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# Think Strategically

## Puerto Rico's Next Chapter: The 2030 Transformative Blueprint

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### The 2030 Transformative Blueprint

There are moments in a nation's life when history pauses — just long enough for its people to see themselves clearly. Puerto Rico is living such a moment now. It is not a moment marked by catastrophe or celebration. It is quieter than that, almost imperceptible at first glance.

An island with extraordinary gifts sits still while the world beyond accelerates.

For decades, Puerto Rico has occupied an uneasy in-between:

- **A place rich in talent but thin in opportunities,**
- **An economy that produces billions in exports yet struggles to lift household incomes,**
- **A society overflowing with federal investment yet constrained by fragmented execution.**

This contradiction reveals itself in a single number: **18.6** — the island's score on the **Government Progress Index (GPI)**, which we recently presented at the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce "Private Sector and Government Forum" this past Thursday November 13, 2025. You may find the story in El Vocero or you may download our presentation by visiting our page:

<https://www.birlingcapital.com/publications/GovernmentProgressIndex.EvaluatestheFirst10MonthsofJGo.pdf>

The **Government Progress Index (GPI)** is a data-driven score developed by Birling Capital to measure how well the Government of Puerto Rico is performing across the systems that most affect everyday life and long-term economic stability.

It combines **economic**, **social**, and **operational** indicators — including economic growth, unemployment, labor participation, crime, energy reliability, manufacturing activity, cement sales, and other key performance measures — into a single score from **0 to 50**.

Having stated what it is and what it measures our score of 18.6 is the story of a place that is not falling behind, yet not moving forward.

It is the story of a powerful engine idling on the runway. The question is no longer whether Puerto Rico *can* transform. The question is whether Puerto Rico will finally align its energy, workforce, industries, institutions, and identity into a coordinated strategy.

Because when Puerto Rico aligns, Puerto Rico rises. And the rise begins with twelve transformative goals — each introduced not as a policy point, but as a chapter in the island's unfinished story.

In order to jump start Puerto Rico's broader economy, we must create a set of goals that drive us into the growth and progress mind set that Puerto Rico, USA needs.

The **Puerto Rico Transformative Agenda 2030** is a data-driven blueprint that identifies the structural changes Puerto Rico must execute over the next decade to move from stagnation to sustained growth. It aligns **twelve measurable 2030 goals** with seven core transformation drivers — energy, workforce, industry, government efficiency, agriculture, strategic identity, and community mobility — to raise the island's GPI into the mid-30s and build a stronger, self-sustaining economy.

### **The Race to 4% Growth: Breaking the Island's Gravity**

**Picture Puerto Rico's economy as an aircraft — heavy, powerful, capable of flight — but still on the ground.**

Not because it lacks engines, but because the engines do not fire simultaneously.

One engine sputters: **energy reliability**.

Another struggle: **workforce alignment**.

A third never reaches full thrust: **industrial and trade capacity**.

To lift off — we must set the goal to achieve **4%+ real GNP growth** — all engines must ignite together.

Energy outages alone subtract **1–1.5 percentage points** from annual growth.

Industrial output, though massive (\$50B+ in exports), cannot scale without a dependable grid.

And the global reshoring wave — the most powerful industrial realignment in 40 years — cannot be captured without a workforce aligned to the demands of manufacturing, aerospace, and advanced tech.

Puerto Rico does not need a miracle.

It needs coordination.

- **Fix the grid.**
- **Automatic Permits in 15 Days after Submitting.**
- **Accelerate production.**
- **Align workers.**
- **Growth follows.**

### **Rebuilding the Industrial Backbone: From Fragmented Strength to Coordinated Power**

**Imagine walking through an industrial clean room in Juncos or Gurabo.**

Robotic arms glide with precision, Bioreactors hum and Engineers in full sterile gear carry iPads with FDA protocols. These scenes represent one of Puerto Rico's greatest paradoxes:

**The island hosts one of the most sophisticated industrial ecosystems in the Western Hemisphere — yet the benefits barely ripple into the broader economy.**

**The reason?**

We built factories, but never built the ecosystem around them.

