

The Future of Work
and Inclusion of
People with Disabilities

About SourceAmerica

Established in 1974, SourceAmerica® (SourceAmerica.org) creates job opportunities for a skilled and dedicated workforce of people with significant disabilities. SourceAmerica is the vital link between the federal government and private sector organizations that procure the products and services provided by this exceptional workforce via a network of more than 750 community-based nonprofits. Headquartered in Vienna, Virginia, SourceAmerica provides its nonprofit agency network with business development, contract management, legislative and regulatory assistance, communications and public relations materials, information technology support, engineering and technical assistance, and extensive professional training needed for successful nonprofit management. SourceAmerica is an AbilityOne® authorized enterprise.

About this Report

In conjunction with the release of *The Future of Work and the Disability Community and Social Enterprises of the Future: A Collective Response*, SourceAmerica invited a panel of experts to share their perspectives on the global state of disability employment and societal inclusion. The panel event took place on May 8th at the 2018 SourceAmerica National Training and Achievement Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. The panel members outlined a variety of challenges and opportunities and offered strategies for meeting the shared goal of a future of inclusion, with employment as a key indicator of success. This report represents the perspectives of a diverse panel on matters of global and domestic policy, human rights, and private sector engagement – and offers a summary of the key takeaways to inform subsequent discussion and action.

Represented Organizations and Speakers

The Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative



The Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative is a nonpartisan effort to identify to the changing nature of work in the 21st century. Several trends are affecting workers and businesses today and could bring dramatic transformations in the years ahead: the weakening social contract between workers and employers, the increased importance of access to education and skills resulting from new technologies and increased automation, and the pressure to produce short-term profits rather than long-term value. Rather than waiting to react to future disruptions, it is critical to develop solutions that address the changes transforming the U.S. economy.

Anna Fife, Associate Director of Outreach and Engagement

Anna Fife serves as the Associate Director of Outreach and Engagement for the Future of Work Initiative. Prior to her tenure at the Aspen Institute, Anna worked in the executive office of Share Our Strength, an organization focused on ending childhood hunger in America through the No Kid Hungry campaign. Previously, Anna worked for U.S. Senator Mark Warner (D-VA), serving as the legislative assistant on the environment and agriculture, among other positions.

The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ict)



The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies is an advocacy initiative launched in December 2006 by the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development, in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) at UNDESA. Its

mission is to facilitate and support the implementation of the dispositions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities promoting digital accessibility and Assistive Technologies.

James Thurston, Vice President of Global Strategy and Development

James Thurston is an international technology policy leader. As Vice President for Global Strategy and Development at the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict), he leads the design and implementation of new worldwide advocacy strategies and programs to scale up G3ict's global

Special Olympics



Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs every day worldwide to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1968, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than five million athletes and Unified Partners in 174 countries. The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. This gives them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Christa Skerry White, Senior Vice President of Global Development

Christa White oversees global efforts to engage the international development community (governments, development banks, aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations) to adopt disability-inclusive development policies, practices, programs and financing to create more inclusive communities worldwide. White has worked in international development for over 20 years in Washington, DC, and abroad. White holds a bachelor's degree in English language and literature from Smith College and a master's degree in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. She is also a certified leadership coach.

United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD)



The United States International Council on Disabilities is a federation of U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations, federal agencies and individuals committed to advocacy and action on behalf of the global disability rights agenda. Because of its unique structure, USICD's core strength is its membership. Through its vast network of disabled people's organizations and other NGO stakeholders, government members and individual advocates, USICD has the advocacy reach to impact critical emerging issues both in the United States and internationally. USICD's board of directors includes the most recognized leaders in the American disability rights movement, providing a wealth of experience and strategic guidance to USICD's mission and sharing a vision for the full inclusion, access and human rights of people with disabilities worldwide.

Isabel Hodge, Executive Director

Isabel Hodge serves as the Executive Director of the United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD). Prior to joining USICD she was a Senior Program Analyst at the Department of Defense Office of Special Needs. She also completed a federal detail to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) in the Office of the Commissioner, and she co-authored the Developmental Disabilities Act regulations. Hodge is the Vice President of Disabled Peoples' International North America Caribbean and also

serves on the board of directors for Wheelchairs for Kids International and the Institute on Disability and Public Policy's Joint Advisory Board.

