

# Convergence Convenes Working Up Dialogue

In July, Convergence launched its newest project aimed at addressing an urgent domestic challenge of our time—ensuring that upward mobility and economic security exists for all Americans. This new **Economic Mobility and Poverty Project** kicked off what will be a 12-18 month dialogue-leading- to-action called Working Up. Assembling 30 cross-sector leaders and employing Convergence’s signature consensus-building process, the project will work to identify solutions both aimed at the short term as well as transformational, big bets that might re-imagine how we train, hire and connect people, especially low-income Americans, to pathways upward. While opinions on the best solutions diverge, a growing consensus has formed across sectors and ideological lines that too many Americans face significant barriers to achieving their own American Dream. While this reality has major consequences for those individuals and communities most impacted, it also has significant ripple effects for the nation. For our global competitiveness in the 21st century, there is widespread agreement that we need more of our talent on the economic playing field so more families achieve economic security, more employers have the skilled workforce they require, and fewer bottlenecks prevent people from accessing opportunity.

## **Diverse Stakeholders Involved**

We began our efforts addressing these pressing issues by convening and consulting with a diverse cross-section of stakeholders including business groups and employers, low-wage worker advocates and labor leaders, workforce development experts, higher education leaders, dynamic practitioners on the ground in communities, faith leaders, and key left- and right-leaning voices. We are convening this dialogue-leading-to-action aimed at both good policy ideas and the full range of cross-sector solutions that can strengthen communities and build multiple pathways to success for more people, especially low-income Americans.

We’ll be sharing much more about the dialogue and lessons learned as the process unfolds. We’ll also be seeking input and good ideas from innovative and provocative leaders, bringing the lived experiences of Americans facing barriers into these conversations, and checking out dynamic programs and models making an impact across the country. We don’t know exactly where this dialogue process will take us, but our goal is to empower an unlikely alliance of stakeholders to develop concrete ideas and action steps that leaders and citizens of all stripes can take to expand opportunity and increase mobility for those in greatest need.

# Working Up Stakeholders

**Julian Alssid**, Vice President, Workforce Development, Community College of Rhode Island

**Ellie Bertani**, Senior Director of Associate Experience – Learning, Walmart

**Michael Billet**, Senior Manager, Research Policy, Labor, Immigration & Employee Benefits, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

**Shelley Waters Boots**, Senior Consultant, Annie E. Casey Foundation

**Melissa Boteach**, Senior Vice President, Poverty to Prosperity Program, Center for American Progress

**Stuart Butler**, Senior Fellow, Economic Studies, Brookings Institution

**John Carr**, Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

**Lanhee Chen**, David and Diane Steffy Research Fellow, Hoover Institution

**Judith Conti**, Government Affairs Director, National Employment Law Project

**Maureen Conway**, Vice President, Policy Programs, The Aspen Institute

**Marie F. Downey**, Executive Director, Boston Education, Skills & Training

**Joel Frater**, Executive Dean, Monroe Community College

**Kate Griffin**, Vice President, Programs, Prosperity Now (formerly Corporation for Enterprise Development)

**Romanita Hairston-Overstreet**, Director, Philanthropies Engagement, Microsoft and Representative, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust

**Will Heaton**, Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Center for Employment Opportunities

**Kimo Kippen**, Founder, Aloha Learning Advisors LLC. (Former Vice President, Global Workforce Initiatives, Hilton)

**Karen Kocher**, General Manager, 21st Century Jobs, Skills and Employability, Microsoft

**Janice Loux**, Executive Vice President and **John Valinch**, Research Analyst, UNITE HERE!

**Corey Matthews**, Vice President, LeadersUp

**Samantha Vargas Poppe**, Director, Policy Analysis Center, UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza)

**Elizabeth Clay Roy**, Chief of Staff, Phipps Neighborhoods

**Lisa Schumacher**, Director, Education Strategies, McDonald's Corporation

**Abby Snay**, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Vocational Services – San Francisco

**Grace Suh**, Director, Education Programs, IBM

**T.J. Sutcliffe**, Senior Director, Income and Housing Policy, The Arc of the United States

**Russell Sykes**, Director of the Center for Employment and Economic Well-Being, APHSA

**Jason Tyszko**, Vice President, Center for Education and Workforce, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

**Kyle Williams**, Director, Financial and Housing Policy, National Urban League