

Corporate Peer Discussions: Re-Tooling the Workforce in Covid-19 Recovery **Summary of Best Practices on Corporate Response**

Virtual convenings held on June 30, July 1, and July 2, 2020

Convening Organizations: ACCP, CECP, COF, and POL

Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP), Council on Foundations (COF), Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (CECP), and Points of Light (POL), which collectively represent more than 400 of the most socially and environmentally responsible global companies, are joining forces to support leaders of corporate purpose and to advocate for the field by convening dialogue on relevant solutions and to share best practices. We have already seen hundreds of corporations respond to the COVID-19 crisis and national unrest related to the movement for racial justice with courage and determination. Their leadership sets an example for the sector to follow. In the sessions focused on Re-Tooling the Workforce in Covid-19 Recovery, 13 member companies participated.

The compounding crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and the movement for racial justice has been a call to action for many companies to proactively address growing inequality and adapt to new realities. Many companies were already on a path towards re-skilling and/or addressing diversity but the events of the last several months have accelerated that journey for many. Participants in the calls focused on “Re-tooling the Workforce in Covid-19 Recovery” were encouraged to share their company’s strategies in corporate responsibility, human resources, or other business teams. Suggested areas of discussion included: upskilling/technical skills, virtual work, professional development for future employees, future pipeline development, and geography/place-based models.

Key Themes Include:

- Prolonged virtual work, upskilling and reskilling
- Digital equity as a key to economic mobility and an inclusive economy
- Shift to skills-based recruitment
- Importance of Employee Resource Groups
- Elevation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Diversifying the workforce
- New and expanded philanthropic focus areas
- Challenges with virtual volunteerism
- Uncertainty around return to in-person volunteering
- Expanded categories of volunteerism for Civic Engagement and acts of kindness

Prolonged virtual work, upskilling and reskilling

- Many companies anticipate prolonged virtual work and extended closures of offices and are focusing on digital transformation, upgrading their technology to more effectively deliver learning and resources.
- Virtual work has seen some benefits in certain job functions in morale and increased productivity. For companies that already had some remote workforce, the shift to more virtual work is helping to break down the perception that you must be at headquarters in person to rise in the ranks.
- Companies are focused on developing a pipeline of talent through upskilling and tech skills training.
- Companies are considering what are the jobs that need to transition as we move to a future workforce and thinking of ways to create certification courses to upskill. For example, with increasing focus on virtual reality, areas like e-sports, gaming and cyber security present viable career pathways and companies are considering the skills and training needed to be successful in those industries.
- AI and robotics are having an impact on the workforce both in manufacturing and headquarters and Covid-19 has accelerated that trend.

- Even within a single company, there may be aspects that are shrinking while others are growing. Consolidation and some permanent loss of jobs is a reality. Some companies with layoffs are providing those employees who are let go with new tech skills.
- As a result of these shifts, HR's function is shifting to talent recruitment and less on admin support

Digital equity as a key to economic mobility and an inclusive economy

- With education and work increasingly remote, digital equity (access and fluency) has emerged as essential for young people to build skills and resources. Companies are looking for organizations to support in digital equity to build this into their portfolio.

Shift to skills-based recruitment

- Some companies are looking at roles that may not require a 4-year college degree but that could be trained for at community colleges or other certification methods to break down barriers to employment.
- Others are looking at skills-based recruitment for manufacturing roles rather than college recruiting and academic components
- Companies are coming together to create curriculum for technical college system in some states to assist more student skill sets and tech skills related to IT in particular.

Importance of Employee Resource Groups

- Employee Resource Groups have taken a leading role in courageous conversations and town halls related to movement for racial justice.
- They are also helping companies to bring attention to nonprofits that are leading in the community by having a voice in funding decisions and/or inviting nonprofits in for lunch and learns with employees.
- There has been considerable intersectionality between affinity groups during this time. One company discussed whether to disband separate ERGs focused on African American, Hispanic, LGBTQ, etc., and ultimately decided to remain as individual groups but collaborate much more to support all communities.
- ERGs have also provided feedback on recruiting efforts, hiring practices, and helping implement solutions where there are issues within companies.
- One concern related to this heightened engagement of ERGs is the volume of “volunteer work” that employees of color are tasked with and whether it should be recognized formally in performance management or bonuses. (See [Washington Post article](#), “Tech companies are asking their black employee groups to fix Silicon Valley’s race problems – often for free”)

Elevation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Amid the call for racial justice, several companies indicated they would be posting new positions for DEI leaders and that they will be looking across their companies to incorporate a DEI lens into their work.
- Re-skilling could include cultivating the competency to infuse a DEI lens across all roles in the company.
- DEI roles are also being elevated (into office of the CEO from public affairs or Human Resources in one example) and combined Chief Corporate Responsibility and Diversity Officer created.
- CECP's report, [Diversity & Inclusion in Corporate Social Engagement](#) highlights this trend of developing a strategic, integrated approach. Some companies have created new, blended senior-level roles with dual-responsibility for overseeing both corporate social engagement and corporate D&I strategy.

