POLICY, POWER, & PARTICIPATION

A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR GOVERNANCE BY ROOSEVELT NETWORK GEN-Z LEADERS



NOVEMBER 2026

Roosevelt Network

A PROGRAM OF THE ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE



The Roosevelt Network hosted its annual Hyde Park Conference in August 2026. Every year, the conference connects a set of undergraduate leaders to the history and legacy of the New Deal era by gathering in Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's lifelong home in the Hudson Valley. They learn from the past as they get the training, tools, and opportunity to redefine our collective future.

THIS YEAR, WE FOCUSED THE CONVENING ON THE PROJECT OF REIMAGINING GOVERNMENT.

We organized a series of panels, breakout conversations, and workshops where students and early-career leaders had the chance to learn directly from the experience of senior leaders with decades of government experience.

The gathering created a unique space for students to wrestle with big questions about rebuilding government and shaping the future of public leadership, and for senior leaders to have their work informed by the ambition and aspirations of an emerging set of young leaders.

PICKING UP THE BLUEPRINT

In 2010, the Roosevelt Network released its Blueprint for Millennial America, built by hosting "Think2040 forums" with students across the country. The workshops prompted elder millennials to envision the world they wanted to see 30 years into the future, calling on them to design policy plans to help realize their vision. Six years later, we built a crowdsourced policy agenda called the Next Generation Blueprint for 2016, which surveyed 1,000 young people from 160 different campuses across the country. It was a clarion call to policymakers about the issues younger millennials felt were most urgent to address.

Today, a policy agenda is just one piece of the puzzle. Roosevelt's Good Life Agenda, which our young people contributed to, offers a range of ideas for how to deliver economic security to people across the country. **So in 2026, the Roosevelt Network's Blueprint is a vision for reimagining government to be fit for that purpose.** Actually delivering on the priorities of the Good Life Agenda will require building more robust government institutions and unwavering political will from leaders inside and outside the halls of power.

So we asked a set of Roosevelt's Gen-Z participants to help figure out what that could look like, and we asked them to stick to the same timeline as their first millennial predecessors: 2040.

The 76 students and early-career professionals who helped shape the agenda below come from 29 different states and 5 different regions across the country—the South, Midwest, Pacific Coast, Northeast, and Great Plains/Rocky Mountains. Of this group, a reported 63 percent are people of color, 46 percent are LGBTQ, 57 percent are women, and 7 percent self-identify nonbinary or other. These leaders are not representative of all of Gen Z—they have self-selected into an organization that asks them to spend a summer weekend digging into a policy agenda—but they do provide a window into how a set of politically engaged and institutionally minded young people think about what's needed in this moment. They were guided by a brain trust of mid-career and senior leaders: people who served in the Obama and Biden administrations and who brought academic and legal expertise to the conversation.

IMAGINING THE FUTURE: 2010 TO 2040







2010 BLUEPRINT FOR MILLENNIAL AMERICA

ELDER MILLENNIALS

2016 NEXT GENERATION BLUEPRINT

YOUNGER MILLENNIALS

2026 REIMAGINING GOVERNMENT

GEN-Z

PARTICIPANT STATISTICS



76 STUDENTS AND EARLY-CAREER PROFESSIONALS
FROM **29 STATES** AND **5 REGIONS**

63%
PEOPLE OF COLOR

57%
WOMEN

46%
LBGTQ+

7%
NONBINARY OR OTHER

HERE'S WHAT THEY SAID →

THE VISION:
MORE THAN SURVIVAL

These young people dream of an **economy and democracy built for human flourishing.** To them, housing, healthcare, and a livable income are fundamental for human dignity. Protection from a surveillance economy that tracks, profiles, and price-gouges people through unregulated tech is a necessity. Real free time and public spaces to actually enjoy life is crucial to achieving their vision. And they see taxing extreme wealth as both a way to rebalance economic and political power, and a fiscal tool that makes possible the kind of sweeping public programs that underpin this vision.

At the heart of this goal to support human flourishing is a demand for government to get back in the driver's seat, policing the coercive exercise of corporate power in their lives and acting powerfully to protect, support, and enable people's desires for meaningful lives.



At its heart, this is a demand for government—not corporations or the private sector—to act quickly and powerfully."

ECONOMIC PRIORITIES FOR A GOOD LIFE

While together in Hyde Park, participants built upon Roosevelt's Good Life Agenda, discussing concrete ways to make people's lives better. These are the themes that emerged from their conversations, including direct quotes from our participants.





DELIVER IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC RELIEF

> **"We're broke, we're in debt, and we're hungry."**

Young people need direct relief now. Delivering that relief could include raising the national minimum wage, canceling student debt, and universalizing SNAP. An economic policy agenda with long-term, structural ambition has to include some of these changes as immediate measures to intervene on behalf of people's day-to-day needs.

