The *Day After* Project
A project of the Achieving the Promise of Work Initiative
Institute for Work & the Economy

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1   Introduction

In the United States, events of 2020 — notably the twin pandemics of COVID-19 on the one hand and police-involved killings on the other, compounded by an historically divisive election – have exposed and exacerbated inequities in fundamental human and civil rights. Clearly, the rollover from 2020 to 2021 will provide no respite from these challenges.

The brunt of these upheavals continues to be felt by underserved populations. The health and job effects of COVID-19 in the U.S. are felt disproportionately by Blacks, Latinx, and Indigenous people, and by women of all races and ethnicities. Widening schisms are adversely affecting mental health and heightening a sense of helplessness. Workers with disabilities are experiencing the consequences of being last in and first out with respect to jobs.

In response to these events, the Institute for Work & the Economy, using its own resources and time, stepped forward in April 2020 to begin a series of virtual *Day After* conversations. Altogether, the Institute and its partners[2] convened nine gatherings involving over 150 participants who are engaged directly with people in their respective communities. They were asked to imagine how the events that are defining 2020 can be used to achieve greater good and what that means for the "*Day After*." Each of these conversations are two hours and are conducted virtually on Zoom. Every participant took the floor and freely expressed their views knowing our promise that nothing would be attributed without explicit permission.

There are two primary goals for each of these discussions: (1) to come up with a set of individual and collective actions that face the challenges and seize the corresponding opportunities for change, and (2) to discover larger ideas from these conversations, report them as general understandings, and offer these findings as contributions to a broad public policy agenda.

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[1] The author is solely responsible for the contents of this paper. Mary V. L. Wright, Chair of the Achieving the Promise of Work initiative, co-convened the "*Day After*" conversations. While many people contributed to the content of this paper, the resulting text does not necessarily reflect their conclusions or those of the initiative's chair, the Board of the Institute, and the partners and participants of the "*Day After*" conversations.

[2] Our partners included the National Urban League (2 conversations), PHI (long term care), SourceAmerica (2 conversations), and Nebraska Community Foundation. Two conversations in the greater Charlotte/Mecklenburg area were organized by Institute Board Chair, Ronnie Bryant. Peter Creticos organized the pilot conversation in the Chicago/Cook metro area in collaboration with the office of Cook County Commissioner Alma Anaya.

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History teaches us that bold solutions begin in small ways. They often start with those who have deep knowledge of their communities or those with whom they share an identity. They grow when they connect their perceptions and ideas with others, and then work together to strategize on how to move ahead collectively. While we do not promise that bold, paradigm shattering ideas from any of the conversations that we host, we are confident that many difference-makers will emerge.

What we learned is that the tragedies and turmoil that mark this year are opening the door to convert many moments into sustained movements. The voices of many who were ignored are now being heard and they are finding people on the frontlines who will commit and risk time, resources, and reputations to undo structural inequities and inequality, and to expand possibilities and opportunities.

People told us that in finding the path forward, it is important to acknowledge that there are also many gaps in this unity as made evident by growing political and racial polarization, and false equivalencies between personal freedoms and collective responsibilities. Movements also are vulnerable to fatigue experienced by funders as well as by those who are leading change efforts. Adding to this, frontline organizations serving the needs of underserved communities are chronically under-resourced and are forced to focus on near-term results rather than systemic changes. They need to be grown and sustained. They need to be afforded the opportunity and resources to act strategically. One-time revenues need to become sustainable investments; public awareness needs to become a shared public consciousness.

All participants in *Day After* conversations personally serve their clients and communities. Many worry that there are critical community-based support systems that employ them are at risk of collapse due to restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of the coronavirus or disruptions in their business models. Many also recognize that old business models and practices will no longer work. New revenue streams need to be established; new technologies need to be adopted and used; new operations systems need to be employed. Some will fail if they are unable to adapt – even reinvent themselves – as they continue to serve during times of great uncertainty and stress.

We heard reports that philanthropic support addressing needs exposed by the events of 2020 from businesses and foundations increased this year, but the fear is that this new support will be neither sufficient nor sustained beyond the near term. People on the calls are grateful for new support, and they acknowledge these contributions as being genuine efforts to address fissures in society and the gaps in the economy. They also worry that institutional players will want to return to pre-pandemics "normal," and that this round of expanded philanthropy and investments will last only as long as the events of 2020 are front of mind.