Panel Moderator

Frances West, Founder, FrancesWestCo

Frances West is an internationally recognized keynote speaker, advisor and technology executive known globally for her work in accessibility, emerging markets and business transformation. She is an innovator for inclusion on a global scale and works with industry, government, startups and nonprofits to ensure that institutions develop insight that human diversity is at the core of disruptive innovation. Frances brings an informed business perspective to human rights initiatives, having been IBM's first Chief Accessibility Officer and having driven accessibility as a strategic business imperative across the enterprise, shaped government policies, operationalized design in practices and developed innovative solutions. FrancesWestCo is a global advisory company providing services for inclusive digital innovation and enterprise accessibility technology strategies to achieve market differentiation, innovation and talent acquisition.

Background

The nature of work is changing worldwide. A confluence of societal, legislative, economic and technological factors is shaping what it means to be employed in the 21st century. Uncertainty about the future is fueling ongoing debate regarding potential outcomes for the labor force. This narrative is commonly referred to as "the future of work." As policymakers, economists and technologists discuss how people will interact with work over the next several decades, there is a glaring lack of consideration for the impact on historically marginalized populations, such as people with disabilities. Yet, arguably, few other groups are facing as much disruption as people with disabilities regarding their ability to access and sustain meaningful employment.

The absence of people with disabilities in the growing debate over the future of work and the need for increased recognition and action on the part of policymakers, service providers and private sector employers was the impetus for SourceAmerica's Social Enterprises of the Future initiative. Meant as a catalyst for systems change, Social Enterprises of the Future combines research, community building and innovative approaches to policy-level and operational interventions. The purpose of this initiative is to positively influence the future of inclusive employment in the United States.

Through Social Enterprises of the Future, SourceAmerica has sought to offer new ways of looking at long-standing societal issues that may become increasingly difficult to overcome due to the changing nature of work. In November 2017, SourceAmerica coordinated the first congressional brief on the future of work and people with disabilities. This event was co-sponsored by Representative Seth Moulton (D-MA) and Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), and it featured perspectives from John Kemp, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Viscardi Center; Mary Davis, Chief Executive Officer of Special Olympics; and Ty Ross, ADA Auditor in the Davis School District of Utah and self-advocate. It was the first in a series of planned panel discussions meant to promote greater awareness and engage diverse perspectives.

In May 2018, SourceAmerica released the first two publications in a series of research reports. [The Future of Work and the Disability Community](#) established a baseline of research to connect the current state of disability employment to emerging trends and make a case that collaboration and

intervention are needed to shape a more inclusive future. In [Social Enterprises of the Future: A Collective Response](#), SourceAmerica published the results of a year-long engagement with the disability community to design new operating models in response to societal, legislative, economic and technological factors. Through the Social Enterprises of the Future initiative, SourceAmerica is convening diverse perspectives to benefit the disability community and the nation at large. The panel discussion highlighted in this report was a continuation of this effort.

Panel Report

Opening Remarks

Opening comments were offered by Shane Kanady, Director of Special Projects in SourceAmerica's Department of Government Affairs. Kanady provided an introduction of the panel format and set the context for the discussion. Of principle importance was the acknowledgment that the panelists assembled were not there to speak on behalf of people with disabilities but to offer important perspectives on the many trends shaping the future of employment and societal inclusion. These ongoing panel discussions will continue to promote inclusive participation, as has been the focus of the Social Enterprises of the Future initiative. With that, Kanady introduced the special guest moderator, Frances West, founder of FrancesWest Co and former Chief Accessibility Officer of IBM.

West's background informs her ability to frame a discussion on this complex topic. As a recognized leader in the technology sector, West is known as a global expert on digital inclusion, disability and gender equality matters. In her opening remarks, she challenged the audience to "engage in this journey of thinking about what the future may look like and then bring it back to how you transform your organization to have a very diverse, and in some cases, a global perspective." Underscoring the need for shared learning across the world, West remarked, "This is very important because the world is flat and whatever happens in India and China, in terms of their government policy, what their DPO [disabled persons organizations] and NPAs [nonprofit agencies] are doing or startups are innovating over there actually has a potential impact on what you are doing here." After briefly introducing the panel members, West asked Steve Soroka, then-President and Chief Executive Officer of SourceAmerica, to provide comments as the event host.

Steve Soroka

Soroka took the opportunity to focus on the big picture perspective. Quoting relevant predictions, Soroka said, "There are experts out there predicting that 50 percent of today's jobs will be automated by the year 2030...the Institute for the Future predicts that 85 percent of the jobs that are going to exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet."