Today, the opportunity is unprecedented:

- Pharma and biotech expansions continue
- Aerospace clusters are emerging
- The U.S. is reshoring critical manufacturing
- Act 60 has brought capital, technologists, and entrepreneurs
- Global firms are seeking stable, compliant, U.S.-based production hubs

To convert potential into prosperity, Puerto Rico already has a manufacturing GNP of 46.3%, and we must set a goal of expanding our industrial base of no less than 25% in Knowledge Economy to add to our set of tools for economic development.

If Puerto Rico executes the Transformative Agenda — stabilizing energy, accelerating permitting, expanding workforce participation, and building **a 25%+ knowledge-economy industrial base** — the island can realistically add: **\$15–\$22 billion in new annual economic output by 2030, driven by:**

- **Manufacturing expansion** (life sciences, MedTech, aerospace, resilience tech)
- **Knowledge-economy growth** (IT, cloud, cybersecurity, AI, data centers, R&D)
- **Agri-tech and controlled-environment farming**
- **Grid reconstruction and infrastructure modernization**
- **Nearshoring and export services**

This level of expansion would push Puerto Rico's total GNP above **\$95–\$100+ billion** by the early 2030s, raising incomes, driving job creation, and lifting the GPI into the mid-30s.

**The island has the factories. Now it must build the ecosystem that makes them multiply.**

### **The 300,000 New Jobs We Must Create: Reversing the Demographic Tide**

**Every time a young Puerto Rican boards a plane at Luis Muñoz Marín Airport with a one-way ticket, the island loses more than a person — it loses possibility.**

For twenty years, Puerto Rico has suffered a slow demographic hemorrhage, more than 696,736 citizens or 18.29% of Puerto Rico's total population.

To reverse it, the island must create **300,000 high-quality private-sector jobs** — not in theory, but in concrete sectors:

- Manufacturing (3–4 indirect jobs for each hire)
- Aerospace (4–5 job multipliers)
- Grid reconstruction (tens of thousands)
- Tech and nearshoring
- Logistics and maritime
- Controlled-environment agriculture
- Defense, dual-use, and resilience industries

This is not aspirational. It is a demographic necessity.

The good news? **Global demand aligns with Puerto Rico's strengths for the first time in decades.**

The question is whether Puerto Rico will organize itself to compete.

### **Rebuilding the Workforce: The Great Variable of Transformation**

**In every economy that has leapt forward — from postwar Germany to modern Israel — the inflection point began not in factories but in classrooms, trade schools, and apprenticeships.**

Puerto Rico's labor participation is **45.1%**, while its the highest it has been in decades it is still one of the lowest in the American system.

This single number shapes every other outcome:

- Fewer workers means lower GNP
- Lower GNP means lower income
- Lower income drives out-migration
- Out-migration shrinks the labor pool further

This is the vicious cycle. But there is also a virtuous cycle:

Every 1% increase in labor participation adds **10,000–12,000 workers** and boosts GNP.

Reaching **60% participation** would add **200,000+ workers** — a structural game-changer.

That requires:

- Trade schools are tied directly to employers
- European-style apprenticeships
- STEM modernization
- IT, cloud, cybersecurity academies
- Childcare access that enables two-working-parent households
- Mobility programs for youth

**The workforce is the master variable. Shift it, and everything else moves.**

**Modernizing Government and Permitting: The Island's Most Fixable Barrier**

**If Puerto Rico's economy were a highway, permitting would be the traffic jam.**

Billions wait on the sidelines:

Industrial expansions, housing projects, solar installations, data centers, and agricultural investments.

But in Puerto Rico:

- Industrial permits take **24–36 months**
- Construction permits take **9–18 months**
- Environmental clearances take **1–2 years**
- Hotel Permits take more than **4 years** if not more.

Meanwhile:

- Ireland: 3–5 months
- Singapore: 2–6 months
- North Carolina/Tennessee: 2–4 months

The irony is painful: **Puerto Rico has the talent to build world-class infrastructure, but not the system to approve it.**

Fixing permitting is one of the fastest, highest-ROI reforms on the island.

