The Skills Friendly Cities Initiative
Tackling Local Concerns, Making a Global Impact

Project Goal
The Skills Friendly Cities Initiative aims to achieve practical, rapid, and relevant solutions to the youth skills crisis for communities by bringing young people, the business community and policymakers together at a city-level to deliver new ways of working in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Rationale
Alarming trends show that by 2030, over half of the world’s young people – 825 million – will not have the most basic skills for employment and participation in society. The pace of change in the Fourth Industrial Revolution – fueled by the development and accessibility of technology, automation, and robotics – means that the labor market will continue to evolve, making a large proportion of today’s professions obsolete while creating a new wave of employment opportunities.

Instead of responding to labor market demand, the pace of change will require the business community to be more proactively engaged in predicting industry trends, adapting to the future of work and supporting NextGen skills development (Millenials and Generation Z). And as the Millennial generation progresses and the Generation Z populations are now approaching the age of entry into the labor market, the ideas and the ways NextGen youth anticipate and envision their own skill development pathway and participation in the economy will play an important role in how individuals and employers mitigate shifts in the global economy and workforce.
Both of these stakeholder groups – business and youth – must advance in the future of work with a backdrop of conducive public policy which places investment in quality, equitable and inclusive education at a premium to help young people acquire the right mix of workforce readiness, essential human skills (or soft skills), technical skills and entrepreneurship skills for the jobs of today and the workforce of tomorrow.

Why Cities?

These complex challenges also come at a time when major demographic shifts are taking place. According to the City Lab, by 2030, more than five billion people (six out of every ten people) will live in cities and urban centers. By 2050, two-thirds of the world’s population will live in cities. The United Nations reported that projections demonstrate that urbanization, combined with the overall growth of the world’s population, could add another 2.5 billion people to urban areas by 2050, with close to 90% of this increase taking place in Asia and Africa.

Cities are often considered the best place to generate wealth and improve living standards at a faster rate because of density, interaction and networks. In addition, the leaders of cities often have the power to influence educational institutions and help to oversee policies and practices that govern these institutions. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, city policies will become even more relevant as they are able to react quickly to local trends and be responsive to large proportions of young people. And while this level of policy engagement could provide quite effective in mitigating the future of work and sustainability for NextGen, the diversity within each city context will require flexible and adaptive approaches youth skills.

These dynamics place us at a unique crossroads and present an opportunity to proactively address the looming crises of youth skills and participation in the economy by harnessing the power of young people, the business community and the city-level policymakers to create rapid progress in addressing the global skills challenge – one city at a time – and generating a network for sharing innovative practices to addressing in real-time the evolving challenges of youth and opportunity in the future of work.
Objectives

1. **Set Criteria for Skills Friendly Cities.** The first stage of work will entail creating a set of indicators and activities for cities to undertake to demonstrate their commitment to skills development. This will be based on research and engagement with city, business and youth officials and may include activities such as forming a skills board consisting of education authorities, youth, local business and city officials, have mayoral endorsement, etc.

Moreover, this activity will entail develop a set of guidance and tools for cities to use to assess the current skills preparation scenario, criteria to become certified as a Skills Friendly City, and the identification of the steps to take to proactively advance efforts at the city level.

2. **Develop and use tools to measure progress.** Before cities would begin to undertake meeting the criteria to become a skills friendly city, we will develop a set of tools and indicators to measure and track progress. These tools would be provided to every city participating in the initiative.

3. **Select, certify and support an initial set of Skills Friendly Cities in the U.S.— and then globally.** The next step will be to identify cities in the United States meeting diversity criteria (location, rural city vs. urban city; geography; demographics, etc.) who are willing to meet the initial criteria to become a skills friendly city, share challenges and promising strategies with other cities, and help to explore ways that youth and the business community can better support and/or lead local efforts.
Though a series of indicators looking at education, employment, and lifelong learning, we will work with cities to use data and technology to create innovative, sustainable and economically friendly communities, that will help generate and foster youth opportunities for learning and employment.

Based on funding and interest from partners, following the identification of cities in the United States, the initiative would identify diversity criteria and recruit a cohort of cities from across the globe.