There is a growing body of academic and industry knowledge that is frequently cited when predicting the future state of employment worldwide. A collection of reports by Oxford University, Ball State University, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Aspen Institute, the Brookings Institution, Pew Research Center, PricewaterhouseCoopers and the United States government were synthesized in SourceAmerica's report *The Future of Work and the Disability Community*. The purpose of SourceAmerica's research and the panel event was to start a dialogue on the future of work for people with disabilities in the United States.

Soroka in his opening comments posed the following question: What does the future of work mean for underserved populations, and in particular, for people with disabilities in the United States? Highlighting one finding of SourceAmerica's extensive research related to technology, Soroka said

there are “24 million people with disabilities out of the workforce...[they] are the ones who most likely will be negatively impacted by the automation that is predicted to happen.”

In completing his opening remarks, Soroka offered the following message:

When we say the future of work is changing, it is really an understatement, and if you think back 10 years ago, 15 years ago, to where we are today, it's a completely different landscape. So, the main challenge we face right now is how do we ensure people with disabilities are included in tomorrow's radically changing environment. And as part of that, how do we grow an Inclusion Economy to reinforce the economic and social value that people with disabilities bring to the workplace. And so, the answer, and we have been saying this for a while, is that we also must change...it is up to this community...to lead the charge and adapt...to make sure that those we serve have the opportunities for decades to come in this rapidly changing world.

Isabel Hodge

Frances West followed up on Soroka's comments by asking each panelist to provide a succinct overview of their background, their organization and relationship to the discussion topic. The first speaker was Isabel Hodge, Executive Director of USICD. In connecting her experience and USICD's mission to the future of work, Hodge shared her history of working within the United States government on detail to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). As part of this assignment, Hodge oversaw the analysis of 4,000 public comments about services for people with I/DD. One of Hodge's key observations was that a “frequent theme throughout all of the public comments was the importance of Employment First as a key strategy for reaching competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities.” Recounting the impact this had on her, Hodge shared that it “was really an emotional roller coaster...because one minute you are hearing all of the terrible stories and the next you're just lifted up and empowered by these messages of people getting out of institutions, finding a partner in life and then finding a job and having a paycheck and being able to do adult things with those paychecks...it was a wonderful experience that I keep with me.”

Hodge closed by offering an observation on the global state of disability employment, where USICD acts as a connector with disabled people's organizations:

In my role with USICD, when we think about global perspectives and disabilities, I meet a lot with U.S. businesses who are very challenged right now because countries, except the United States, have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.¹ And they are establishing these hiring quotas, and they are being penalized because they cannot find people with disabilities with the skills. So, there is a real opportunity.

Christa White

The next panelist to introduce themselves was Christa White, Senior Vice President for Global Development at Special Olympics. In her comments, White provided context on the scope of Special Olympics' reach and impact as a global movement that is changing perceptions for people with intellectual disabilities through their work in sports, health, education, community building and

¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international treaty, ratified by 177 countries, outlining 26 critical human rights issues to promote societal inclusion. More information is available here: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

leadership. Every day, in 174 countries around the world, Special Olympics is working hard to solve the global injustice, isolation and intolerance felt by the over five million athletes they serve. White acknowledged the new, developing partnership with SourceAmerica on the future of work, which resulted in their participation in a congressional briefing on the topic in November 2017 and led to the Journey of Employment resource fairs at their Special Olympics USA Games event in Seattle and their 50th Anniversary Global Day of Inclusion in Chicago in July.

Prior to joining Special Olympics, White spent 25 years working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Much of her career was spent overseas, where she gained firsthand experience engaging with those seeking relief from economic and social barriers. In recounting her career transition, White said, "I left that role three years ago to join Special Olympics, because I wanted to take what I had learned and what were some of the greatest challenges about how to reach some of the most vulnerable populations and get a better understanding of one of the most critical and vulnerable and marginalized of those populations, who are those with intellectual disabilities."

Special Olympics uses sports as a vehicle to change attitudes and perceptions about what people with intellectual disabilities can do. White offered several important points to underscore the discussion on the future of work and inclusion and represented Special Olympics' commitment to impacting a disability-inclusive culture worldwide:

We are an organization that doesn't speak for our population of people with intellectual disabilities. We speak alongside them. We want our athletes to lead the discussion on building more inclusive learning environments, creating more inclusive play opportunities and ensuring more inclusive health options are available to those with intellectual disabilities. We want our athletes to have a seat at the table and continue to change attitudes and perceptions about their abilities. As we look to the next 50 years of our Movement, we will continue to seek out opportunities where our athletes are truly included in all aspects of the community and in society. We are strongly committed to building a more inclusive world for everyone.