**Agriculture: Rediscovering a Forgotten Giant**

**There was a time when Puerto Rico fed itself, then during the 1940's we became a single product agricultural economy with sugar as the main crop until the 1990's.**

When sugar, coffee, and citrus were not just symbols, but the backbone of the economy, representing more than **20% of GDP**.

Today, agriculture contributes less than **1%**, and the island imports **85%** of its food.

But agriculture's rebirth will not come from nostalgia.

It will come from innovation:

- Hydroponics
- Vertical farms
- Greenhouses
- Aquaponics
- Climate-smart agritech
- Regenerative soil systems

Doubling local production from **15% → 30%** by 2030 is within reach.

And doing so will:

- Keep billions circulating locally
- Strengthen food security
- Create thousands of rural and urban jobs
- Support the restaurant, tourism, and export sectors

Agriculture is not a pastime.

It is a pillar of resilience.

**Energy: The Trigger Variable That Moves Every Other System**

**Every transformation story begins in the dark — and Puerto Rico's story starts with turning the lights back on, permanently.**

Energy is not just a sector. It is the foundation beneath every sector.

A stable grid:

- Attracts investment
- Reduces industrial costs
- Improves water reliability
- Strengthens hospitals
- Stabilizes small businesses
- Raises GNP
- Boosts safety and quality of life

With FEMA's **\$9.5B** and DOE's **\$1.2B**, Puerto Rico can cut outage duration by **70%**.

A reliable grid alone moves the GPI by **+4–5 points**.

This is the single most powerful economic lever Puerto Rico possesses.

### **Strategic Identity: Becoming What the U.S. Needs in a Fractured World**

Some places follow global trends — and places that define them.

**Puerto Rico can become the latter. The United States is now reengineering its supply chains for:**

- Pharmaceuticals
- Medical devices
- Aerospace
- Semiconductors
- Defense and dual-use technologies
- Climate and resilience products

### **Puerto Rico is one of the few U.S. jurisdictions with:**

- Made in Puerto Rico, USA Brand and Tariffs Free
- FDA-aligned infrastructure
- Deep STEM talent
- A 50-year life-science legacy
- Geographic advantages
- Strong compliance culture
- Existing industrial corridors

### **Arecibo for Science & Data. Aguadilla for Aerospace. Roosevelt Roads for Defense & Dual-Use Innovation.**

Every successful economic transformation has a geography — a map of strategic places where innovation clusters, talent gathers, and industries take root.

For Puerto Rico, that geography is now unmistakably clear:

#### **Arecibo is the island's scientific soul.**

Arecibo was never an aerospace platform —

it was, and remains, one of the most iconic instruments of human knowledge:

a deep-space listening post that connected Puerto Rico to the cosmos.

Reviving Arecibo means transforming it into:

- A world-class **STEM and computational sciences hub**
- A **radio astronomy and atmospheric research institute**
- A magnet for **AI, remote sensing, and data-science programs**
- A center that inspires the next generation of Puerto Rico's scientists

More than a facility, it is **identity**:

Puerto Rico as a place of intellect, discovery, and scientific excellence.

**Aguadilla is Puerto Rico's aerospace engine.**

Aguadilla — with the former Ramey Air Force Base and the longest runway in the Caribbean — is the island's aerospace frontier.

It already hosts:

- **Lufthansa Technik** (MRO powerhouse)
- **Honeywell**
- **Infosys**
- **Pratt & Whitney**
- Aviation technology and engineering centers
- A rapidly growing aviation and logistics workforce

Aguadilla can expand into:

- Aviation maintenance and repair super-hub
- Aerospace component manufacturing
- Drone innovation and testing
- Cargo, logistics, and air mobility
- Flight training and aerospace engineering programs

This is where Puerto Rico competes with North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida — and can win.

**Roosevelt Roads is the dual-use 21st-century strategic platform.**

Roosevelt Roads is not just land —it is one of the most valuable underdeveloped defense-aligned assets in the entire U.S. system.

**Its potential is singular:**

- Deepwater port
- Massive acreage
- Civil-military compatible runway
- Direct access to key Caribbean and Atlantic corridors

By 2030, Roosevelt Roads can become:

- A **maritime security and logistics hub**
- A home for **U.S. Coast Guard and DHS expansion**
- A **resilience and climate-tech innovation district**
- A support node for **satellite operations and space-surveillance networks**
- A launchpad for dual-use tech companies (cyber, maritime, energy, drone security)
- This is Puerto Rico's opportunity to anchor itself in the U.S. national security architecture — permanently.

