

Cognizant Foundation Awards \$5.5 Million to 13 Organizations in the U.S. and Canada

New grants will support work to build an inclusive tech talent pipeline and provide historically excluded populations with equitable pathways into careers

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Today the [Cognizant Foundation](#) announced \$5.5 million in grants to 13 organizations across the United States and Canada working to introduce K-12 students to computer science and STEM-related fields and create equitable pathways into technology careers for historically excluded populations.

"While technology has created unparalleled opportunities for many, far too few have access to the quality education, social capital and jobs needed to improve their economic and social mobility," said Kristen Titus, executive director of the Cognizant Foundation. "Our grantee partners are working to equip educators with resources to introduce students to computer science and STEM concepts; deliver industry-aligned skills training; and ensure equitable access to high-paying tech careers."

The 13 organizations receiving grants are:

- Ada Developers Academy
- Braven
- Code Nation
- Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA)
- Girls, Inc. of Metro Denver
- Girlstart
- Junior Achievement Central Ontario
- Maker Ed
- The Marcy Lab School
- New York Hall of Science (NYSCI)
- Road to Hire
- United Way Greater Toronto
- University of Toronto Engineering

Strengthening and Diversifying the Tech Talent Pipeline

A growing [body of research](#) indicates that early identity plays a powerful role in the jobs and careers we ultimately have—which means that to expand and diversify the pipeline into fields like technology, more people need to be able to see themselves in the work and that needs to start early.

Organizations like CSTA, Maker Ed and University of Toronto Engineering are equipping educators with the training and resources necessary to inspire students to pursue computer science and other STEM fields. Additionally, organizations such as Code Nation, Girls, Inc. of Metro Denver, Girlstart, JA Central Ontario and NYSCI have proven models that provide young people with hands-on, inspiring programming and curriculum outside the classroom.

Expanding and Scaling New Pathways into Tech Careers

As we continue to respond to the pandemic's inequitable economic impacts, it is critical to support organizations expanding access to the industry-relevant education, technical skills training and social capital that individuals need to successfully transition into and throughout a career in the tech industry.

Localized leaders such as those at Braven, Marcy Lab School, Road to Hire and United Way Greater Toronto intimately understand their city's ecosystem of employers and workforce needs as they scale new and equitable pathways to economic mobility. Further, organizations like Ada Developers Academy are applying localized successes diversifying the tech industry as they expand to new markets.

This announcement continues the Cognizant Foundation's [international expansion](#), marking the foundation's first investments in Toronto, Canada. Together, the foundation's \$5.5 million in new grants mark a significant investment in organizations at the [front line](#) of preparing the workforce of today and tomorrow in communities across the U.S. and Canada.

Below are quotes from each organization:

Ada Developers Academy—Lauren Sato, CEO: "This partnership with the Cognizant Foundation has been such a powerful one from the beginning, given our shared goal of preparing people for the workforce of today and tomorrow. With this funding, Ada will carry out this important work in Atlanta—a city with an incredibly vibrant community and growing demand for technologists. We aim to ensure that the wealth the tech sector brings to Atlanta stays in and truly benefits the community."

Braven—Aimée Eubanks Davis, founder and CEO: "This generous gift will help propel Fellows who are pursuing careers in STEM and tech on the path to strong first jobs and economic mobility. I am so incredibly thankful for the Cognizant Foundation's support of Braven and the Fellows we serve. And, as an African American founder, access to a network such as Cognizant's is invaluable."

Code Nation—Becca Novak, CEO: "The Cognizant Foundation is one of our fiercest champions and has helped us grow to where we are today—this additional support will continue to strengthen and scale core school programs, expand our alumni program, and add critical infrastructure to help us bring our programs to more high school students. We share a mutual mission to prepare all communities, especially those underrepresented in tech, for the jobs of the future. On behalf of all the students, volunteers and our dedicated team, we thank the foundation for believing in Code Nation."

Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA)—Jake Baskin, executive director: "Computer science teachers need ongoing professional learning opportunities and communities of support in order to develop their craft in a new field. Through CSTA's partnership with the Cognizant Foundation, we will deepen our investment in local chapter leadership development and expand the high-quality professional development opportunities we provide to thousands of computer science teachers across the country each year."