...As we celebrate our 50th anniversary this year: we are the future of work. And that is because we not only, through our sports, actually develop the capabilities for people with intellectual disabilities on the playing field, those skills transfer into other aspects of life and especially in the employment field...our athletes are serving on boards of directors all over the world...they are officials, they are coaches, they are parents, they are brothers and sisters, they are employees, they are spokespeople on their behalf. They are our daily inspiration.

Anna Fife

The next member of the panel to offer remarks was Anna Fife, Associate Director of Outreach and Engagement at the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative. In her role with the Future of Work Initiative, Fife combines an interdisciplinary background in management, public policy and community building to engage a variety of stakeholder groups. In summarizing the work of her team, Fife said, "We are looking at the changes impacting the 21st century economy and the workforce. And, we're looking at both the challenges and opportunities, specifically focused on the policy side of the question." The Future of Work Initiative was founded in 2015 by Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) and former Governor Mitch Daniels (R-IN). Through a nonpartisan approach to research and outreach, the Future of Work Initiative garners considerable recognition on Capitol Hill and across the United States at all levels of government.

In surveying the dynamics shaping the future of work, Fife says the institute has identified three big trends:

The first is technology...so that's automation, that's AI [artificial intelligence], that's robotics and how that's changing the nature of work. And we're also considering what that means for worker training and education. The other trend we are looking at is the rise of the independent workforce. You may be familiar with the gig economy or contract work, or other elements that are just outside the traditional W2 workforce...The last trend that we're looking at is kind of a bigger, longer-term trend: looking at companies and giving them the room to invest in the long term to support communities and to support their workers. So that's the idea of corporate short-termism and how we can have a positive policy impact to make sure that companies make those long-term investments.

James Thurston

The discussion then shifted to the final panelist of the morning, James Thurston, Vice President of Global Strategy and Development at G3ict. Thurston opened his remarks by providing a brief history on his organization, which was established in support of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. G3ict is an independent, international nonprofit organization supporting the fastest negotiated and adopted human rights treaty in the history of the UN. And, as Thurston pointed out, "It's the first human rights treaty to elevate access to technology to a basic human right, which was...and remains, groundbreaking." With a focus on digital inclusion of people with disabilities, G3ict's programs touch on "education, employment, access to justice, voting and participating in democratic processes..."

Much of G3ict's work relies on developing strong partnerships worldwide. Their network includes industry, civic leaders and policymakers – each with a vested interest in ensuring people with disabilities have access to technology as a fundamental human right. From a tactical standpoint, Thurston shared that G3ict is "developing tools, developing model policies and working with government to implement programs around the world to really leverage technology to make progress on each area in the CRPD." In closing, Thurston emphasized the need for strong partnerships to provide the most sustainable solutions and programs.

Policy Interventions

Following introductions, the discussion shifted to the first topic for collective input: the efficacy of policy interventions to promote inclusive employment domestically and internationally. Having significant experience with this issue in the private sector, West initiated the conversation by sharing "for those of you [audience members] who are actually engaging the private sector for employment, which I think is everybody's objective, you will find that most companies don't pay a lot of attention to policies or legislation...they actually want to run away from it."

This reality underscores the need for companies with strategic foresight and perspectives that recognize the significant contributions people with disabilities can make when provided an opportunity. West suggested that the companies that embrace this mindset and the intent of federal legislation are oriented toward "policy-driven growth," in that these progressive companies embrace the government policies, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, as a potential driver for business differentiation.

To provide a focal point for panelists to offer comments, West asked each to consider their experience with international hiring quotas as well as the aspirational goals established in the U.S. under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In particular, she asked the panel for their “reactions to this kind of policy movement and what kind of opportunities and challenges [they] see being created for the constituency we are here to serve?”

James Thurston

Through his extensive interaction with governments around the world, Thurston said that “quota policies, quota regulations...have not been terribly effective in driving real, meaningful employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.” As contributing factors, Thurston identified that “systems aren’t necessarily in place to support that [outcome], whether it’s the skills training or the employers, the companies or the governments not having the technology in place that is accessible to persons with disabilities so when they show up or even try to apply for jobs it’s difficult if they’re leveraging technology.” From his perspective, this is an issue that needs to be addressed because a lack of accessibility will negate the intended benefits of employment quotas. Thurston added, “There is absolutely a need for a policy framework to support greater employment of persons with disabilities, if for nothing else it raises awareness, and it does actually set an expectation...but there needs to be some additional policy supports to actually make sure it is successful.” Relating the topic back to G3ict’s mission, Thurston discussed the strategy of engaging policymakers and the private sector to implement policies that spur innovation in products and services, but also expands to a requirement for greater accessibility practices within supply chains. He believes doing so “actually provides the accessibility support when it comes to technology that persons with disabilities would need as potential employees.”

