Navigating the 21st Century Workforce: The Cognizant U.S. Foundation and Aspen Institute for the Future of Work Highlight the Importance of Lifelong Learning

The Aspen Institute Future of Work recently 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.

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. Brought together for a virtual event on December 3, these leaders discussed how cities can ensure workers get the relevant skills training they need. Among the speakers were Kristen Titus, Executive Director, Cognizant U.S. Foundation, and Becky Schmitt, Chief People Officer, Cognizant.

“A recent World Economic Forum report forecasts that 50% of the world’s employees will need reskilling by 2025—and more than half of all employed adults believe it’s essential to pursue new training to stay competitive in the workforce,” noted Titus. “We know that the key to economic mobility is not only having access to a quality job, but also the continuing education and skills training necessary to succeed in that job. This is paramount to lifelong learning.”

"As an employer, I think we have a bird’s-eye view of what skills are needed for the future—whether that's months or years out,” said Schmitt. “We have a plan based on how we see our business moving.”

Further upcoming research from Cognizant’s Center for the Future of Work entitled *21 Places of the Future* supports the findings from Aspen Institute. The body of work examines locations around the world that have discovered the secret recipe for creating a roadmap to the future: a mix of education, capital, skills, and lifestyles that the cities in the Aspen report are focused on following.

“Aspen’s report highlights the vital role developing, retaining and attracting skills are to the future prospects of an area,” said Ben Pring, Cognizant’s Vice President, Head of Thought Leadership & Managing Director, Center for the Future of Work. “Prioritizing life-long education is ‘job one’ for those in both the public and private sector looking to ensure widely distributed opportunity.”

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