Some of our past student fellows have explored ideas for designing a system of guaranteed income and ending subminimum wages.

GUARANTEE STABLE JOBS AND INCOME SECURITY

> **"We want dignity in our work—for everyone."**

Economic dignity depends on stable, fairly-compensated work. Policymakers should guarantee that everyone who wants to work has a pathway to training and a job. This should be paired with a livable, indexed wage; a 32-hour workweek; and stronger labor protections, including by passing the PRO Act.

Our past student fellows have written about states encouraging employee ownership, workers bargaining over algorithmic decision-making, and nurses fighting AI in the workplace.

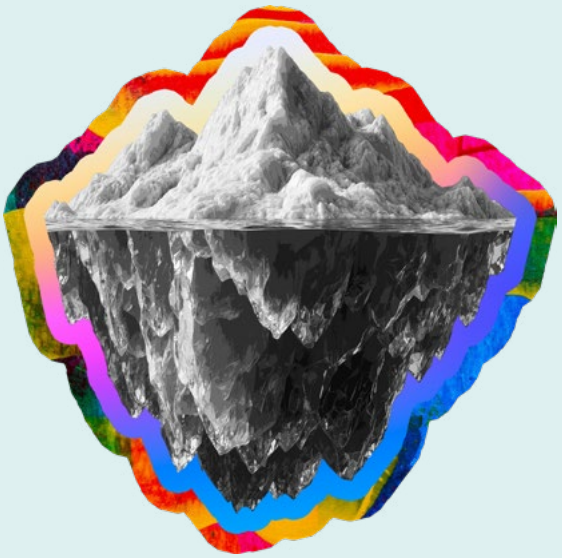


ESTABLISH PUBLIC OPTIONS FOR HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE

> **“This is basic human dignity—we deserve shelter and the ability to not die from preventable disease.”**

Housing and healthcare go hand in hand: Only with a baseline guarantee of both can people meaningfully participate in the economy and society. Private corporate investments and meager public assistance are not meeting the basic needs of our citizens, and these policy areas require robust public options from the government as a baseline.

Network fellows have conducted research on affordable housing, community health, and healthcare consolidation.



DEPLOY EVERY GOVERNMENT TOOL POSSIBLE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

> **“Nothing else matters if the world isn’t habitable.”**

Climate change requires decisive, creative, and radical action, given how far behind the country already is. Climate protections must be embedded across every area of policy, alongside specific interventions like concrete energy-sector reform—nationalizing energy at the federal or state level and investing in solar microgrids for essential services—and climate jobs programs that train people for the transition.

Our student fellows have written extensively about coordinating just energy transitions across the country, from Virginia to Michigan to California.

A GOVERNMENT FIT FOR PURPOSE

With a focus on the executive branch, we asked our participants to imagine the changes required to rebuild trust, restore accountability, and to ensure successful implementation of their policy priorities. Their vision for the executive branch is one that uses its power more effectively and with more democratic accountability. They want to see other branches of government and civil society take greater accountability in restraining executive overreach.

AGENCIES THAT STUDENTS NAMED AS MOST IMPORTANT FOR DELIVERING ON THEIR ECONOMIC PRIORITIES	
Department of Labor	Run a federal jobs guarantee that could be in the form of Housing Corps or WPA-style programs
Internal Revenue Service	Stand up a dedicated task force to execute a billionaire tax
Department of Housing and Urban Development	Unleash the authorities to address the housing crisis at scale
Department of Health and Human Services	Build and administer a fully public healthcare system
Environmental Protection Agency & Department of Energy	Lead climate action, including rebuilding technical capacity and driving legislative change
Department of the Interior	Protect public land and public space

New agencies that students proposed when prompted to think creatively about how the executive branch could help deliver their economic priorities:

Office of Well-Being: Support peoples' right to free time, well-being, and third spaces

Office of Mass Engagement: Solicit real constituent participation in policymaking, modeled on the same agency in New York City

Office of Emerging Technology & AI: Take charge of privacy, ethics, security, and autonomy with a broader mandate than a narrow AI regulator

NEW PATHWAYS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Young people want to drive this change. But, public service is seen as outdated and closed off—as one student noted, "it's hard to get into the space, and no one will pass the torch." To develop the next generation of public servants, government must make entry points visible and rewarding, with tangible benefits up front and a clear path to a lasting career.

Here were some of their ideas to transform the public service pipeline:

- *Front-loading the benefits of public service.* Youth want creative entry points and benefits. As one example, they proposed a 3-year public service apprenticeship that guarantees a significant government contribution toward a home down payment upon completion—modeled on baby bonds, not standard loan forgiveness.
- *Guaranteeing a "return offer."* Paid public-service apprenticeships could be structured like private-sector internship pipelines, with a real job waiting at the end.
- *Mass hiring tied to new departments.* Standing up new offices/agencies (Mass Engagement, Well-Being, etc.) is a recruitment opportunity—a visible, large-scale entry point for young people into government work. They also offer the opportunity to utilize different skill sets and abilities, and to build different kinds of public servants.
- *Building real community engagement pathways.* Government leaders should fund new roles that let people work directly with and in their communities, not just inside agency walls, and empower the public servants already fanned across the country to actually deliver services for people.