Girls, Inc. of Metro Denver—Sonya Ulibarri, president and CEO: "Girls Inc. of Metro Denver is thrilled to work alongside the Cognizant Foundation to create meaningful experiences for girls who otherwise may not have the opportunity to explore and engage with STEM industries in a safe, pro-girl environment. This funding will connect middle and high school girls to vital STEM education, career exploration, hands-on field experiences and paid internships, creating pathways toward the pursuit of higher education, economic self-sufficiency and fulfilling work."

Girlstart—Jennifer Pratt, board chair: "We are so grateful for our incredible partnership with the Cognizant Foundation. The foundation's generous support makes STEM learning possible for hundreds of girls who are underserved across North and Central Texas."

Junior Achievement Central Ontario—Jennifer Holmes Weier, president and CEO: "JA Central Ontario is delighted to partner with the Cognizant Foundation to empower high school students through JA's flagship Company Program. This unique learning experience inspires students to become entrepreneurs and leaders in their communities. Together with volunteers from the foundation, we will bring the world of work to life for students across Central Ontario, shaping their future and fueling their dreams—as they create the economy and society of tomorrow."

Maker Ed—Kyle Cornforth, executive director: "Maker Ed is grateful for and excited by our partnership with the Cognizant Foundation to develop the nation's largest network of educators bringing hands-on, learner-driven, liberatory practices to learners everywhere. With this relationship, we have a unique opportunity to provide stronger infrastructure to, offer more resources for, and build greater community with educators who strive to foster hands-on learning experiences filled with joy and equity for our nation's learners."

The Marcy Lab School—Reuben Ogbonna, executive director: "The Marcy Lab School is honored to partner with the Cognizant Foundation—their funding, network and guidance will allow us to support 100 students and alumni this year while building the infrastructure to serve 500 more over the next three years. The Cognizant Foundation supports the country's most innovative solutions to the systemic challenges facing our country's workforce—we are excited to be among them."

New York Hall of Science (NYSCI)—Margaret Honey, president and CEO: "We are thrilled to have the Cognizant Foundation's partnership and investment in NYSCI's youth and workforce development work, which aims to diversify the STEM talent pipeline by leveling the playing field for NYC high school and college students from underrepresented groups. With the foundation's support, we will provide students with access to high-quality STEM learning experiences and employment opportunities that build critical workforce skills and provide multiple, dynamic pathways to careers in the technology-driven workforce."

Road to Hire—Kacey Grantham, executive director: "This grant will ensure under-resourced young adults have on-ramps to paid tech apprenticeships and high-earning careers that place them on the path toward economic justice. Road to Hire is proud to partner with the Cognizant Foundation to create equitable access to in-demand careers in tech."

United Way Greater Toronto—Daniele Zanotti, president and CEO: "As the effects of Covid-19 continue to unfold, we see individuals who were already struggling fall even deeper into poverty. Our network of 280 agencies is on the frontline of skyrocketing food insecurity, mental health challenges and the need for good jobs—beginning with our young people. Thanks to the generous support and foresight of the Cognizant Foundation, we are building pathways to employment and brighter futures for our youth—from immediate relief to long-term, positive change."

University of Toronto—Christopher Yip, dean of the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering: "Engineering is at its best when everyone is empowered to participate. Through this partnership, we are launching a new program that enables young women to see themselves as change-makers and creators of technology. We are also developing programming that gives local elementary school teachers the skills needed to confidently deliver coding curriculum to the next generation of innovators. We are honoured to be one of the Cognizant Foundation's first Canadian grantees—I can't wait to see where it goes from here."

About the Cognizant Foundation

The Cognizant Foundation works to inspire, educate and prepare people of all ages to succeed in the workforce of today and tomorrow. Since its founding in 2018, the foundation has awarded approximately \$60 million to support organizations working to ensure all communities are prepared for the jobs driving the future. Learn more at www.cognizantfdn.org.

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