

Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative and Cognizant U.S. Foundation Release "Building A Lifelong Learning System: A Roadmap for Cities"

Amidst COVID-19 economic recovery, report outlines concrete recommendations for how cities can build a resilient workforce through lifelong learning

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative today released a new report, *Building A Lifelong Learning System: A Roadmap for Cities*, outlining strategies for cities to strengthen education and workforce systems to support lifelong learning. This report is the culmination of a \$1.25 million grant from the [Cognizant U.S. Foundation](#) to advance local education, training, and policy initiatives to support workers navigating the 21st century workforce.

While lifelong learning was a critical component to building a competitive workforce long before COVID-19, helping people find employment, re-enter the labor market, or develop new skills and competencies, has become even more urgent. Increasingly, cities recognize the importance of building equitable, accessible lifelong learning systems to help residents advance their careers.

Over the past year, the Initiative and Foundation brought together local leaders, industry executives, academic institutions, training providers, and policymakers from Chicago, Ill., Phoenix, Ariz., and Hartford, Conn., to better understand how American cities can develop lifelong learning systems to support workers. A recent World Economic Forum report forecasts that 50% of the world's employees will need reskilling by 2025—and, according to Pew Research Center, more than half of all employed adults believe it's essential to pursue new training to stay competitive in the workforce.

Building on the conversations convened on the frontlines of this challenge, this report illuminates the barriers and opportunities of creating a system that helps, not hinders, lifelong learning. The Initiative and Foundation will host a [virtual event](#) on December 3, 2020, to further explore key findings from the report.

Cities have considerable assets to meet this challenge, from world-renowned educational institutions and innovative training providers to employers and nonprofit partners. This report details concrete steps mayors and city leaders can take to build integrated and effective lifelong learning systems, including:

- Create a Deputy Mayor position and establish an advisory council for lifelong learning
- Build a digital platform for jobs and training and expand career counseling
- Support a more equitable education and training system

"While much is known about the role that the federal and state governments play in promoting education and training, less attention has been focused on the opportunity that exists for cities to take a leadership role in helping their workers adapt and thrive in a turbulent and changing labor market," said Alastair Fitzpayne, Executive Director, Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative. "Cities have been centers of growth and innovation in large part due to the unique resources that exist in cities—from world-class universities and community colleges to a diverse mix of employers. Based on conversations with city leaders in Chicago, Phoenix, and Hartford, this report proposes concrete steps that cities can take to promote lifelong learning."

"As we navigate both the changing nature of work and the economic impacts brought on by COVID-19, cities have the opportunity to leverage the collective power of employers, education institutions, policymakers, and local organizations to build a resilient, competitive workforce," said Kristen Titus, Executive Director, Cognizant U.S. Foundation. "The current crisis accelerated ongoing inequities and changes in our workforce systems—this research helps shine a light on the path forward."

According to the report, cities have an opportunity to play a larger role in helping unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers better navigate this complex landscape—in doing so, cities can build an inclusive lifelong learning system that fosters a skilled, competitive, and economically mobile workforce.

About the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative

The Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative is a nonpartisan effort to identify concrete ways to address the challenges American workers and businesses face due to the changing nature of work in the 21st century. Established in 2015, the Initiative is driven by the leadership of Honorary Co-Chairs Senator Mark R. Warner and Purdue University President and former Governor of Indiana Mitch Daniels, and Co-Chairs John Bridgeland and Bruce Reed. Executive Director Alastair Fitzpayne leads an Aspen Institute staff, based in Washington, DC. To learn more, visit www.aspeninstitute.org/futureofwork.

About the Cognizant U.S. Foundation

The Cognizant U.S. Foundation supports organizations working to inspire, educate and prepare people of all ages to succeed in the workforce of today and tomorrow. Since 2018, the Foundation has committed \$50 million to ensure all individuals have equitable opportunity to thrive in the digital economy. Learn more about the Foundation: <https://www.cognizantusfoundation.org>

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