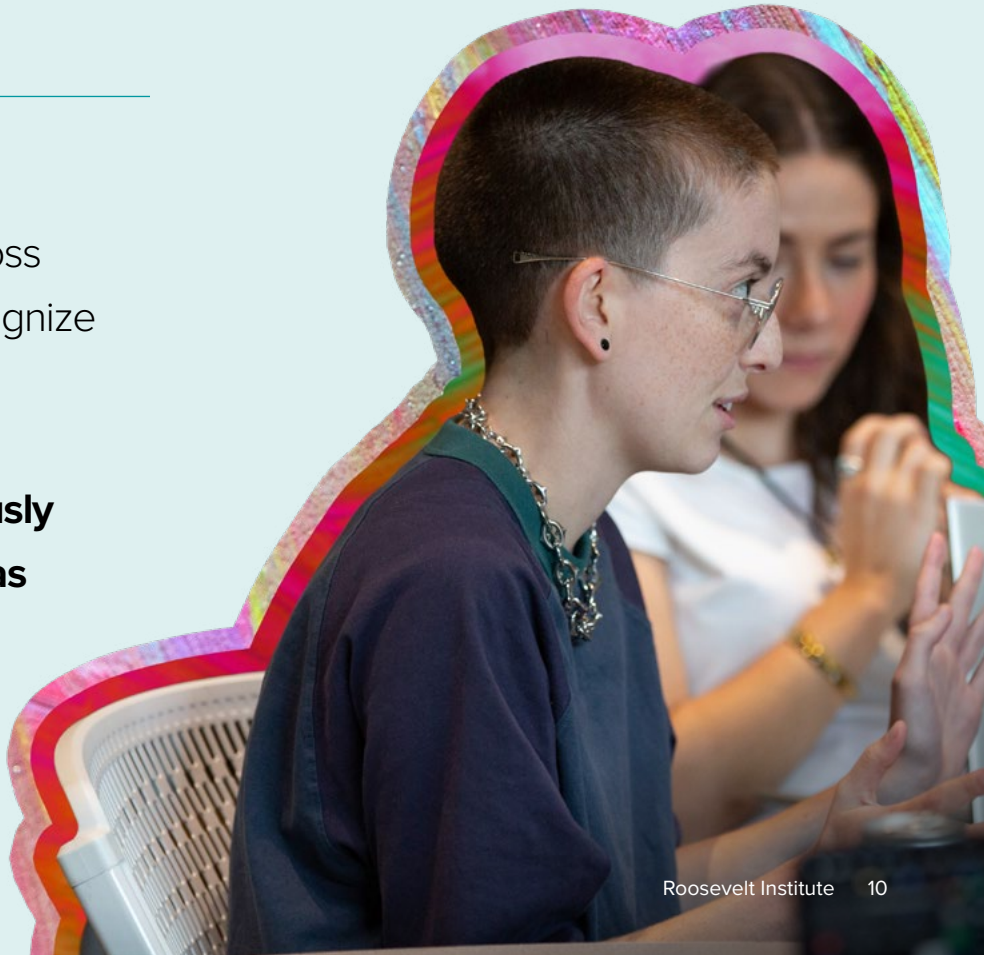
> **"It's hard to get into the space, and no one will pass the torch."**

THE PATH FORWARD: HOW TO BUILD THE FUTURE ALONGSIDE PROGRESSIVE YOUTH

Young people have historically low trust in government, but incredibly high aspirations for what government can and should do. Taking inspiration from the New Deal, they can clearly articulate their version of a good life, and have the energy and enthusiasm to build the economy and democracy built for the human flourishing they want to see.

Roosevelt's DNA is built around taking big ideas to deliver for people seriously, and we have long known that young people are a critical source of those ideas. We are using what we learned at Hyde Park to inform our intellectual pursuits and people pipelining work, exploring the ideas we could help translate into concrete plans and providing training and support to continue moving these bold thinkers into positions of influence.

We hope that policymakers, philanthropists, and leaders across the progressive ecosystem recognize this as a call to action: **to create new policies, pathways, and opportunities to engage seriously with these youth and their ideas in building what comes next.**



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The Roosevelt Network develops and supports undergraduate college students and early career professionals—in particular, those who hold identities historically denied political power—to be the next generation of leaders in the progressive policy ecosystem. We are creating a pipeline of new leaders who champion ideas that rebalance power in our economy and democracy. As a program of the Roosevelt Institute stewarding the legacy of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt into the 21st century, we believe that we can rewrite the rules by changing who writes them.

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