The history of federal, state, and local workforce and economic development legislation and policies is replete with examples of policies that promise to eliminate silos. And, yet the details of comprehensive legislation do the opposite. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,

in combination with other policies in education, disability, and economic development, taken together, is an example of well-meaning policies that result in siloed programs.

We heard people say that they believe that the fissures are deliberate and purposeful. Regardless of whether this is true, structural differences perpetuate and grow in part because policymakers are risk adverse and resist making large changes. Consequently, incremental "solutions" focus on the outward manifestations of problems and not the underlying causes. For example, we learned of near-heroic efforts to cut red tape and permit creative problem solving in response to emergency conditions created by COVID-19; yet the take-up on these measures was frustratingly limited, perhaps because the regulatory changes seemed temporary.

The purpose of this document is to describe what we have learned so far from the *Day After* project. Details of each conversation can be found in the summaries published on www.promiseofwork.org/resources). There is also a link to a graphic displaying a list of the observations, opportunities and actions contained within the individual summaries.

In Section 2, we provide an overview of the 2020 environment and the pressing needs that we were privileged to learn through the often soul-baring stories that were shared. In Section 3 we offer an agenda for social action derived from the many ideas offered over the course of the year. Where appropriate, we also explicitly include ideas that we heard from related initiatives of the Institute. Section 4 provides our conclusion and vision for the next steps.

2   Background: 2020 Overview

The year 2020 is difficult to fathom fully. To begin to grasp the immediate and long-term consequences of both the COVID-19 pandemic and police-involved killings, with the subsequent civil actions taken around the country, we examine the issues that garnered the greatest attention across the nine *Day After* conversations.

2.1.1   Revealing the value of essential workers

The shockwaves delivered by the COVID-19 pandemic are prompting people world-wide to pause and reflect. Domestically, many Americans are opening their eyes and minds to the social and economic injustices that have long preceded 2020, and they are starting the journey to seek new opportunities for change.

In 2020, the question "How does America value essential workers?" is now squarely a matter of national discourse. The answer to this question must factor directly in future public policy decisions at all levels. COVID-19 has had its greatest impact on low-wage essential workers who are disproportionately African American, Latinx, Indigenous People, immigrants, and women of all races and ethnicities. These workers include bus drivers, retail cashiers, food service workers, meat processors, manufacturing workers, and direct care workers in nursing homes and other health facilities. For these jobs, work-from-home is not an option; the people

who do these jobs are at greater risk of contracting the novel corona virus and suffering its complications.

For example, as we learned from our Massachusetts conversation about direct care services, frontline workers are at the "bleeding edge" in confronting the coronavirus pandemic. A large proportion of these workers earn the minimum wage – often less than a living wage – and care for people who are poor themselves. Many direct care settings, particularly those serving indigent clients, are under-resourced and are COVID-19 hotspots. The increased demand for long term care workers is resulting in staffing shortages exacerbated by growing rates of illness, staff burnout, and self-defeating immigration policies, such as the loss of temporary protective status of some direct care workers.

Lawmakers must now confront the strategic policy question: How do we value these essential workers? Post-pandemic, will they just return to being out of mind and out of sight, just like in 2019? Will movements such as the fight for the $15 minimum wage for all workers gain traction, and will $15 be enough to sustainably feed and house workers and their families? Does an adequate social safety net exist today and what should it become? These and other related questions will need to be addressed and resolved.

2.1.2   The pandemic and the labor market

There are other ways in which the events of 2020 are accelerating and broadening changes taking place in the labor market. Many on the *Day After* calls said that baked-in inequities and inequalities are being exacerbated by events of this year. Unlike prior recessions, the 2020 recession is hitting low-wage workers in lower-skilled jobs the hardest. This was reported first in the Chicago conversation in April and was repeated several times over the year. The Great Recession of 2008 started with the financial sector imploding and then extended out to main street businesses, affecting middle skilled and middle-income jobs the most. Many low-wage, low-skilled jobs were spared, and post-recession growth was fastest in this category.

This time, businesses that can only operate on-site have been hit hard; and low-wage, low-skilled jobs constitute a large share of the work in many of these businesses. These include accommodation and food services, "non-essential" retail, many forms of transportation, health care (ironically), and arts, entertainment and recreation, naming a few. Recovery is also most tenuous for these workers, even after herd immunity is achieved, since many of the businesses that employed them will not re-open – especially small businesses. Many renters and homeowners who are behind on their housing payments will face foreclosure and growing food vulnerabilities no matter the government action to mitigate the effects of the economic downturn.

