



## Putting Ambition Without Access to Work

How community organizations can use JBI's 2050 Survey to advance local economic initiatives

### A TOOL FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

The Julian Bond Institute's *Ambition Without Access* report documents a finding that community organizations have long known from lived experience: young Black, Latino, and Asian Americans hold some of the highest wealth-building aspirations in the country – and face the steepest structural barriers to realizing them. Two thirds of Black Gen Z want to own a business. Seventy-seven percent of Black Gen Z want to leave an inheritance to loved ones, even though only 18% expect to receive one. These are not communities that need to be persuaded to dream; they are communities that need infrastructure to build.

This brief is designed to help community leaders, advocates, housing counselors, small business assistance providers, financial empowerment centers, faith-based organizations, HBCU financial aid offices, and coalition partners translate the 2050 Survey's national findings into local action. The data give your work something powerful: a nationally representative, demographically precise evidence base that validates what your communities are already telling you – and that you can cite, quote, and build programs around.



### THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

*Aspiration is not the problem. Access is. Across homeownership, entrepreneurship, retirement, and intergenerational wealth, young Americans of color want the same things – often more intensely – than their White peers. The gap is in the financial infrastructure built around them. That is a gap community organizations are uniquely positioned to help close.*

### Five ways to put the report to work locally

#### 1. Use the data to validate your funding case

Foundations, municipal agencies, CRA-motivated banks, and CDFI funders increasingly want nationally representative evidence behind local programs. *Ambition Without Access* gives you that. When you apply for grants to support first-generation homebuyer programs, small business technical assistance, children's savings programs, or financial coaching, cite the 2050 Survey findings directly. A statistic like **“23% of Black Millennials who aspired to homeownership have achieved it, compared to 51% of White Millennials”** does rhetorical work in a proposal that anecdote alone cannot.

#### 2. Design programs around the specific barriers the data name

The report is unusually specific about which barriers matter most for which communities. Use that specificity. For Black aspiring homeowners, the top barriers are downpayment savings and credit score. For Asian aspiring homeowners, the barrier is process complexity – 35% of Gen Z and Millennial Asian aspirants who feel off-track say the homebuying process is simply too complicated to navigate. These call for different interventions: first-generation downpayment assistance and credit-building services in one case, culturally responsive, language-accessible homebuyer navigation in the other. One-size-fits-all programming is leaving aspiration on the table.

#### 3. Build the estate planning and wealth-transfer infrastructure that is missing

One of the most correctable gaps in the report is estate planning. Only 19% of Black Americans and 15% of Latino Americans have an estate plan – and among Boomers, the generation actively transferring wealth right now, the figures are 31% and 32% respectively. Wealth accumulated over a lifetime is being lost at the moment of transfer. Community organizations can partner with legal aid societies, bar associations, and law school clinics to run free or low-cost estate planning clinics, will-drafting days, and wealth-transfer education sessions in houses of worship and community centers. This is a program model with a clear problem statement, a defined population, and measurable outcomes.

#### 4. Meet young people in the channels they already trust

Thirty-six percent of Black Gen Z trust AI chatbots for financial advice. Thirty-four percent use social media for financial guidance. Forty percent of Black Gen Z bank with fintech platforms. The report is clear that this is not a fad — it is the emerging norm for the majority of tomorrow’s financial consumers, led by young Americans of color. Community organizations that still rely exclusively on in-person workshops and printed brochures are reaching a shrinking share of the population they serve. Invest in short-form video content, peer-ambassador programs on platforms young people actually use, and vetted digital resources that can live on a phone. This is not about abandoning trusted in-person relationships; it is about extending them.

#### 5. Organize locally around the policy agenda the report lays out

The report is explicit about what structural reforms would close the aspiration-access gap: expanded first-generation downpayment assistance, mortgage underwriting reform that credits rental history and non-traditional indicators, universal access to state-sponsored retirement plans, a refundable Saver’s Credit, overdraft fee reform, small-dollar credit alternatives, stronger consumer protections for fintech and BNPL products, and children’s savings account programs at scale. Local coalitions can take this agenda to city councils, state legislatures, congressional delegations, and bank CRA negotiations. Having a rigorous, cited evidence base behind the ask matters.

### From finding to action: a local planning table

The table below pairs specific findings from Ambition Without Access with the kinds of local programs, partnerships, and advocacy asks each finding supports. Use it as a starting point for your coalition’s planning conversation — not as a prescriptive checklist.