Christa White

Broadening the topic, White offered comments on the role of policy frameworks in societal change and strategies for engaging legislators. Based on her experience, White said that “governments don’t necessarily look at the CRPD and say, ‘What can I do for you tomorrow and how can I do it?’” She mentioned, “it is an absolute forcing function in terms of opening doors to conversations where you can begin to negotiate the space, the openings, the opportunities.” In framing the argument, White stated that governments are more receptive to a rights-based perspective rather than detailed mandates on quotas and tactics.

White went on to offer strategies for engaging governments and the private sector. She shared that at Special Olympics, their strategy is to “immediately seek out strong partnerships with governments...If you are going to promote policies and practices, governments are critical partners to help put policy into practice.” White also sees a parallel with the private sector. In her international work, White said she does not find a lack of willingness on the part of governments and other stakeholders to support progress. Instead it is often hesitation from some in the international development community regarding not knowing where to start. “The question is: How do I do it. It’s not a lack of willingness to do it, but the policy frameworks open the door to the start of a conversation on what can be achieved and how it can be achieved,” which she believes is the perfect opportunity for those in the disability community to offer the necessary guidance and services to reach successful outcomes.

Steve Soroka

Taking a different approach to the question of policy-driven quotas, Soroka addressed the perception of challenges encountered in the United States. Referring to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973², Soroka said that the seven percent utilization goal has not yielded significant results. Analyzing the contributing factors, Soroka said, "Goals are fine, but it gets back to some of the barriers...policy being one...lack of awareness, as I mentioned, about the scope and magnitude of the crisis. Let's call it a national crisis." Referring to SourceAmerica's analysis on the scope of the issue, he went a step further, citing that "\$150 billion is left out of the economy due to people with disabilities being unemployed and not paying taxes."

Another contributing factor Soroka cited was fragmentation within the disability community. He said there are many organizations working on different aspects of the issue and there is a need for an "effort to reach common ground and move us all forward." In summarizing the common barriers to progress, Soroka listed awareness, stigmas and fear, as well as perceptions of the cost for reasonable accommodations. A potential bright spot that he noted is reflected in generational shifts, where groups like millennials are entering the workforce with a different context for inclusion. He sees their mindset as an opportunity for affecting change in the workplace of the future.

Frances West

Offering a private industry perspective, West agreed with Soroka's assessment of community fragmentation as a barrier to success. "I know that as a business, sometimes we will have many, many nonprofits representing different disability groups...and sometimes businesses get overwhelmed and end up saying 'we can't do it,'" West said. She recommended finding common ground on a topic that applies across community organizations and engages private industry. West believes that "the future of work framework can bring everyone together on one or two key issues, such as technology, which cuts across all disability types." She suggested that bringing disparate groups together can drive faster adoption of inclusive employment initiatives through the private sector, and she asked Anna Fife for her thoughts on the matter.

Anna Fife

Fife concurred, stating that awareness-building is always a great place to start, but she said that it is through collaboration "you are going to have a louder voice in many cases." Fife also recommended that advocates compile data to support their case and demonstrate a direct impact on their community. She suggested taking an active approach to identifying the potential end state by "having a very nuanced look at what the future looks like and what that's going to do to impact your community...it may not exist yet, you may need the data." Another critical factor Fife identified was collaboration. Commenting on SourceAmerica's efforts in publishing research and bringing parties together, she said she believes it is critical to "have that shared voice and bring policymakers and private business together to understand the challenges we are all facing."

² In 2013, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended to direct a seven percent utilization goal for the employment of qualified people with disabilities within the private sector. This regulation, found under Section 503, applies to commercial companies conducting business with the federal government and includes specific guidance for its application. The regulation became effective in 2014. More information is available here: <https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm>.

Future of Work Opportunities

Shifting the focus of conversation from global policy challenges, West prompted the panel to think about the potential opportunities created for people with disabilities by the changing nature of work. As an example, West referenced the increased prevalence of the gig economy and the diversity of work available through platform-based employment models. West said she believes that the “gig economy will potentially match the profile of people with disabilities in that you have more independence and you can work anywhere...and you can pick and choose your hours.” This was just one example that was presented of how to see opportunity in the disruption to the typical 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. office model.