People on our calls were emphatic that it is time that policy makers seize what has happened in 2020 as an opportunity to act boldly and think creatively as they deal with profound changes in the relationships between workers and those who engage them.

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Traditional forms of place-based employment that characterized the formal economy of the 20th and early 21st centuries are giving way to alternative forms of working arrangements.

Four years ago, Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb captured the attention of policy makers as heralding the arrival of "gig work" as a viable means to earn a living without being tied to a schedule or employer. The Institute and the National Governors Association partnered with a group of states on a project to explore the depth and breadth of "on demand" work, which also included workers whose schedules and worksites varied daily or weekly. We learned that Uber and similar electronic platforms engage a small portion of the workers who either by choice or necessity rely on informal work arrangements to meet a variety of needs. The reasons range earning enough to cover essentials, to a choice of lifestyle, to accumulating additional resources to cover a large purchase, travel, or even a luxury item.

This year, when "gig work" came up in *Day After* conversations, it was often about survival: the pandemic has revealed that workers are using gig work as a lifeline. This is happening not only in places experiencing high rates of unemployment. Workers with multiple part-time or gig jobs are also found in places like Nebraska where unemployment is relatively low and job participation rates are high.

What we hear and see, and what we learned from our work on the on-demand workforce, is that legacy policies governing compensation, working conditions, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and worker safety are increasingly out-of-synch with new realities. On demand workers, including "gig workers," "freelancers," and self-employed business owners do not receive regular wages, will not be compensated for work-related disabilities short of filing a lawsuit for an injury, and except for this year's pandemic unemployment assistance, people without a regular employer have no access to short-term compensation between jobs. Many other workers who receive paychecks and whose lives are governed by just-in-time schedules must constantly juggle home and job responsibilities. New policies will be needed to establish new guardrails as conditions change; other policies may redesign the safety net serving workers, their families, and main street businesses.

The pandemic is also drawing a troubling illustration of the global nature of work and production supply chains. The move towards remote work — which appeared to be growing prior to the pandemic but not yet established as a standard — has been required and promoted in 2020 beyond all expectations. This change is prompting a shift in workforce and economic development thinking.

At first glance, many see the acceptance of remote work as opening new opportunities, especially for those who live outside metro areas or who needed extra accommodations in offices or transportation. At the same time, geographic boundaries of labor markets are disappearing, and competition will become more global. Some on our calls worry that the move to remote work will reduce opportunities for people to join essential social networks linked to successful career pathways, leaving those on the outside looking in. Several also worry that

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many workers will be undercut in price and even outperformed by competitors residing in low cost-of-living places. By extension, as the locations of where work is performed and who obtains the work are de-coupled, public systems will need to reflect the new reality that their clients are individuals and not businesses, and that area residents might be working remotely with the beneficiaries of their labor located somewhere else in the country or even the world. Long distance employers will have less incentive to secure training for their workers and greater incentive to shift that burden onto individuals.

The pandemic also adds new barriers to employment for other parts of society. For example, we learned about workers with disabilities who are denied employment or are otherwise restricted because they wrongly are considered to be especially vulnerable to COVID-19. We heard reports that people with disabilities are being pushed back in the queue for jobs, and some are denied publicly funded relief.[3] Some workers with disabilities are being moved from integrated community-based work settings to center-based work settings as jobs in their communities get slashed.

Some Urban League affiliates reported that returning citizens are put under strict parole due to COVID-19 restrictions and are thus blocked from seeking or sustaining employment. Workers of all backgrounds and career paths who have not accumulated enough savings to carry themselves over are especially vulnerable to disruptions in employment. New entrants, workers with disabilities, and returning workers who are last hired and are then among the first fired are especially squeezed as the pandemic suspends and closes businesses. Women – who traditionally carry the greater burden in child and family care – are dropping out of the workforce at strikingly high rates.

2.1.3 The challenges of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship that goes beyond gig work may provide an alternative path to traditional employment, but this is fraught with challenges. For some, starting one's own enterprise is driven more by necessity and less by purposeful pursuit of new business opportunities. Necessity entrepreneurs start a business because they cannot find a job, or their current jobs cannot sustain them and their families. They try to monetize what they know in order to put food on the table. We heard this story in small as well as large urban areas, in rural places, by people who engage with workers with disabilities, and by those who assist returning citizens. In short, people are taking great risks by striking out on their own with no clear idea as to how to succeed over the long term.

