has been able to secure a significant degree of funding from various foundations throughout the United States. But, we still rely heavily on volunteer labor to advance the broad initiatives we have initiated and undertaken.

Cooperation Jackson has several divisions to its overall. We have a 501c3 division and a LLC (limited liability division). An elected board, drawn from our general membership, and managed by 4 full-time staff members, governs our 501c3.

## Implementation

The launch of Cooperation Jackson and our effort to institute a full and complete Transition program in Jackson has been marked by many challenges from the beginning. The two primary challenges were:

- 1) finances and material support and
- 2) municipal support.

Jackson is a relatively poor city, with few municipal resources, and few philanthropic resources. We have been able to draw heavily from the limited financial and human resources of our community, pooling these to be able to undertake various strategic initiatives, such as the acquisition of a number of vacant lots to establish our Community Land Trust (CLT). We have also been able to mobilize significant numbers of members and community volunteers to supply the initiatives with ample volunteer labor to make some rather significant advances. However, if we had greater access to capital and various types of financial assistance, we would advance much further, much faster, particularly on the digital fabrication (Fab City) and sustainable dimensions of our program, to help the city move more rapidly towards becoming a zero-waste and zero-emissions city within the next 10 years.

Some of our mid-term goals include:

1. Building a Community Production Center or Fab Lab in each of the 7 wards in the city within the next 5 years.
2. Creating a Community Energy Center in each of the 7 wards within the city within the next 5 years.
3. Creating 3 Eco-Villages within the next 5 years, which includes building or retrofitting 100 homes to be completely off the grid units.
4. Building the capacity to produce 1/10th of Jackson's vegetable consumption via Urban Farms within the next 5 years.

In order to attain these goals, and our ultimate goals, like making Jackson a zero-waste and zero-emissions city, capable of producing a range of local goods and services via community production we are going to need to collaborate with our municipal government to create the policy framework and social incentives necessary to achieve these aims.

We are currently building out our Ewing Street Eco-Village Pilot Project. By the end of 2019, the pilot project will consist of 2 digitally fabricated self-sustaining homes and a small solar farm that will provide a concrete illustration of what a zero-emissions community could possibly look like

### **Results achieved and Evaluation**

To date our major accomplishments are:

1. Helping several progressive candidates get elected to municipal offices over the last several years to help advance our policy agenda.
2. Starting a growing network of cooperatives and solidarity economy organizations.
3. Creating the Fannie Lou Hamer Community Land Trust.
4. Starting the Human Rights Institute.

All of these initiatives have helped to legitimize our vision and program in the community. Provide quality employment and wages to a growing number of Jacksonians, initiated a process to decommodify land and start the process of creating permanently affordable housing, build a broad consensus on the need for food sovereignty, and laid the foundation for the development for a human rights charter and commission to respect, protect, and fulfill the basic human rights of all Jacksonians.

### **Political Strategies**

In order to be a transformative catalyst we employ a broad range of educational and constituent building strategies, including, but not limited to:

1. Base Building conducted primarily by doing door-to-door community outreach to build our constituent and mass membership.
2. Mass Mobilization to impact public opinion and the policy makers and power brokers in society.
3. Mass Education via our website, social media (Facebook and Twitter primarily), print media (The Cooperative Way), and audio-visual production.
4. Institution Building to carry forward strategic programmatic work, like the human rights component of our Transition City work, which is conducted by the Jackson Human Rights Institute.
5. Coalition Building to aggregate social and political power to effect change, two of our key coalition activities include the Union-Coop Initiative, to build broad unity amongst working class people in Jackson, and the Coalition for Economic Justice, to monitor, challenge and propose legislation primarily on the state level.

### **Related legislations**

We are currently trying to change various laws in the state of Mississippi relative to cooperatives and workers rights.

We are currently working with the city to advance various policies to enable cooperatives to have more operating room within the local economy. We are also trying to change laws in the state of Mississippi that currently limit cooperatives to agricultural businesses, utilities, or credit unions.

We are also engaged in a long-term campaign to strengthen working class organizations in the state. Mississippi is a “right to work” state, meaning a state that as adopted key components of the Taft-Hartley Law that prohibit workers from rights like collective bargaining.

Finally, we are working hard to advance what we call “Just Transition Policies” throughout our municipality, county and state to adopt a suite of laws that will combat climate change the system of excessive resource extraction.

### **Lessons learned**

A few critical things that we have learned over the last 5 years in our effort to advance a transformative agenda at the Municipal Level:

1. That we have to formally organize the resources of our community into democratic loan funds, etc., in order to facilitate greater value creation and creativity in our community.
2. That we have to constantly work at building, sustaining and educating our base of constituents.
3. That we have to create our own mass media outlets and venues to tell our own story to ensure that what we want to communicate and convey is promoted and distributed, as we desire.

We are also constantly learning from the experiences of others. The Zapatista Communities in Mexico have been a great inspiration to us. As has the Kurdish experiment in Rojava, Syria. More closer to home we are continuing to learn a great deal from Incite Focus about digital fabrication and the Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative about building strategic partnerships between cooperatives and the trade unions.

We are presently working on assimilating all of these critical lessons and employing them in the building and conducting of our upcoming Transition Assemblies.

**EXTRA INFO**

**Supporting documents**

- 1. Fearless Cities Conference: Organizing and Municipalist Platform Platform**  
<http://navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/2017/09/fearless-cities-conference-organizing.html>
- 2. Black Power Takes Root in the Heart of Dixie**  
<http://navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/2017/06/black-power-takes-root-in-heart-of-dixie.html>
- 3. Learning from Mississippi**  
<http://navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/2017/03/learning-from-mississippi-cooperation.html>
- 4. Jackson Rising: Interview with Sacajawea Hall**  
<http://atlantablackstar.com/2017/10/16/jackson-rising-saki-hall-cooperation-jackson-intersection-gender-economics/>
- 5. Building Power in a Frontline Community: The Cooperation Jackson Model**  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08854300.2016.1195180>