Conference Report

New York City
January 17, 2019

Panel #3

NYC LMIS
LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SERVICE

THE GRADUATE CENTER
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Innovation and Collaboration: Best Practices in Cross-Sector Partnerships for Economic Development & Inclusion

MODERATOR:

Celeste Frye
CEO & Principal, Public Works Partners

PANELISTS:

- **Dayanna Torres**
  Director, Economic Opportunities and Business Partnerships, JobsFirstNYC
- **Harini Venkatesh**
  Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships and Strategy, Career and Technical Education, NYC Department of Education
- **Marvin Ward, PhD**
  Research Lead, Local Consumer Commerce, JPMorgan Chase Institute

The panel began with an overview of the key elements for successful cross-sector partnerships, including building trust and credibility; sharing data and information; including the voice of every stakeholder; and a commitment to learning from each other. The panel then delved into specific examples of cross-sector partnerships.

Ms. Venkatesh discussed how her office, within the NYC Department of Education, has launched sector-based industry commissions that bring together partners from industry and post-secondary education providers to work on positive labor market outcomes for individuals in career and technical education (CTE) programs. The effort uses a human-centered design-thinking approach, which means that initiatives like internship programs are focused on the needs and outcomes of end-users (students and employers) to maximize outcomes (job recruitment and retention).

Ms. Torres highlighted her experience with a partnership in Staten Island called YouthWins, a coalition of Staten Island stakeholders committed to helping young adults (ages 18-24) to become meaningfully employed in order to become financially secure and economically mobile. The coalition reaches out-of-school, out-of-work young adults and supports their entry into the workforce. The YouthWins partnership focuses on data and discussions to learn what stakeholders need, including individuals, communities, and employers. It then fosters engagement between youth and existing skill-based training programs to improve youth access to job opportunities, and to facilitate employer access to a broader pool of candidates.

Dr. Ward discussed a unique initiative within JP Morgan Chase that collects data from actual consumer transactions to better understand spending and economic trends. One particular partnership involves working with the Census Bureau to review online commerce data, analyze what consumption looks like, and how it changes over time. This initiative led to a recent report that revealed online commerce expanding, and contracted brick and mortar commerce lagging behind. The data could be used by local leaders and the business community to understand the nature of online commerce, and to help local businesses to adapt and thrive.

The moderator, **Ms. Frye**, opened the question and answer session by asking about the promises and challenges of sharing data in cross-sector partnerships. For **Dr. Ward**, the challenges involve privacy issues, given the very localized nature of the data they collect, which can be done at a zip code level. He suggested that we should find ways to provide cross-sector constituents with access to data that are granular enough to pinpoint areas in need of additional investment, but without revealing identifiable information about merchants.

Identifying inequities in access to basic goods and services through spending data has the potential to help inform policymakers when looking at economic development issues. Ms. Torres echoed this point by noting that data about what people are buying and where can help workforce development practices respond to economic development trends.

Another panel question focused on whether cross-sector partnerships are initiated in the private sector or public sector. **Dr. Ward's** experience with the JP Morgan Chase Institute found that ideas or questions from the public sector frequently drive their research, so that they can produce information targeted to policy objectives. **Ms. Venkatesh** found that it did not matter how partnerships originated as long as they formed with a clear consensus on an objective and how they would collaborate to meet it. In addition, each side can leverage different resources necessary to advance a partnership. **Ms. Torres** noted that problems often have a sense of urgency that bring together different entities to leverage each other's competencies, resources, and ideas to enact change.

Ms. Frye then highlighted how the New York City economy has been robust in recent years, citing that new economic drivers are on the horizon (Amazon HQ2, Google, etc.), and asked how we can be prepared for what may come next. **Ms. Venkatesh** approached the question from her CTE experience. She explained how her department has tried to institutionalize real-time data from industry to remain informed of where the City is headed, so that CTE training can be aligned to the jobs of tomorrow. She also discussed the benefits of scaling work-based opportunities by increasing internship opportunities and ensuring up-to-date CTE teacher training through externships with local employers, to help educators to remain abreast of workplace trends and demands.

Ms. Torres emphasized the importance of empowering local communities that are being impacted by rezoning and economic development. This includes securing commitments from incoming employers to work with workforce development programs to train and hire local residents. **Dr. Ward** referenced the Institute's consumer spending data and how it can track local economic activity. If an investment is made in a certain neighborhood, the data can be used to see if it has had an impact, which can help inform future public economic policy.

An audience member then noted that despite numerous innovative programs, there are some people who are still not "making it," and that this can be addressed through a national policy that would require employers to devote a percentage of revenue to workforce development and training.

"[Let's] think about how to...improve cross-sector collaboration [among] for-profit and non-profit organizations."

"Leveraging cross-sector partnerships [has the power to influence] decision-makers."

— Participant post-conference survey feedback

The panelists all agreed that it is a business imperative to make investments to cultivate the worker pipeline for the future, as well as to help incumbent workers advance in their careers. Another audience member asked whether those employers who are receiving subsidies from the City should be required to hire area residents. **Ms. Frye** mentioned that the City recently reactivated a program called Hire NYC, which requires any business that receives City benefits or is on City property to agree to advertise jobs and screen candidates in partnership with the workforce development system.

Ms. Torres noted that many low-income communities are often not included in economic development decisions, which needs to change so that their voices are heard and their needs are included. Lastly, an audience member discussed the increase in online commerce and wondered how it would affect local neighborhoods and businesses. **Dr. Ward** expressed that while it was too early to make a detailed prediction, he anticipated that there would be a shift in the kinds of neighborhood businesses that would thrive, but that they would not be eliminated.

"[We need to develop more]...cross-sector collaboration."

— Participant post-conference survey feedback