During the pandemic, necessity-driven startups provide little long-term shelter. Many of these businesses, which include small shops, cleaning services, hair and nail salons, repair services, and similar neighborhood and main street businesses, face daunting odds. They depend on the resources of the entrepreneur and their family and friends. They do not have

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3 Many individuals with disabilities in congregate settings in pre-vocational training funded by Medicaid discovered that they were not eligible for unemployment insurance upon being separated from their work.

capital to weather economic hardships. That is because most main street businesses do not excite venture capitalists, outside investors, and economic developers who rather want to fund the high-flyers of the future.

Of course, established businesses are also facing new challenge in 2020. For example, we heard reports that manufacturers are sometimes unable to sustain their operations and have laid off workers due to pandemic related delays in their supply chains. Unfortunately, the short-term fixes found in initial federal government assistance packages are neither sufficient nor designed to provide long-term relief.

2.1.4   A watershed time for civil rights

For many, the year 2020 has brought a seminal moment for a new Civil Rights movement. This movement builds on those of the 1950s and 1960s, while striving to become even more inclusive and expansive. Time and again, participants in our conversations talked about the many colors and identities of people who spoke out about civil and human rights at public gatherings across the country. The events of 2020 are seeming to be changing both minds and hearts.

There is a sense that a growing number of employers appreciate one of the basics of the movement towards greater diversity and inclusion: i.e., the added value of people with differing abilities and experiences. Many employers are now publicly admitting to inequities that are systemic impediments to the careers and wealth of African Americans, Latinx, Indigenous, and other People of Color. They are being shown that gender, immigration experiences and status, disability, age, and justice involvement intersect as well as act independently of race and ethnicity. Participants are optimistic that the power already in the hands of business and government leaders can and should be exercised for a greater good. At the same time, the pull to return to pre-2020 conditions makes it unlikely that those who benefit from their privilege will share or cede power. People outside of these elites must understand the great potential of their combined strength at the polls, in commerce, and by their numbers.

3   Where do we go from here? An agenda for change

While the lessons of the past can help inform and inspire today's actions, it is essential to move beyond recycled ideas and attempts to force-fit old solutions to today's conditions. This agenda for change is derived from the *Day After* conversations; it is augmented in places by the Institute's own work. We were privileged to hear unfiltered ideas that sometime differ from the public positions taken by representatives of their industry, business, or community of interest. Participants also focused on what they believe must happen and did not consider what may or may not "sell."

Even in the face of great uncertainty and tragedy during 2020, optimism coursed through every conversation. Participants in our *Day After* conversations overwhelmingly see opportunities to right many wrongs and to put their communities and industries on better paths through collective efforts. Altogether, any successful effort towards righting wrongs *will*

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require collective empathy, new alliances, greater cooperation, and the commitment by members of these alliances to go beyond words and commit resources and share risks.

Finally, we heard people talk about the need to share tear down silos and put build common foundations upon which targeted programs and interventions can be stacked. It makes no sense to establish a unique program for each of several targeted groups where elements may be shared across programs. For example, empowering workers with disabilities, returning citizens, rural entrepreneurs, and urban innovators to take advantage of new models of distributed work require a shared set of foundational skills[4]. Everyone needs to know how to navigate, survive and thrive in the online ecosystem and a curriculum does not need to be designed and implemented from scratch for each group. As we will be presented later, essential "wrap-around" services constitute a shared need and should be made available generally rather than as an added accommodation for specific "high-need" groups.

3.1   Agenda for Change

The agenda emerging from the *Day After* conversations can be grouped into six themes:

1.   Purpose: Economic security

Goal(s): Every worker will be paid no less than a living wage.

Workers on the front lines performing essential work are paid minimum wages while juggling family care responsibilities and encountering daily dangers. People are starting their own businesses or performing "gig" work because they do not have alternatives, or they must fill the gap between what they earn and what they need to survive. During one of our meetings, we learned that many workers across rural Nebraska are working several jobs. Over the course of other conversations, people talked about how this is happening in cities across the country as well. Nationwide, much attention is being given to a proposed base-line minimum wage of $15 per hour, but the reality is that $15 might not be enough to sustain a family in many places.[5]

Recommended actions:

There are several pathways toward achieving at least a family-sustaining standard of a living wage. For example,

- Anchor institutions and federal, state, and local governments can promote a living wage by example and through regulations, ordinances, and statutes. Large private

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4 For example, there is an emerging need for all remote workers to learn "digital behaviors." These are essential abilities to deal with the ever changing and evolving work technologies and practices. How these are customized to specific circumstance and put into practice may vary by population.

