



UPSKILL UPDATE

July 2020

New Report Challenges Partners to Take Collective Action to Drive Effective Workforce Development

On July 16, UpSkill Houston initiative released a new report highlighting the disruption that greater automation and increased requirements for digital skills is causing regional workers and the importance of helping workers build digital skills for occupations that can lead to economic opportunity.

The report, "Navigating the Changing Nature of Work," spotlights analytical approaches to identify viable and desirable upskilling progressions for good middle-skill occupations and to remove barriers creating bottlenecks along those pathways. It highlights research conducted by TEconomy Partners, LLC, and follows our April report, "Middle Skills Matter to Greater Houston," which underscores the long-term and critical role of middle-skill occupations in creating economic opportunity.

We believe our region's workforce development stakeholders can address barriers and accelerate efforts to attract, train, place and grow workers into good careers through the following actions:

- Tackle upskilling by aggregating demand and identifying skills.
- Highlight opportunities in advanced middle-skill careers.
- Encourage workers across all occupations to develop strong digital skills.
- Create an upskilling framework to guide individuals to pathways of opportunity.
- Identify and map good job transitions.
- Support and coach workers in upskilling pathways.

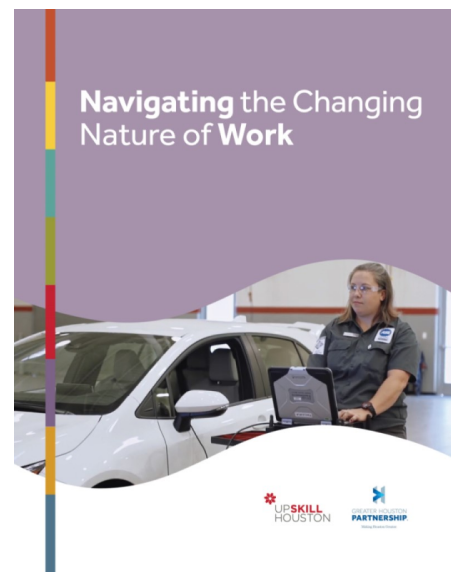
To support these efforts, UpSkill Houston will continue to convene employers, education and community leaders and other workforce stakeholders in innovative ways with the goal of driving and organizing collective action to support individuals who need reskilling and upskilling to acquire the skills necessary to participate in our evolving digital economy. We will also continue or work to support workers as they navigate new career and skills transitions across jobs and industries toward economic opportunity and mobility.

[Read the more about the new report and see it in full here.](#)

Executive Committee Develops Strategies to Accelerate Work

UpSkill Houston's executive committee this month held three working sessions to advance three pillars of our strategic plan this calendar year: identifying key transferable skills and how they can be assessed, strengthening career guidance and developing and sharing information and data related to career pathways and transitions.

Committee members used these sessions to articulate and focus strategic actions to help



students and workers identify and follow pathways to good careers in our regional economy. The full committee will meet in August.

Brookings Economic Development Expert Makes Virtual Visit

On July 29, senior fellow with the Brookings Institution's Global Development Program Marcela Escobari will speak with Peter Beard and an UpSkill Works Forum audience about the critical role reskilling can play in worker mobility.

Escobari leads Brookings' Workforce of the Future initiative, which explores how cities and regions can attract growth and nurture good jobs; how skill-building organizations and policymakers measure and target skills needed by emerging local industries to help workers transition effectively; and how companies can use data on worker transitions to retrain and prepare their workforce for the jobs of tomorrow, and invest in their workforce to benefit their communities and bottom lines.

The initiative's research has informed several major bodies of research including the reports "[Growing Cities that Work for All](#)," which uses data analytics to inform city policy, inclusive growth, and skilling strategies, and "[Realism About Reskilling](#)," which leverages data to highlight realities of low-wage work and maps realistic pathways to mobility. It also produced the visualization "[A Roadmap for Growing Good Jobs](#)," presenting options to inform regional development based on different priorities and tailored to the strengths of individual cities.



Escobari's insights into the tools, practices and frameworks that can be used to help individuals identify and navigate career pathways will help our initiative accelerate our work to help Houstonians connect to good jobs that increase their economic opportunity and prosperity.

[Learn more about Brookings' Workforce of the Future initiative.](#)

[Register for the Forum.](#)

Higher Ed Aid Will Support Reskilling for Displaced Workers

Gov. Greg Abbott announced this month that Texas will allot \$118 million in federal funding to support higher education in the state. The funding will include \$46.5 million for targeted financial aid for upskilling and reskilling displaced workers in high-demand fields.

In all, \$93 million of the allocation will help individuals continue or restart their progress toward earning a post-secondary degree or credential, whether they seek upskilling or reskilling, including individuals with some college credit but no credential, or are students who need emergency support in order to remain enrolled in higher education. The funds will also include \$15 million for strategic education and workforce data infrastructure and \$10 million to improve the quality of online learning.

This funding follows \$57 million already allocated to offset potential cuts to state financial aid programs.

[Read the full press release here.](#)

Global Skills Initiative to Expand Digital Skills

Microsoft has announced a new global skills initiative to bring more digital skills to 25 million people worldwide by the close of the year, an effort that could have a profound effect on individuals seeking to reskill in order to reenter the workforce or increase their mobility.

