

SOUTH CAROLINA LOCAL STRATEGY

2026



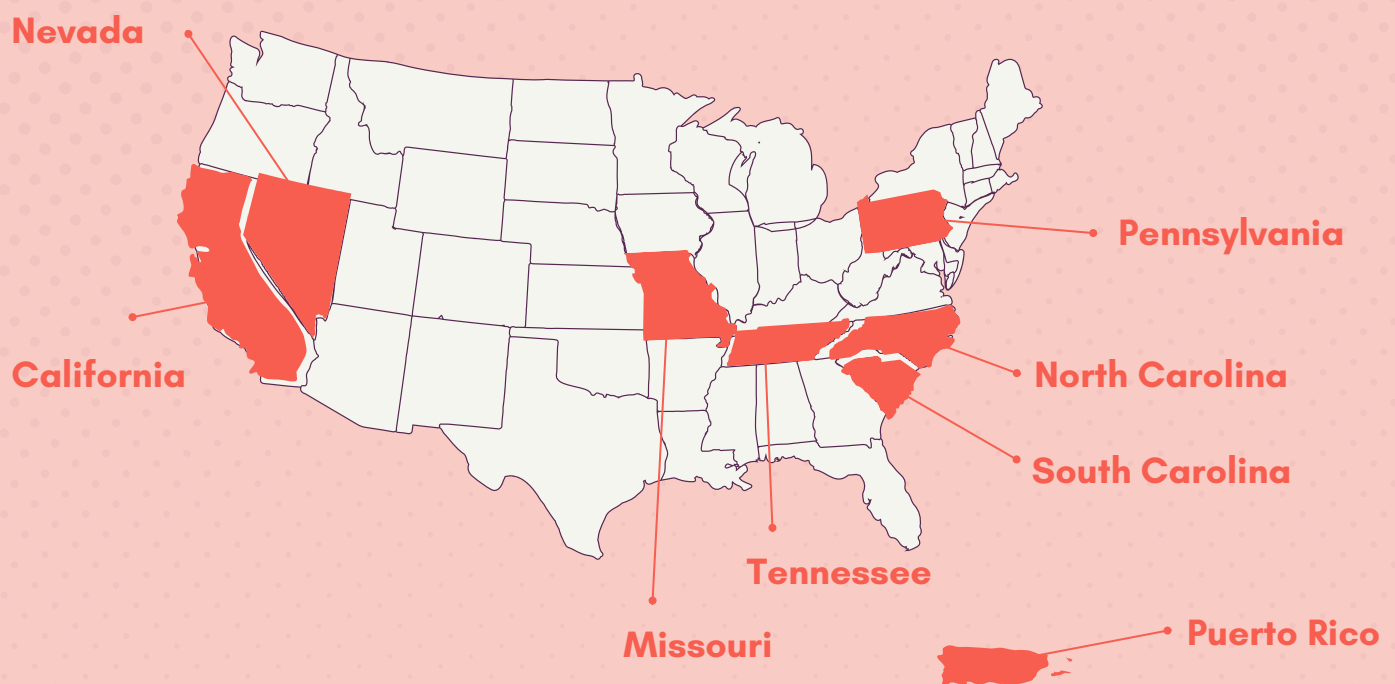
AMPLIFY FUND

NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

Amplify Fund is a place-based pooled fund that supports historically marginalized communities in maintaining and building decision-making power.

We do this by funding community organizing groups working on land justice, economic justice, holistic wellbeing, and human dignity issues.

Each of our funding places has a unique historic, economic, political, and social context, so our grantmaking strategy is tailored to each place.



Local Strategy Design

SOUTH CAROLINA

In 2025, after committing to extend Amplify Fund 10 years beyond the original 4-year lifespan, we decided to update our local grantmaking strategies.

25 interviews

In South Carolina, we surveyed and interviewed 25 leaders from our grantee organizations, other movement organizations, and value-aligned, local foundations. We asked about the most pressing challenges in the region, progressive solutions to those problems, the ecosystem of organizations and leaders working on those solutions, and capacities needed to achieve those solutions.