[5] At the same time, there may need to be carve-outs in special circumstances.

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employers can lead the way by paying no less than a living wage to their workers and by driving these policies through their supply chains and contracts.

- Businesses may act collectively without waiting for government to engage all community stakeholders on policies and actions aimed at achieving a high community-wide quality of life. One of the central principles of the Institute's Achieving the Promise of Work Initiative[6] tracks closely with the Business Roundtable's statement on the purpose of the corporation.[7] These are blueprints for policies and actions that are accomplished locally in collaboration with businesses' workforces and with community stakeholders.

2. **Purpose: Stable community-based organizations that can serve as the springboards for improvement of community and worker conditions**

   Goal(s): Sustained, patient, long-term investment

The civil actions of 2020 and the hardships created by COVID-19 opened large flows of money to community-based organizations, often emphasizing those serving Black and Brown neighborhoods. While sustained or continued at sometimes unprecedented levels. The problems that they aim to cure will continue long after the funding drops to pre-2020 levels.

Our conversations revealed that places such as Louisville, through the leadership of the Louisville Urban League, are considering large structural changes in workforce, community, and economic development systems, as well as in education, policing, housing, and uses of

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[6] https://www.achievingthepromiseofwork.org/about-1

[7] "Americans deserve an economy that allows each person to succeed through hard work and creativity and to lead a life of meaning and dignity. We believe the free-market system is the best means of generating good jobs, a strong and sustainable economy, innovation, a healthy environment and economic opportunity for all.

Businesses play a vital role in the economy by creating jobs, fostering innovation and providing essential goods and services. Businesses make and sell consumer products; manufacture equipment and vehicles; support the national defense; grow and produce food; provide health care; generate and deliver energy; and offer financial, communications and other services that underpin economic growth.

While each of our individual companies serves its own corporate purpose, we share a fundamental commitment to all of our stakeholders. We commit to:

- Delivering value to our customers. We will further the tradition of American companies leading the way in meeting or exceeding customer expectations.
- Investing in our employees. This starts with compensating them fairly and providing important benefits. It also includes supporting them through training and education that help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world. We foster diversity and inclusion, dignity and respect.
- Dealing fairly and ethically with our suppliers. We are dedicated to serving as good partners to the other companies, large and small, that help us meet our missions.
- Supporting the communities in which we work. We respect the people in our communities and protect the environment by embracing sustainable practices across our businesses.
- Generating long-term value for shareholders, who provide the capital that allows companies to invest, grow and innovate. We are committed to transparency and effective engagement with shareholders.

Each of our stakeholders is essential. We commit to deliver value to all of them, for the future success of our companies, our communities and our country. (Released: 08/19/19)

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availability of capital. Participants from other locations talked about the need for philanthropy to be directed toward long-term, stakeholder-focused, structural changes and improvements. Some argued that corporate boards need to be more diverse and inclusive, and that senior executives who are African American or other People of Color must be supported by their communities as well as by executive leadership – and not sidelined in their careers – when they press for greater equity, equality, inclusivity, and diversity at their employer and in the community.

Recommended actions:

Fundamental structural changes require patience and commitments that last years, not just months. Time and again, participants applauded their new alliances and, at the same time, raised the concern that these alliances will be fleeting. Coming together on a common set of goals and then measuring progress towards those goals will help sustain and grow these alliances.

Systemic change can be achieved through a variety of means. For example, participants suggested that:

- Collaborations should involve all stakeholders and should cede power to those traditionally locked out of decisions regarding the allocation and use of public, philanthropic, and community resources. In fact, the same people who often are locked out already make significant, but unrecognized, collective contributions – often in "sweat equity" – to the overall economy and society. It is important, therefore, that the investments from corporate, philanthropic, and government sources should recognize and at least match the totality of contributions that the community is already making.

- Organizations should seek multiple sources of funding and the total level of effort must be sustainable. Financial plans must be developed that recognize the importance of initial large donors and the need to develop a long-term diversified funding stream.

- Funding should be pegged to need and not to what is simply sufficient. At the same time, resources are limited, even in the best of times, so priorities and choices have to be made. Many participants pointed out that they are forced often to turn on each other while fighting for the same crumbs rather than put their full attention towards the achievement of broad results. Such fissuring leads to program silos and redundancies across program efforts.