Isabel Hodge

The first to speak on the positive aspects of the changing nature of work was Isabel Hodge. Tying her response to the discussion on policy, Hodge said she sees the emphasis on employment quotas as fertile ground for progress. She pointed to businesses around the world that fall short of quota requirements and receive financial penalties, suggesting that it is an opportunity to redirect the funds into “skills and vocational training programs so that individuals with disabilities will eventually get the skills they need to be hired by those companies.” Hodge went on to talk about the need to increase capacity building for disability employment professionals as a way to help the private sector achieve successful outcomes, specifically with practices like customized employment. In her experience, self-paced videos on inclusive employment practices alone do not provide companies an understanding of how to hire, support and retain employees with disabilities. Such resources must be supplemented by employment professionals focused on engaging the private sector. Hodge said, “We can use corporate social responsibility to build a training package that really helps build the acumen of the employment specialist...so they do their research, they understand the company they are going to visit, they understand the hiring needs and where the opportunities are.”

Christa White

Due to their extensive network of corporate partners who are making disability inclusion more of a priority, Special Olympics has seen some of the progress industry leaders are making in workplace inclusion. White shared examples from Microsoft and Bank of America, who are both investing in inclusion. Both companies have developed toolkits to share their experience with others. As White said, in creating a culture of inclusion, these companies “have had some learnings, they understand the challenges. They haven’t solved all of the challenges, but they recognize the need for a playbook that involves training for their entire employee base.” White commented on the parallels between this approach and the evolution of Special Olympics from “an organization that focuses on building the skills of the individual with an intellectual disability to looking at how we actually build the environment for acceptance and inclusion.” Elaborating on societal change and the role organizations like Special Olympics can play, she said:

We’ve gone from saying, ‘How do you train and prepare the individual for the world?’ to ‘How do you prepare the world for the individual?’ And I think that’s sort of a business model that we are beginning to explore, in particular with this new partnership with SourceAmerica. Our future looks like a more unified workplace. A more unified workplace means we can’t only focus on how we train individuals with disabilities for employment, but how do we train everyone else in the workplace to take advantage of a mindset that growth is possible and people with disabilities have skills and talents that should be valued? Investing in building a more inclusive mindset in the workplace will not only change the culture to a more welcoming and inclusive

workplace, but it will also grow the revenues as more people will be attracted to supporting and working in a business that is more accepting and inclusive.

White also reflected on the importance of promoting inclusion whenever the opportunity arises. In her experience, the most effective way to reach an audience is by ceding the stage to those with the most important perspective – people with disabilities. While preparing for a presentation at the United Nations Conference of States Parties, White made it a point to turn the microphone over to a colleague to share how technology has changed her life in the workplace and in her community. Relating this to the future of work, White commented that it is “useful to look at how [technology] can help you become a friend, a citizen and better able to communicate with everyone around you...sometimes we think we have to change the whole world with technology when actually we have to learn from what is simple and at somebody’s desk that makes them better able to fit in with a corporate culture.”

Frances West

Continuing the theme White touched on, West drew on her career in the technology sector to offer a perspective on emerging trends that are shaping the future of work. “I think with technology, we are moving to what they call a market of one,” West said. Elaborating on this concept, she continued: “It used to be that a company would try to produce software or a solution for a segment of the population...they would study the overall behavior of those market segments and then create products and services, say for example, the teen market, the baby boomer market...but now we’re getting to a point where technology is very personalized.” West said she believes the movement toward technology tailored to individual preferences and needs represents tremendous benefits for the disability community if they are engaged as design, development and deployment partners. Taking this a step further, West stated that this is a new opportunity for jobs in the evolving labor market. From West’s point of view, this is also a motivating factor to work with an organization like SourceAmerica that is seeking to leverage its scale to amplify the understanding of the disability community and articulate the possibilities to the public and private sectors.

James Thurston

West then turned to Thurston to bring the topics of emerging opportunity and cross-sector engagement together with another important trend: urbanization. Within the context of their mission, which is focused on human rights, G3ict launched a program titled Smart Cities for All under Thurston’s leadership. Smart Cities for All evolved out of concerns about several trends that could, ideally, be reframed as catalysts for opportunity. Thurston framed the problem by stating that the path we are all on is likely “making the digital divide for people with disabilities worse, not better.” Elaborating on this, Thurston continued:

...if you think about where you live, whether it is a big city or a small city, cities do a lot of things that are important to all of us. From public safety to sanitation to education to criminal justice, it has a huge impact on our lives, and cities are increasingly using technology for all of that...the problem is that none of them are thinking about inclusion as part of that. Are these enormous “smart city” technology investments actually thinking about whether or not all of their citizens can access these solutions? And I can tell you, the bottom line is ‘no’ because most of the smart cities technologies are inaccessible.