The initiative will immediately bring together all aspects of the company, combining new and

existing resources from Microsoft, LinkedIn and GitHub to help individuals reskill and pursue in-demand jobs. This includes:

- the use of data to identify in-demand jobs;
- free access to learning paths and content; and
- low-cost certifications and free job-seeking tools to help individuals who develop these skills pursue new jobs.

The resources are available at opportunity.linkedin.com and will be available in English, French, German and Spanish.

The company is also offering \$20 million in cash grants to help nonprofit organizations support people in need.

[Read more about this initiative from Microsoft.](#)

UpSkill in the Community

Keeping Workforce Development Top-of-Mind Critical Amid Changing Workforce Landscape

Continuing outreach that helps students become familiar with different careers and career tracks remains critically important despite ongoing changes in greater Houston's regional economy.

For example, the petrochemical manufacturing industry still faces a projected workforce shortage as aging workers retire over the next several years, according to Patti Bell, Economic Alliance Houston Port Region manager of workforce development/Dream It. Do It. Southeast Texas. Bell coordinates a team of volunteers who serve as industry ambassadors to area students, parents, school administrators, and unemployed or under-employed adults.

The group maintains the [Gulf Coast Workforce Events Calendar](#), where organizations looking for speakers can submit events and volunteers can see and sign up for these opportunities. She anticipates that upcoming outreach will be conducted virtually. Bell says the best volunteer ambassadors are those who want to talk with students and share their stories and how they entered into their careers, regardless of the twists or turns along the way.

The Construction Career Collaborative (C3) is forming a new educational advisory committee, whose members would coordinate industry messaging, create a speakers bureau and manage outreach events like C3's career fair and the WeCan career expo it held with Aldine Independent School District last fall. Members would represent the organization on school district advisory boards, according to C3 Director Angela Robbins-Taylor. Robbins-Taylor is currently seeking volunteers who work in commercial construction; the companies or organizations committee members represent do not have to be part of C3.

Individuals and companies can help make students aware of, and understand, the wealth of different careers and opportunities they might not otherwise recognize. They can also help students visualize themselves in - and want to pursue - these careers. "If we can help them see it, they're going to want to be it," Robbins-Taylor said.

Individuals interested in volunteering through Dream It. Do It. Southeast Texas can email Bell at patti@allianceportregion.com. Those interested in serving on C3's advisory committee can email Robbins-Taylor at angela@c3.org.

Learning Opportunities & Events

- **July 29: [President's Address](#)**; Partnership President and CEO Bob Harvey will discuss the latest data on the pandemic and the Partnership's recent related work and Marc Boom, President and CEO of Houston Methodist, will discuss how business leaders should view the coming months and what they can do to help slow the spread
- **July 29: [UpSkill Works Forum: Upgrading Career Prospects for Houston's Middle-](#)**

[Skill Workforce](#); UpSkill Houston will host Brookings Institution senior fellow Marcela Escobari for a conversation around data, tools and frameworks that can be used to help individuals identify and navigate new career progressions

- **July 29:** [COVID-19 Business Forum - Regional Back to School Update](#); The Partnership will facilitate a discussion with regional independent school district leaders around what to expect during the new school year
- **Aug. 4:** [Houston Facts](#); The Partnership's Research team will provide an overview of the Houston Facts publication
- **Aug.7:** [State of the Senate](#); The Partnership hosts U.S. Sen. John Cornyn for a discussion of the actions the 116th Congress has taken in response to COVID-19 and his work on legislation affecting the greater Houston region
- **Aug. 7-8:** [The Mayor's Back 2 School Fest](#); Houston elementary school students and their families can receive free backpacks, school supplies, masks and food via this drive-through distribution event
- **Aug. 12:** [Global Perspectives with Marvin E. Odum and Robert S. Kaplan](#); This event will feature a moderated discussion between Marvin E. Odum, City of Houston's COVID-19 relief and recovery czar and former chairman and president of Shell Oil Company, and Robert S. Kaplan, president of the Dallas Fed
- **Aug. 25:** [iWorkHouston Hiring Expo](#); This unique virtual hiring event will connect Houstonians with employers, second-chance job opportunities, free resources and more
- **Sept. 18:** [State of Education](#); During this Partnership event, Texas State Coordinating Board Commissioner Harrison Keller will speak about innovation within the Coordinating Board and what to expect in the state's higher education system post-COVID-19
- **Sept. 25:** [State of the Houston Region](#); The Partnership will bring together a panel of county judges for a conversation around emergency preparedness and coordination

Resources & Readings

- [Strada Public Viewpoint Weekly Dashboard](#); Updated weekly, the COVID-19 Work and Education Survey offers insights to the education and training providers, policymakers, employers, and individual Americans who are navigating the COVID-19 crisis
- [Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker](#); This real-time economic tracker created with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Brown University provides a variety of user-friendly datasets around employment and earnings, consumer spending and business revenue, among others
- [3 ways cities can redefine their economic trajectories](#); The Brookings Institution's Workforce of the Future initiative presents three strategies for charting a course to shared prosperity and inclusive economic growth
- [TWC: Expanded Funding Provides Skilling Opportunities for Workers and Unemployed](#); New TWC initiatives support training for existing workers and new hires of businesses impacted by COVID-19, another provides access to online learning platforms for unemployed individuals
- [Online educator offering courses for jobs available now](#); Working Nation highlights a partnership between Coursera and local governments to provide free training



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Led by and for employers, UpSkill Houston builds the pipeline of skilled workers to grow the regional economy and provide opportunity for all Houstonians.

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