- Regulations need to encourage the creative use of resources to achieve a common set of objectives shared by several interests as well as prevent and punish possible misdeeds. Currently, organizations are schooled on what they cannot do and build their systems to prevent failure. Consequently, when given the emergency permission to expand the use of their funds, they may mitigate their risk and choose

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to not take advantage of the moment. The possible short-term gains may not warrant the chance of being out of compliance or unable to sustain a new initiative once the emergency ends.

- Publicly reported measurements and evaluations are essential to the efficacious and efficient delivery of services and products. The combination of transparency and data-informed decision-making and actions improves performance, grows confidence, which, in turn helps to attract additional resources as part of a virtuous cycle.

3. **Purpose: Prioritize conditions that are critical to the success of workers**

   Goal(s): Design and Implement Programs on a Common Foundation; Eliminate Redundancies and Inequities Inherent in Program Silos

   Throughout the *Day After* project, everyone agreed that existing priorities for the workforce development system are still relevant. These include improvement of career counseling and services; better alignment of workforce training to employer needs; emphasis on building stackable skills; and increasing skill certification and badging while providing better context for four-year college degrees, among others.

   The construction of the current system is tied to the acquisition and use of certifiable, standardized task-focused skills. The achievement of these standards is relatively easy to understand and measure, and they can be correlated by employers to job performance. Research is demonstrating that the path to successful careers can be blocked when workers do not have good access to basic services such as reliable and affordable transportation, and good family care support. Those with adequate resources are often able to make do on their own. They can afford a reliable vehicle or good care for their children or elderly family members. These become part of background of normal expectations. The essential need for these services becomes explicit, however, when under-resourced populations cannot enroll in training or keep a job because they cannot afford these services.

   Based on the Institute's own work as well as other research, so called "wrap-around" services that also include mentorship and career counseling bridge critical gaps that handicap under-resourced families. For example, case studies on pre-apprenticeship programs conducted by the Institute show that wrap-around services are central to the long-term success of traditionally under-represented, under-resourced workers in the construction trades.[8] But there also is evidence that impediments created by the lack of basic services are not limited to poor people. Recent data show that an extraordinary number of women are leaving the workforce

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[8] See: *How Pre-Apprenticeship and YouthBuild Foster New Opportunities for Under-represented Groups in the Construction Trades in Illinois*, December 2020.

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over the course of the pandemic[9] and based on the anecdotal evidence from the *Day After* conversations, the loss of childcare and other family-care supports are among the factors forcing women across many income groups to take on full-time family care responsibilities.

In reality, these supports act directly on systemic and systematic inequities that drive growing gaps in wealth and income. Many of these supports are broadly needed and used, the only difference is that some are able to afford it on their own and others require help. We see this starkly in the differences between low-paid essential workers, who rely on public transportation, and who have to physically show up at their jobs in contrast to other well-paid workers, essential or otherwise, who are able to work remotely, secure daycare or a nanny, or commute using a private vehicle.

The following suggested actions are based on the fundamental principle that the cost of basic services is a pooled expense, and the specific cost of training as a direct program cost.[10]

Suggested actions:

None of the groups came forward with specific actions beyond the common refrain that program silos get in the way of effective solutions for the problems encountered by their constituencies. Two ideas that are reasonably inferred are:

- Social support services for individuals in training and education programs should be improved and expanded. The true cost of workforce development is comprised of the complete package of services and supports that are essential to success as well as occupational skills training. These should be included as part of the baseline of the workforce system.

- To avoid the cost of replicating these core services by every program, one alternative is to build several training programs on top of a consolidated foundation comprised of critical supports that serve several groups. This foundation would operate as a utility function across several otherwise siloed programs. For example, some corporate universities are funded to serve as the institutional memory and collective learning of their parent businesses; or "back-office" operations and technical services support several divisions within a business.

4. **Purpose: Integrate remote work as part of the "new normal" for the global workforce.**

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[9] E.g., the labor force participation rate for women is 4 percentage points lower in September 2020 than pre-pandemic levels. It was 2.6 percentage points lower for men. Stephanie Aaronson & Wendy Edelberg. *Tracking the Mounting Challenges Among Those Who Have Lost Their Jobs.* The Brookings Institution. 11/5/2020

[10] The conceptual framework is described in: Peter A. Creticos and Robert G. Sheets. *Evaluating State-Financed, Workplace-Based Retraining Programs: A Report on the Feasibility of a Business Screening and Performance Outcome Evaluation System (A Joint Study of the National Commission for Employment Policy and the National Governors Association).* May 1990.