In scoping the opportunity, G3ict points to research that the global market for smart city technology is two trillion dollars over the next several years. G3ict’s own research, a global study during the first year of the Smart Cities for All project, confirmed that current smart city initiatives are making the

digital divide worse for people with disabilities. In response to their findings, G3ict and their partner World Enabled, set about creating a framework for engaging the technology industry, civil society and disabled persons' organizations to influence the planning and procurement of smart city technologies and drive greater inclusion. Relating his experience, Thurston recounted how conversations with city chief information officers in Cape Town, Kyoto, Rio, the Global North and Global South typically follow a similar pattern. "It's about a five-minute conversation with them about why they should care about this issue of digital inclusion as part of their technology investments, but then you get to the harder part, which is: 'Okay, what do we need to do?'"

With the problem and opportunity defined, Thurston then provided insight on G3ict's strategies for achieving the mission of their Smart Cities for All project. "We've started creating toolkits for cities and really started engaging them...there is a lot more room for partnership, frankly, and leveraging this trend, which is global urbanization," said Thurston. To emphasize the importance of this undertaking, he referenced the prediction that more than 70 percent of the world will be living in urban zones by 2050. Thurston added, "Cities are driving technology. They are the heart of global GDP. That's where the jobs are...and so, if we're going to have an impact on employment, we need to be leveraging technology and focus on cities." A concerted effort to bring inclusion to the forefront of urban planning is critical to addressing the future of work for people with disabilities.

Anna Fife

Earlier in the discussion, Fife identified three significant areas of policy and research within the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative: technology, independent work and incentives for long-term value creation by corporations. For the final perspective on opportunities, West asked Fife to comment on what the impetus will be for corporations to engage, think about the future of work and ensure people with disabilities are included. Fife said she believes an important factor will be how companies fill the skills gap or the perceived shortage of talent to fulfill all available roles in the labor market. She believes companies will need to consider "where their markets are and who their talent is...and to think long-term about what their business is going to be." From there, they will need to find the talent they require to reach the future state of their company; they must take an inclusive approach to hiring. Fife acknowledged that it's hard to see the future and is often "easier to focus on the jobs that will be destroyed because you can see them, they're in front of you, than the jobs that will be created."

Fife went on to underscore the importance of the initiatives undertaken by SourceAmerica and G3ict, saying that through collaboration we can begin to mutually explore the future and understand what the jobs could look like. "It allows people to think longer because employment pathways can't be 'just-in-time' if they're really going to be developed and sustainable." Fife concluded by encouraging organizations like those on the panel to continue bringing together "the industry side, nonprofit side, government and education [systems] to really foster those communications early."

Audience Questions

Following the insightful comments of the panel, West opened the floor to questions from the audience. The first question was directed primarily to James Thurston.

Q: “You mentioned digital inclusion, and we have partnered with our city because of recognized gaps in both literacy and access to the internet and technology. We started an in-house digital literacy training program, but people could not afford devices. So, we then started an electronic recycling program to offer low-cost devices to those we serve. This was an initiative and was based on a public, private partnership, but it made us realize the gap. There are so many people that do not know how to use technology. Are there examples of programs implemented across large industrialized areas to address this problem?”

A: In response, Thurston reflected on the innovative models in SourceAmerica’s *Social Enterprises of the Future: A Collective Response* report. “I’ve heard a couple of times today that your community could be playing the role, or maybe already are playing the role, of accessibility consultant and inclusion consultant,” said Thurston. “Every time I hear that, I nod my head, because I mentioned I’m talking to cities around the world, many across the U.S., and they’re looking for what I call ‘heavy hand-holding.’” Essentially, cities and public and private sector leaders within them want to be inclusive, but they do not know how to begin and sustain that journey. “And so, if someone is in the business of ‘heavy hand-holding’ around some of these tough challenges like skills, cost [and] the digital divide, you can make something accessible...but if a person with a disability has less access to broadband and much less access to a smartphone, which they do, it doesn’t really matter if it’s accessible, because they’re not using it,” he continued. Thurston said he believes there is tremendous opportunity for those in the disability community to fill that role and work with the business community and civic leaders to solve the issues.