**A Nonprofit Sector Built for Mobility, Not Survival**

**Every society is judged not only by how it responds to emergencies, but by how it builds mobility.**

Puerto Rico's nonprofit sector must evolve from:

- **80% emergency relief:** to a more balanced model that focuses on mobility, workforce development, small-business support, and youth pathways.
- Emergency response helps people survive while mobility helps them thrive.

## The Final Word: A Puerto Rico That Rises When Systems Align

If you stand at any high point in Puerto Rico — from El Yunque, from the mountains of Adjuntas, from the cliffs near Cabo Rojo — and look outward, you can see the complete contradiction and the full promise of the island.

Only by pushing an agenda that includes these twelve set of goals that every citizen can understand, preserve and push to achieve.

### Twelve Transformative Goals for Puerto Rico 2030

- 1. Achieve real GNP growth above 4%:** Break the island's long-term 2% growth ceiling and shift into sustained expansion.
- 2. Build a high-value industrial ecosystem contributing 25%+ of GNP:** Expand life sciences, MedTech, aerospace, resilience tech, and advanced manufacturing clusters.
- 3. Create 300,000 high-quality private-sector jobs:** Reverse demographic decline and expand the productive workforce.
- 4. Raise labor participation to 60%:** Add 300,000+ workers to the economy through workforce alignment and mobility strategies.
- 5. Reduce unemployment to 4%:** Match strong U.S. labor market performance by aligning skills with employer demand.
- 6. Modernize and streamline government operations and permitting:** Move from multi-year permit delays to a modern, digital, fast, accountable system.
- 7. Increase median household income by 40%:** Lift families from ~\$25,096 to roughly \$35,134 a year and above the U.S. Poverty Line through better wages and opportunity.
- 8. Transform the education-to-workforce pipeline:** Build a skills-driven model with STEM, trade schools, apprenticeships, and employer-designed training.
- 9. Increase local agricultural production to 30%+:** Reduce import dependence and strengthen food security through modern agritech.
- 10. Establish a reliable, resilient, affordable 21st-century energy grid:** Cut outages by 70% and stabilize industrial, commercial, and residential operations.
- 11. Position Puerto Rico as a global strategic hub for life sciences, nearshoring, aerospace, and dual-use innovation:** Leverage Arecibo, Aguadilla, and Roosevelt Roads as anchors of knowledge, manufacturing, and national-security identity.



## TWELVE TRANSFORMATIVE GOALS FOR PUERTO RICO 2030



Achieve real GNP growth above 4%



Build a high-value industrial knowledge economy contributing 25%+ of GNP



Create 300,000 high-quality private-sector jobs



Raise labor participation to 60%



Reduce unemployment to 4%



Modernize and streamline government operations and permitting



Increase median household income by 40%



Increase local agricultural production to 30%+



Establish a reliable, resilient, affordable 21st-century energy grid



Position Puerto Rico as a global strategic hub



Shift the nonprofit sector toward



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- 12. Shift the nonprofit sector toward economic mobility and community transformation:** Move from emergency relief dominance to workforce, entrepreneurship, and opportunity-building investments.

### **A Nation Ready to Rise**

On one side stands **an economy waiting to flourish**. On the other stands **a people waiting for their systems to finally work as hard as they do**.

Transformation does not come from one reform or one investment.

It comes from **alignment** — when:

- Energy
- Industry
- Workforce
- Government
- Agriculture
- Strategic identity
- Capital and community

move in the same direction, at the same time.

When this alignment occurs, Puerto Rico will not rise slowly.

**It will rise all at once**, crossing the threshold where progress becomes self-reinforcing, where the island's brilliance finally matches its potential. This is the decade when Puerto Rico decides who it will become.

**And the world is watching.**

**“Nations do not rise by accident; they rise when their people decide that potential is no longer enough — and Puerto Rico’s future will be written not in the stars, but in the choices we make together, right now, by setting and achieving the agenda we set today”.**



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