Diversifying the workforce

- Some companies have released bold goals on D&I front internally for gender and race, with pay parity and diversity in senior positions, thereby holding the mirror to themselves regarding diversity in workforce and leadership.
- For some companies, this requires re-thinking common practices like promoting from within, if that pipeline lacks diversity, and looking outside of the company for talent for new positions.
- In talent pipeline work, Corporate Foundations must be mindful of not directly benefitting the company (by providing scholarships to individuals who will then work at the company, for example).

New and expanded philanthropic focus areas

- Some companies have increased investment levels to address **Covid-19 recovery** and **racial justice** areas.
- Key areas of funding from employees during Covid-19 have included: **critical human needs** – food and **housing insecurity** (global), **access to education**, **economic empowerment**. Some companies have added new focus areas due to emerging needs such as **domestic violence** and **mental health** related to Covid-19
- **Digital equity** and the **learning gap** are increasingly areas of focus. Some companies are offering skills based or pro bono volunteering in tech for their nonprofit partners.
- Due to the increased focus on racial equity, **criminal justice reform and advocacy** have been emphasized.
- Companies are **supporting small businesses** led by women, people of color, disabilities, immigrant, and other underrepresented groups more significantly affected by job loss in Covid-19 to help them participate in the economy. CDFIs help support small businesses not included in government relief.
- Companies have made significant commitments and donations to organizations addressing the movement for Black Lives Matter and added **racial justice** organizations to eligible employee matching gift options.
- Global companies are seeking ways to engage their workforce in **racial equity** work outside of the US; especially in other areas of the world that have also had recent racial justice demonstrations. Examples:
 - Brazil has the [Baoba Fund](#), the first and only fund dedicated exclusively to the promotion of racial equity for the black population in Brazil. It aims to mobilize people and resources, in Brazil and abroad, to support pro-racial equity projects and actions.
 - [Race at Work Charter Signatories](#) in the UK, through Business in the Community

Challenges with virtual volunteerism

- In March, companies abruptly halted their in-person volunteer events and shifted to virtual with mixed success. Activities like making masks, sending letters to the elderly, and others have created engagement, as have virtual mentoring, but overall companies feel that more needs to be done to deepen impact.
- As they go forward, companies would like to do more skills based volunteering and pro bono service virtually. There could be an opportunity to help nonprofits develop virtual volunteering capacity.
- Most available virtual volunteering projects are US centric, and companies are looking for more guidance and opportunities for global footprint. Tracking of virtual volunteerism has been inconsistent.
- [Give2Get](#) has an at-home volunteering program that sends custom boxes of volunteer kits to employees with pre-addressed envelopes to deliver to the nonprofits and will host a virtual event for team building.
- Some companies have pledged volunteer or pro bono hours supporting causes related to racial equity.

Uncertainty around return to in-person volunteering

- Planning is beginning for return to in-office work and in-person volunteering, but uncertainty abounds. One company asked its leadership to add volunteerism into part of the re-opening plan to determine the necessary steps and re-entry training to resume in-person volunteering.
- POL has developed a resource, [Guidelines for In-Person Volunteering during Covid-19](#).
- Companies are considering bringing in-person volunteering onsite in a distributions center rather than going out in the community to create a more controlled environment.
- For those employees that are volunteering in person with a nonprofit, registering directly with the nonprofit removes some liability to the company.

Expanded categories of volunteerism for Civic Engagement and acts of kindness

- During Covid-19, companies recognized employees' **acts of kindness** (that may not necessarily be with a 501c3) in social media campaigns, and some began to track them as a separate volunteerism category.
- Companies are also supporting employees' **Civic Engagement** by providing time off to help with voter registration, supporting the Census, advocacy, peaceful protests, connecting with non-partisan organizations, etc. This has emerged as another aspect of employee engagement, and there is a movement for companies to offer election day as a paid day off. <http://www.electionday.org/companies>
- Companies are considering tracking these civic engagement activities separately from volunteerism and trying to navigate the line between what is company-driven versus individual expression.

COVID-19 Resources from each partnering organization:

- ACCP: [COVID-19 Resources for Corporate Citizenship Professionals](#)
- CECP: COVID-19 Resources [Recap for CEOs](#) and [Recap for CR Leaders](#)
- COF: [COVID-19 Resource Hub](#)
- POL: [COVID-19 Action Plan](#)