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Goals(s): Expand the outreach of workforce development systems beyond serving local businesses and their employees within geographically defined labor markets.

Growing acceptance of and greater reliance on remote work provide new opportunities for workers with disabilities, workers who live outside of urban job centers, city-dwellers who face long commutes to work, and those who cannot afford or do not have access to good transportation. It appears, however, the sudden acceleration in remote work is outpacing understanding of its implications for business, commerce, education, training and labor markets.

We heard clearly that labor markets will expand and globalize as the frictions of geographic separation are reduced. In geographically bounded labor markets, a worker competes against others in that area. We already have a sense of what happens when labor markets are less bounded. Places such as Silicon Valley, Washington, DC, Chicago, New York, Austin succeed by attracting talent; incumbent residents have no special advantage. Consequently, these high attraction businesses are less likely to feel the need to invest resources just so that local residents will be put on the same footing with workers who already arrive ready to work.

By implication, the shift to remote work will enable businesses to have access to a global workforce without having to overcome the stickiness of relocations and visas. People with the right skills who already live in the area will not necessarily retain their competitive advantage tied to proximity. More individual area residents will become their own non-employer businesses competing in a boundaryless world. Clearly, many workers are wrongly classified as non-employees, but there is a growing universe of working arrangements that cannot be effectively monitored as workplaces or that fall outside the definition of employment altogether. Therefore, from the perspective of workers, the full advantages of remote work will not be attained until policies and services catch up and get ahead of this phenomenon.

Recommended actions:[11]

- Remote workers will need to be continuous learners, know how to work collaboratively in virtual settings, as well as work independently without the benefit of the social environment of a common workplace. Those who formally incorporate on-line businesses as well as more informal gig workers will need to learn the fundamentals of operating a business, keeping their own books, negotiating and managing their own contracts, acquiring and servicing needed technologies and communications services, obtaining all necessary insurances, and staying within all laws and regulations – domestic and foreign.

- Within the next few years, our current system of employer-based worker protections and guarantees built on so-called traditional working arrangements will

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[11] These action recommendations are derived partly from recent work by the Institute with respect to on-demand workers. The underlying project was a partnership with the National Governors Association, however, these ideas are wholly those of the author.

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need to change to reflect new realities. Unemployment insurance is not designed to assist gig workers between jobs when the loss of work is through no fault of their own. The existing no-fault workers compensation system covering disability and medical care from work-related injuries does not translate to situations where there is no employer of record, and therefore no insured employer. Wage and hours rules do not apply to freelancers, day laborers and gig workers. The federal government and states are scratching the surface on these issues, however, broadly accepted policies are a long way off.

- The reach of federal, state and local governments to regulate labor markets is growing more limited as labor becomes more globalized. Legal frameworks and protections need to be updated to support a growing portion of self-employed workers whose work is compensated by overseas clients. In addition, public systems and local taxes are relied up to provide basic support to local markets, including training and education, electronic infrastructure, etc. These locally driven relationships will need to be adjusted to better match revenues with system costs, i.e., solve the free-rider problems created by contractors outside the reach of U.S. taxing bodies.

5. **Purpose: Support small businesses and minority entrepreneurship**

   Goals(s): Level the economic playing field for independent, minority and women-owned small businesses that provide critical services to the communities where they are located

While small business entrepreneurship offers many great possibilities, as discussed above, many people start businesses once they feel that they have exhausted all other possibilities. Unfortunately, new entrepreneurs often lack both experience and funding to have a good chance of success. They may start without a good plan and may lack a place to turn for advice and guidance. They may have a hunch about the market for the product or services without data to back it up. They may not have the capital to adequately support a start-up – and it is well documented that Black, Brown and Indigenous communities, and women across all groups, are woefully underserved by banks, investors, and other sources of debt and equity funding. Without a way to attract bank support or venture capital, there is no apparent pathway to early success and long-term sustainability. The possibilities of entrepreneurship can be realized only if these and other systemic barriers are addressed and overcome by altering underlying inequities and inequalities

   Recommended actions:

- Establish community-based support for local start-up businesses. Some of the ideas floated in the *Day After* conversations targeted the implied assumption that entrepreneurial long-term success cannot be achieved without the consent and largesse of a third party. Instead, a virtuous cycle of community-based entrepreneurship can be established through continuous investment from within the community. All key stakeholders have to have "skin in the game." The early influx of outside investment may be necessary to begin the process, but the

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endgame is achieved upon the successful transition to self-sufficiency through collaborative community effort in partnership with individual entrepreneurs.