The objective will be to create a coalition of cities with buy-in at the leadership level from the Mayors – but also from local business leaders, youth and supporting foundations – from around the world who have identified youth and workforce development as a key priority for their administration and will work in partnership with the Global Business Coalition for Education to ensure local implementation of the recommendations highlighted in the 2018 report produced by the Youth Skills and Innovation Commission. We envision city leaders will work with a local team, comprised of business leaders, youth and community partners to outline a strategy for best practices and data about programs that have proven effective elsewhere. City strategies will look at availability, access, demand, and preparation at the intersection of youth, education, and infrastructure.

4. **Monitor progress, report, share and scale.** Once cities officially commit support, GBC-Education will provide ongoing engagement and support the city focal points and relevant networking opportunities. GBC-Education would also ensure city leadership utilized the tools to measure progress and would report on the collective group of cities, identifying lessons learned, impact and opportunities to scaling up.
About the Global Business Coalition for Education

The Global Business Coalition for Education is a movement of businesses committed to ending the global education crisis and unleashing the potential of the next generation. Our mission is to ensure that every child has the best start in life, a safe place to learn, and skills for the future. Established as an initiative of the global children’s charity Theirworld in 2012, the Global Business Coalition for Education is committed to bringing together the expertise and resources of the business community with the campaign for global education and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

We serve as the business community’s social impact advisor, combining the expertise of education and business to develop customized programs and identify investments, partnerships, and opportunities that will have the greatest impact.

We know that tackling the global education crisis takes the collective power of business and other stakeholders – and know-how to bring these voices together for positive change. The members in our network are next generation business leaders who understand the power and potential of leveraging their knowledge, resources, and scale in coordination with peers, government, international organizations, and NGOs.

Our Team

Jamira Burley | Head of Youth and Skills

Jamira Burley is the Head of Youth Skills and Engagement at the Global Business Coalition for Education. Recognized by the White House as a Champion of Change and Forbes 30 Under 30 Honoree, Jamira leads with expertise on youth engagement, education reform, workforce development, global citizenship and social justice and CSR to authentically reshape communities and disrupt the status quo.

Jamira is fueled by her upbringing in West Philadelphia to transform our communities selflessly. Discovering her calling at the age of 15 sparked by the murder of her brother, she organized an anti-violence program in her high school, reducing the crime rate by 30%. Gaining public recognition through her efforts, she received a $50,000 grant from the Governor to implement the program in the ten most dangerous high schools in the city.
She is the first of her siblings to graduate high school and pursue higher education, obtaining a BA in International Business and Legal Studies from Temple University. While in college, she was appointed by the United Nations General Secretary to the United Nations Global Education First Initiative, Youth Advocacy group, facilitating over 100 trainings with youth leaders in 18 countries.

For the past decade, Jamira has worked with corporations, non-profits and government leaders on better engaging impacted communities.

Prior to GBC-Education, Jamira was the National Deputy Millennial Vote Director at Hillary For America and before that, she managed gun violence and criminal justice initiatives at Amnesty International USA – one of the first and largest human rights organizations in the World. With a passion for social justice and policy, Jamira has worked with Hillary For America, Amnesty International, and the City of Philadelphia.

She has been politically active at the local, state, and national level serving on city and state commissions such as the Pennsylvania Commission on Children and Families, Police Advisory Commission and Fund For Philadelphia Board.

**Justin W. van Fleet, Ph.D. | Executive Director**

Justin van Fleet is the President of the global children’s charity Theirworld and Executive Director of the Global Business Coalition for Education.

He previously served as the Director of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity and Chief of Staff to the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown where the landmark “Learning Generation” report put forward a pathway to finance and deliver the ambitions of Sustainable Development Goal 4 – inclusive and equitable quality education for all. He has been a passionate advocate for financing education, playing an instrumental role in the establishment of the Education Cannot Wait Fund for education in emergencies and the new International Finance Facility for Education.
van Fleet was a fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Universal Education in Washington, D.C. where his research focused on corporate social investments and philanthropy for global education. He has previously held various non-profit and academic posts, including as Deputy Chair for Education at the Clinton Global Initiative, an Instructor at the University of Maryland and Associate Director of the Council on Foreign Relations Center for Universal Education. He has consulted for various international and national organizations and foundations. van Fleet served on the Board of Trustees of Creative Minds International Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. from 2011-2015.

He graduated with a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in international education policy and holds a Masters degree from Harvard University in the same field. A native of Western Maryland in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains, he completed his Bachelor of Arts at Frostburg State University in international politics and Spanish. He has lived in Bolivia and Argentina.