8 advisors

With that data, we identified eight local strategy advisors, two of which were grantees. Those advisors came together on June 4, 2026 to make decisions on what Amplify Fund should focus on in South Carolina for the next five years and provided written feedback on the final strategy. Those decisions, along with important local context, can be found on the next few pages.



Audrey Lane
E3 Foundation



Bernie Mazyck
South Carolina Association for
Community Economic Development



Kerri Forrest
Coastal Community Foundation



Domenico Ruggerio
We Are Family



Kenni Cummings
SC Tenant Union



Amalia Luxardo
Women's Rights & Empowerment
Network



Melinda Merrell



Inka Bogdanski
Lowcountry Alliance for Model
Communities

South Carolina Context

SOUTH CAROLINA

Almost half of all enslaved Africans brought to North America entered through Charleston, many kidnapped for their expertise in rice cultivation and water management, knowledge that fueled South Carolina's booming plantation economy. The wealth generated through this exploitation concentrated power among a small slave-owning elite committed to preserving the racial hierarchy on which their power depended. After Lincoln's election in 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union and launched the Civil War. While slavery was ultimately abolished, many of the power structures it established have endured through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and subsequent policies and practices that continue to shape the lives of South Carolinians today, across economic, social, and political systems. →

However, where there is oppression, there is resistance. Despite the violence of enslavement, **communities preserved their language, culture, and traditions, laying the foundation for the Gullah/Geechee community, one of the nation's most enduring African diasporic legacies.** Then, at the start of the Civil War, Mitchelville became the first self-governed town for formerly enslaved people, and the Penn Center became the first school for formerly enslaved people. During Reconstruction, South Carolina adopted one of the most progressive constitutions, established the South's first statewide system of free public education, and sent more Black legislators to Congress than any other state. ↓

Today, South Carolina is among the fastest growing states, with residents born outside the state projected to become a majority within the next decade. The Latinx population, the state's fastest growing demographic, is reshaping the cultural and political landscape. At the same time, LGBTQ+ communities — particularly trans youth and adults — face heightened political targeting, surveillance, and policy threats affecting safety, belonging, mental health, and access to care. However, these trends are masked by differences across the state. South Carolina encompasses distinct regions (Upstate, Midlands, Lowcountry, Pee Dee, and the I-95 corridor), each with distinct geographies and needs. To support the growing organizing ecosystem connecting communities and regions, join Amplify Fund in supporting issues lifted up by our South Carolina local strategy advisors. ■

These histories, however, are frequently sanitized or omitted in public narratives, reinforcing the misconception that transformative change is not possible in South Carolina. As one of the state's largest industries, tourism is built in part on the romanticization of the antebellum South. Of the 175 antebellum plantations that once lined the Lowcountry, approximately 150 still stand, many now marketed as wedding venues, luxury resorts, and retirement and golf communities. This white washing of history affects philanthropic investment. While the South has historically received a disproportionately small share of philanthropic funding, South Carolina fares worse than most neighboring states, with state foundations distributing approximately \$361 million annually compared with \$1.4 billion in North Carolina and \$1.7 billion in Georgia. ←

Grantmaking Priorities

SOUTH CAROLINA

Housing

In South Carolina, the rental housing crisis is primarily caused by a severe shortage of affordable homes, and the gap between low incomes and the high cost of housing. The state's high eviction rate, one of the highest in the country, underscores this gap. However, high demand for housing in coastal areas — including threats to heirs' property and long-held Black family land — reveals the role predatory developers play in limiting affordable housing and displacing longtime residents. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations using a Housing First approach, and focusing on community land trusts, social housing, developer accountability and community benefits agreements, and reparations.

Education & Training

In 2005, a documentary titled "Corridor of Shame" exposed school funding inequalities between urban and rural schools in South Carolina. Unfortunately, in the two decades since, funding disparities continue to have racialized effects: Black students are less likely to be in gifted programs, more likely to be suspended, and more likely to be arrested in schools. All while schools are restricting discussions of race and banning books. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations modeling education after Freedom Schools and offering skills training programs.

