

Summer Policy Institute 2023 Policy Pitch Details

During the Summer Policy Institute, attendees participate in interactive sessions where they learn the ins and outs of policy change through legislative methods, as well as learn crucial skills rooted in community engagement and grassroots mobilization. Throughout the convening, participants work in small teams to identify and develop policy proposals to shape the future they want to see in the Mountain State, culminating in team “policy pitches” to community leaders. Sessions will equip participants to focus on defining the problem as an essential first step before moving ahead to proposing solutions. This will ensure that no fully finalized policy ideas emerge from SPI without authentic engagement—and ideally partnership—with the people most impacted by the issues at hand.

Each team's policy pitch will be expected to (1) define the problem, (2) propose an actionable organizing plan and methodology to engage community members and directly impacted people, and (3) include a vision statement of the potential policy changes and concrete outcomes* that would ideally result in the future if the team's plan is implemented.

*(*Policy changes might target different levels of the government—municipal, county, state, school board, etc.—depending on each team's diagnosis of the problem, and envisioned outcomes could be years down the line).*

Each team will present their ideas to a panel of community leaders to get feedback and potentially continued funding and logistical support. This pedagogical approach acknowledges the reality of policymaking today in West Virginia, where building relational organizing skills and strengthening networks and coalitions is of huge importance while the current representatives are often closed off to progressive ideas.

Teams will be formed based on policy interest areas, but we can imagine new teams emerging following the conference based on geography, especially if the targeted level of change is more localized. Post-conference support through coaching and mini-grants will be decided after the event when teams have more opportunity to discuss and build out their proposal (as well as assess their own capacity and willingness for continuing the work).