What the data show	What community organizations can do
<b>44% of Gen Z aspiring homeowners feel they are not on track or will never own a home.</b>	Launch or expand first-generation homebuyer education, downpayment matched-savings programs, and credit-building partnerships with local CDFIs and credit unions. Track how many participants move from aspiration to closing.
<b>67% of Black Gen Z aspire to own a business; capital and guidance are the top barriers.</b>	Partner with CDFIs, minority business development agencies, HBCUs, and community colleges to build a visible small-business-assistance pipeline — microgrants, mentorship circles, technical assistance, and pitch events — anchored in neighborhoods where aspiration is highest.
<b>Only 19% of Black and 15% of Latino Americans have an estate plan.</b>	Host free estate-planning clinics with legal aid, bar associations, or law-school clinics. Pair them with plain-language education on wills, beneficiary designations, and TOD/POD accounts. Faith-based institutions are well-positioned convening partners.
<b>51% of Black Gen Z and 33% of Latino Gen Z used a payday loan app in the past year.</b>	Promote small-dollar loan alternatives through CDFIs and credit unions; negotiate local employer partnerships for true earned-wage access with no fees; advocate for state-level oversight of earned-wage-access products.
<b>Only 24% of Latino Gen Z have three months of emergency savings.</b>	Run emergency savings matched-incentive programs in partnership with employers and local banks. Pair with direct enrollment in state-sponsored retirement accounts where available.
<b>35% of Gen Z/Millennial Asian aspiring homeowners cite process complexity as a barrier.</b>	Invest in in-language, culturally responsive homebuyer navigation. Recruit and train housing counselors from AAPI communities; distribute plain-language homebuying guides in the languages of your community.
<b>36% of Black Gen Z trust AI chatbots for financial advice; 40% bank with fintechs.</b>	Develop short-form video content, peer-ambassador programs, and vetted digital toolkits. Partner with trusted influencers and educators. Warn specifically about BNPL and payday-app risks without dismissing the channels themselves.
<b>46% of Black Millennials are optimistic about their financial future despite fewer resources.</b>	Protect and build on this optimism: design programs that convert determination into compounding outcomes — children’s savings accounts, matched-savings, first-gen wealth-building cohorts — rather than deficit-framed interventions.

## Spotlight: National CAPACD — a model for culturally responsive housing counseling

The report’s finding that 35% of Gen Z and Millennial Asian aspiring homeowners cite process complexity as a barrier — the highest rate of any group — points directly to a need for culturally and linguistically responsive homebuyer navigation. Community organizations looking for a proof of concept can look to the work of JBI Research Advisory Council member **National CAPACD** (the Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development), represented on the RAC by Chheng Sim Bun.

### ▶▶▶ SPOTLIGHT: NATIONAL CAPACD

National CAPACD operates a HUD-approved housing counseling intermediary providing culturally and linguistically relevant services in more than 30 languages to low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander renters and homeowners. Its network of roughly 16 HUD-approved member organizations across more than 21 states delivers comprehensive counseling and education for buying, renting, and maintaining a home — including financial literacy and foreclosure prevention.

#### Key features of the model:

- Services delivered in the languages of the communities served, removing the process-complexity barrier the 2050 Survey documents.
- A national network of community-based member organizations with deep local trust, rather than a centralized call-center model.
- HUD intermediary role that trains staff, provides technical assistance, and passes through federal funding to member organizations — a model that other community coalitions can study and adapt for their own populations.
- Integrated services that address housing stability end-to-end — from first-time homebuyer education through foreclosure prevention.

**The takeaway for community organizations:** when the 2050 Survey identifies a structural barrier, there are often existing community-based infrastructures already designed to dismantle it. The work is not always to invent a new model — it is to fund, scale, and adapt the ones that are working.

## How to cite and share the findings

When you use *Ambition Without Access* in your own materials, lead with the finding most relevant to your audience and keep the citation consistent:

### SUGGESTED CITATION

Spotser, M., Wang, C., & Weiss, S. (2026). **Ambition Without Access: Race, Generation, and the Barriers to Wealth Building in America — Findings from JBI’s 2050 Survey**. Julian Bond Institute for Financial Equity Research, an initiative of the Center for Responsible Lending.

A few practical suggestions as you share the findings:

- **Lead with the aspiration, not the deficit.** “77% of Black Gen Z want to leave an inheritance to loved ones” is a stronger opening than any statistic that frames the community as lacking.
- **Name generations and racial groups specifically.** The report’s power is in its intersectional granularity — keep that granularity when you cite it.
- **Pair a stat with an action.** Every finding in the report implies a concrete policy or program response; make the connection explicit when you share the data with funders, policymakers, or community members.
- **Remember the optimism paradox.** Black Millennials are significantly more optimistic than White Millennials despite fewer resources. That is resilience to build on, not naïveté to correct.

## Building a local coalition around the findings

The report's breadth means no single organization can act on all of it. That is a feature, not a limitation. Consider which partners in your local ecosystem are best positioned to act on each theme:

- **Housing counseling agencies and CDFIs** – first-generation homebuyer programs, credit-building, downpayment assistance.
- **Minority business development agencies, HBCUs, chambers of commerce** – entrepreneurship pipelines, mentorship, microcapital.
- **Legal aid, bar associations, faith institutions** – estate planning, wealth-transfer infrastructure.
- **Credit unions, state-sponsored retirement programs, financial empowerment centers** – small-dollar credit, savings, retirement enrollment.
- **Schools, HBCUs, community colleges, youth programs** – financial education that meets young people on the platforms and in the voice they actually use.
- **Civil rights and advocacy organizations, city councils, state legislators** – policy and regulatory reform at every level of government.

### A FINAL WORD

The 2050 Survey is designed to be a biennial study. The findings in this first wave – on homeownership, entrepreneurship, retirement, intergenerational wealth, and fintech – will be measured again. The question the report asks is whether the system is meeting the ambition these communities are already bringing. Community organizations are part of how that question gets answered. The communities surveyed here are not waiting to be discovered. They are already building – with less, against more, and with more optimism than the circumstances warrant. This brief is an invitation to build *with them*.

**Full report** available at <https://julianbondinstitute.org/2050-survey>.

## ABOUT THE JULIAN BOND INSTITUTE

The Julian Bond Institute for Financial Equity Research (JBI) is an initiative of the Center for Responsible Lending. Named for civil rights leader Julian Bond, JBI produces rigorous, representative research on race, generation, and financial equity. The 2050 Survey is JBI's flagship biennial study of how race and generation intersect in shaping the financial lives of Americans.