Climate & Environmental Disasters

Rising sea levels, caused by climate change, are resulting in increased flooding in places like Charleston, while increasing temperatures inland are increasing droughts, or severe water shortages across the state. This is all on top of the annual susceptibility to hurricanes as a coastal state. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations advocating for nature-based solutions to the climate crisis, making housing climate resilient, and pressuring government agencies to address recovery in an equitable and timely manner.

Wages & Benefits

In 2025, South Carolina ranked third lowest in terms of percent of workers who are union members (2.7%) and the state has aggressively maintained its right-to-work status, suppressing wages and weakening workers' ability to organize. The result has been no minimum wage law, gross income inequality, and limited benefits. Many workers cannot afford to live in the communities where they work. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations unionizing workers, increasing the minimum wage, advocating for better benefits, and holding industry accountable.

Land
Justice

Economic
Justice

Grantmaking Priorities

SOUTH CAROLINA

Holistic Wellbeing

Access to Healthcare

South Carolina refused to expand Medicaid, leaving an estimated 200,000 residents in the “coverage gap”, contributing to healthcare disparities and rural hospital closures. The state also ranks in the bottom third for overall mental health, underscoring the need for affirming mental health care, especially for LGBTQ+ people, BIPOC communities, and low-income residents. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations organizing for improved healthcare access, including through mobile health units, culturally competent providers, and universal healthcare.

Denial of History

South Carolina forbids state education funds from being used to teach anything that could make a student feel “discomfort, guilt or anguish” due to race or sex. This policy led to the statewide cancellation of the Advanced Placement African American Studies course and the removal of several books by Black authors while South Carolina elected officials continue to explicitly deny the racist history of the state. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations engaging in political education, the removal of racist monuments, and demanding policy changes related to school curricula.

Human Dignity

Reproductive Justice

The South Carolina legislature has been hostile to reproductive justice: bills introduced every session ban abortion from fertilization, make it a felony to share information about obtaining one, and subject birthing people to criminal penalties ranging from prison to death. Additionally, 13% of South Carolina counties are maternity deserts, and mortality for Black birthing people is three times higher than white birthing people. These attacks are part of a broader struggle over bodily autonomy, connecting reproductive justice with LGBTQ+ and trans rights. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support doula networks, birth justice organizations, and groups working to reframe abortion care.

Lack of Political Representation

The two decades of Republican control in South Carolina has been consolidated through racial gerrymandering. Ahead of the 2022 midterms, the legislature redrew Congressional District 1 by moving thousands of Black voters out of the district. The result is stark underrepresentation of BIPOC groups in elected positions. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations conducting political leadership development (especially amongst youth and Black and brown communities), year-round voter engagement, and advocacy against gerrymandering.

Capacity Building

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When asked what kinds of technical assistance or capacity building support local organizing groups most need to deepen the impact of their work, local strategy advisors identified the following priority areas:

1. **Fundraising** support specifically focused on funder briefings, support for major donor programs, connections with funders, and a fundraising consultant that can do grant writing.
2. **Coordination infrastructure** to strengthen statewide organizing capacity by resourcing and supporting movement-led cross-regional spaces for training, campaign alignment, relationship-building, and shared strategy.
3. **Leadership development** through the creation of a cohort with coordination, facilitation, and note-taking support, along with executive coaching, grants for professional development, and succession planning.
4. **Rest** to address burnout and mental health, including covering expenses for sabbaticals, leadership coverage, staffing support, travel, and a retreat space.
5. **Organizing training** focused on the basics of building power and advocacy, especially for youth, emerging leaders, and volunteers.

As long as Amplify Fund continues to meet its fundraising goals, we will provide no-strings-attached, general operating grants to organizations in South Carolina working on the problems and solutions named by local leaders in this strategy paper. We will also offer capacity building grants related to the priority areas listed above.

We encourage our fellow funders to join our pooled fund, or fund South Carolina organizations directly, to support long-term change in the region.

If you have any questions about our local strategy process or would like to further discuss our final grantmaking strategy in South Carolina, please contact amplify@nfg.org