- Expand the business-to-business operations of banks into currently underserved areas. This approach includes the development of relationships with community-based banks as well as larger national banks.

- Encourage anchor institutions to play a central role by buying directly from local startups and small businesses. This form of local market-making establishes an important track record and infusion of revenues upon which local businesses can grow.

- Sources of "patient" equity must be established and directed towards people and places that are now denied these resources. But adding new sources and levels of equity, while necessary, are not sufficient for success. They are part of larger entrepreneurial ecosystems that are supported by and succeed through the work of people who organize and convene the resources and people within a community that go to support entrepreneurship.

6. **Purpose: Re-balance economic investments and labor movements to achieve more equitable and equal growth**

   Goals(s): Establish greater outside investment; prepare communities to accept and nourish successful new growth accompanied by the arrival of new workers

We discovered many meanings of change over the course of 2020. They reflect different areas of emphasis and are not mutually exclusive. For example, we listened to economic developers in rural Nebraska talk about attracting new residents to their communities and to the state. Urban communities have similar goals in that they too are looking to attract greater outside financial investment.

As we noted with our example of Silicon Valley, it is a community built in part on the foundation of an international workforce that is attracted to the businesses in the area. There is little home-town advantage for area residents, and many are not able to compete in the high-skills labor market. On the other hand, the benefits derived from economic growth may be felt equitably through a more managed and inclusive approach may rely on a combination of local and new talent.

At the time when the issue of labor attraction came up, people acknowledged that change can also disrupt the status quo as the time-honored local culture and identity rub up against what newcomers bring with them. The following ideas for supporting constructive change are derived from these conversations and from the Institute's work on immigrant integration and economic development.

   Recommended actions:

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- It is necessary to establish in advance community resources, policies, and services to support an impending change process. These support systems can routinely assess whether the receiving community is prepared to receive an influx of families or investments. In this way, it is possible to ensure that the integration of new families and investments becomes part of the culture of the receiving community.

- New gateways for arriving immigrants need to establish appropriate community supports that allow new arrivals to navigate the ways of the receiving area and still retain the essential elements of their cultures and values. Places that are historic gateways are better equipped to incorporate each new group, although they may still encounter new stresses along the way. Success will depend in very large measure on advance preparation, especially by the receiving area, since it takes the dominant position. There is a give and take – a process of "integration" – that is best achieved through deliberate and conscious efforts rather than by leaving matters to take their own course.

- Services provided to assuring economic opportunities for newcomers need to also benefit incumbent residents. An influx of new residents regardless of origin – domestic or foreign – puts added demands on housing, schools, utilities, infrastructure, businesses, restaurants, and other services. This issue is not limited to services for the less affluent. Financial incentives provided to encourage upper-income residential development in urban areas. The resulting gentrification often leads to the disruption of lower-income neighborhoods and loss of affordable housing. This phenomenon is a well-documented concern in cities, and it is also an emerging concern in the exurbs and rural areas as an influx of entrepreneurs who can work remotely are driving up housing costs.

4   Conclusion

The nine *Day After* conversations provide a unique and valuable glimpse into the experiences and ideas of people who are at the forefront of change in their communities and industries. We and our partners who helped in organizing the conversations are gratified by feedback from participants who say that they value the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas in a respectful setting.

Persistent social and economic issues are now exposed, public discourse is polarized, and emotions are raw and exploited. Yet, despite these divisions, the feelings expressed in the *Day After* conversations are extraordinarily optimistic. Participants see opportunities to right many wrongs and to put their communities and industries on better paths. The actions that eventually are taken will *require collective empathy, new alliances, and greater collaboration.* Solutions will need to be built on a shared foundation upon which specific needs are targeted. For example, empowering workers with disabilities, returning citizens, rural entrepreneurs, and urban innovators to take advantage of new models of distributed work require the same

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foundational skills[12]. Where there may be differences are in the specific skills that are tied to the unique circumstances of each group.

The Institute intends to continue the project in 2021. Our next step is to acquire funding to expand the variety and number of *Day After* conversations, and to serve as a bridge to sustainable individual and collective action following each *Day After* conversation.

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[12] For example, there is an emerging need for all remote workers to learn "digital behaviors." These are essential abilities to deal with the ever changing and evolving work technologies and practices. How these behaviors are put into practice may vary by population.

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