Q: The second question was posed to Christa White about expanding on Special Olympics’ ambitious approach to inclusion: “Christa, I appreciate your initiative on turning from the individual athlete-building skills to the environment. How is Special Olympics communicating this to local communities to bring about this change?”

A: In response, White shared that the recognition of their 50th anniversary has prompted the organization to “double down” on what they have learned through their Unified Sports experience. The data collected by the organization shows their Unified programming is “dramatically changing attitudes about what people with intellectual disabilities can do and how they contribute in their communities,” White said. Their strategy for creating large-scale change includes sharing their data at the federal, state and community levels. The organization is also expanding their Unified concept throughout the education system. Through their partnership with the Department of Education, Special Olympics has expanded its Unified programming to 6,000 schools nationwide. White shared that they have learned that bringing the experience of inclusion to communities is the key to sustainable change.

White continued by sharing a lesson learned that is valuable for any advocacy organization.

When we actually engage heads of state, we give them an opportunity to experience true inclusion. What we have seen time and time again when explaining our mission and the critical work we do, data matters but it doesn't fully explain the impact we make. We can permanently change the way that a head of state looks at disability when we give them the opportunity to walk alongside our athletes during the Opening Ceremony at our World Games or participate in a pick-up game of soccer in their neighborhood. That is where the true magic happens and true inclusion is felt and seen.

To overcome long-standing barriers caused by misperceptions regarding the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics is partnering with organizations like SourceAmerica to explore what a unified workplace looks like. Concluding her remarks, White reflected on the importance of time in creating meaningful change. She said that “one of the things we often don’t talk about is the kind of time it takes in the workplace to give to employees with disabilities...it’s the social aspect of being on the job that continues to change attitudes and move people from the back-office operations to leadership positions.” Upward social mobility is a defining aspect of Special Olympics’ advocacy efforts. To that point, White added that Special Olympics is “organizing athletes globally into athlete input councils and providing leadership training that brings those five million athletes into leadership positions. By working with SourceAmerica and other global partners, we are able to demonstrate leadership capability by people with intellectual disabilities directly into the workplace, including opportunities with government offices.”

The audience also posed questions about specific policies in the United States. Though relevant to the future of work and inclusion of people with disabilities, this discussion was not included in this report, which focuses on a broader, global context of inclusion. Analysis of domestic policy shifts and their potential impact are offered in SourceAmerica’s report *The Future of Work and the Disability Community*.

Conclusion

The challenges, opportunities and recommendations presented by the panelists reflect a growing need for systems change to achieve a more inclusive labor market. Societal, legislative, economic and technological trends are converging to shape the future of work not only in the United States, but also across the globe. It is incumbent upon actors within the disability employment ecosystem to engage one another to explore the actions that will be needed to ensure such trends do not increase the marginalization of people with disabilities.

There are examples of successes within the United States and across the world that establish a foundation to build upon. There is a measurable increase in the frequency of media outlets and private companies talking about employing people with disabilities, reflecting the growing societal expectations of inclusion. This is undoubtedly a result of decades of advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities. There have also been advances in global and domestic policy frameworks to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout all aspects of society. Such frameworks often lead to new challenges that must be overcome – during both the implementation and monitoring processes. By meeting these challenges and improving upon the frameworks as needed, it becomes possible to achieve the desired outcomes. This positive momentum around social sentiment and public policy must be accompanied by actions to address long-standing economic inequality faced by people with disabilities. When coupled with the predictions of the changing

nature of work globally, it is apparent that new approaches are needed at the intersection of education, workforce development and equal access to opportunity.

Through the Social Enterprises of the Future initiative, SourceAmerica is partnering with organizations such as Special Olympics, USICD, G3ict, the Aspen Institute and FrancesWestCo to act as a catalyst for systems change. The contributions of Anna Fife, Isabel Hodge, James Thurston, Frances West and Christa White through the first Future of Work and Inclusion panel event provide a global perspective on this critical issue. The Social Enterprises of the Future initiative will continue to engage in research and program design that leads to operational and policy-level interventions with the goal of increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Ultimately, progress will depend on collaboration across sectors and the meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities to design outcomes that meet their goals and aspirations for the future. The Social Enterprises of the Future initiative will continue to bring together thought leaders with diverse perspectives to advance shared goals of inclusion and economic well-being for the benefit of the disability community and the nation at large.

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