

# **EMPLOYER I&D SERVICES INSIGHTS GUIDE:**

**BUILDING TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE &  
EQUITABLE WORKFORCE RECOVERY**

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear Readers,

Thank you for your interest and passion for building an inclusive & diverse workforce for all, including immigrants and refugees.

As we adapt and transition to a new normal amid the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have learned to work and build social connections in a different way. Upwardly Global wanted to gain a better understanding of the workforce challenges and needs of the jobseekers and corporations given the pandemic to help us pave a path for an inclusive recovery. We believe that by hearing people's voices, we are more equipped to understand existing inequalities and rebuild better, ensuring the inclusion of all voices, including those of the immigrant and refugee population. In this spirit, the team applied the principles of design thinking and worked with immigrant and refugee professionals and corporations of all sizes to delve into the question "**how might we build towards an inclusive & equitable workforce recovery?**"

To answer this question, the team conducted market research, held 45+ landscape interviews, and led two design thinking workshops with over 25 corporate partners and Upwardly Global alumni in New York City, NY and San Francisco, CA. The results of the workshops are synthesized into 6 high-level concepts that Upwardly Global hopes to build out further with the help of its corporate partners.

This paper is intended to provide a summary of:

- **Market Research & Interview Key Findings**
- **COVID-19 Impacts & Implications to Jobseekers and Corporations**
- **Innovations & Top Ideas from Workshops**

With a focus around the themes of:

- **Remote Work: Inclusive Culture**
- **Future & Current Workforce Uncertainty**
- **Upskilling / Reskilling Opportunities**

We hope this level-set of underlying impacts and high-level ideas will help all of us as we move forward on finding solutions that benefit both the immigrant and refugee population in the U.S. and corporate partners.

Organizations can and should become more resilient and vibrant as a result of inclusive and equitable planning and rebuilding efforts, and we hope that you join us in this journey. If you are interested in learning more, you can find our contact information at the end of this paper.

Happy Reading,  
*Upwardly Global*

## A NOTE ON TARGET POPULATION

Upwardly Global's target focus is immigrant and refugee professionals in the U.S., who are unemployed or under-employed. This group is highly skilled, with a minimum of a four-year degree and international work experience. These professionals are fully authorized to work in the U.S. and do not require visa sponsorship from employers.

Ideas and concepts in this paper can be applied to the inclusion of various groups and underrepresented populations. In addition, it is Upwardly Global's intention to put forward ideas inclusive of the immigrant and refugee population to develop strategies, priorities, and potential products and services with their corporate partners.

## A NOTE TO ACCENTURE

As a key supporter, Upwardly Global would like to thank Accenture for their pro bono project support and contributions to this paper.

## Project Sponsors and Partnering Organizations:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <br>Project Sponsor                 | <br>Project Sponsor |
| <br>Project Implementation Partner |  |

# PROJECT OVERVIEW & APPROACH

## ABOUT UPWARDLY GLOBAL

Upwardly Global (or UpGlo for short) builds an inclusive, future-ready workforce that embraces the skills of immigrant and refugee professionals. The organization advances equity, powers the economy, and champions human potential through innovative skill-building, coaching, and networking programs.

To date, the organization has assisted more than 7,000 people in successfully rebuilding professional careers in the U.S. Upwardly Global envisions an equitable, more welcoming nation, where everyone can fully contribute and thrive.

## ABOUT ACCENTURE

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services in strategy and consulting, interactive, technology and operations, with digital capabilities across all of these services. We combine unmatched experience and specialized capabilities across more than 40 industries — powered by the world’s largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centers. With 509,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture brings continuous innovation to help clients improve their performance and create lasting value across their enterprises.

Through Corporate Citizenship, Accenture is working to innovate for social impact and build a future of shared success. As part of this program, Accenture has provided pro bono support to Upwardly Global to help it expand its future of work services.

## ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The project brings together employers and skilled immigrants through design thinking sessions (facilitated by Accenture) to co-create products and solutions that will move the mark on promoting inclusive workplaces.

The initiative design includes a market research and landscape interview phase, along with a development and pilot phase, where Upwardly Global will work with select corporate participants to continue to build, refine product and service ideas, and beta test solutions.

## ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

We know that inclusive workplaces for all is a complex challenge to tackle in the U.S. Now, unemployment rates are projected to reach 20-30%, and given the current circumstances, companies are working to understand current and future skills needs and priorities to better prepare for a strong economic recovery.

By sharing and learning from each other during the workshops and beyond, we hope to ideate on strategies that will lead to an inclusive economic recovery for all.



### MARKET RESEARCH

Conducted research to understand barriers & challenges surrounding the immigrant and refugee population’s workforce integration and to understand leading practices around Inclusion & Diversity (I&D)



### LANDSCAPE INTERVIEWS

Conducted 45+ landscape interviews of Corporate & Upwardly Global Alumni participants to better understand their context, business drivers & obstacles



### WORKSHOPS

Conducted workshops in New York City & San Francisco to identify opportunities to “build towards an inclusive & equitable workforce recovery”



### INSIGHTS & ACTION

Prioritize outcomes and opportunities for Upwardly Global to utilize for employer partnerships & initiatives

# MARKET RESEARCH & INTERVIEW KEY FINDINGS

The market research and landscape interviews explore the role that the immigrant and refugee population plays in the U.S. workforce, especially as companies look towards the future of work and an economic recovery. These findings brought to light the unique barriers and challenges to inclusion faced by the immigrant and refugee professionals, as well as a variety of leading practices to aid in the inclusion of this population in the workforce. For the landscape interviews, over 45 interviews were conducted with both alumni of the Upwardly Global program and corporate participants from partnering organizations.

## THE FUTURE OF WORK

Between 2000 and 2050, new immigrants and their children will contribute to 83 percent of the growth in the working-age population.<sup>1</sup> There is an increasing number of highly educated immigrants coming to the U.S. with 48% having received a bachelor's degree. However, over 2 million immigrant and refugee college graduates are experiencing "brain waste" or the underutilization of skills through under and unemployment.<sup>2</sup> Addressing this missed opportunity to integrate the highly skilled immigrant and refugee population into our workforce will help ensure continued economic recovery and growth.

Research has found benefits to a diverse & inclusive corporation – there are enormous bodies of research and consensus within industry that a diverse workforce leads to increased productivity, better ideas, and happier workers.

## BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

Immigrant and refugee jobseekers face barriers at various intersections of the career journey, from the job search, interview, onboarding and career advancement stages.

**In the Job Search:** Matching foreign experience to job titles and explaining employment gaps is a barrier to effectively securing interviews.

**In the Interview Process:** Cultural differences (e.g. eye-contact, firm handshakes, and marketing oneself), as well as the American-style of storytelling present barriers for immigrant and refugee professionals, especially those who have not mastered these culturally specific nuances. In addition, phone or virtual screenings are harder to navigate due to reliance on language over body language.

**During Onboarding:** It is often difficult to negotiate salary, within no context of how foreign experience translates into the US market. In addition, inclusion training is not generally offered to new employees to facilitate inclusion into workplace culture.

**Career Advancement:** Immigrant and refugee employees often face challenges when others do not fully understand characteristics of different cultures. These employees face U.S. corporate cultural barriers, as well as a lack of formal mentorship, making it hard to navigate the U.S. workplace and leading to feelings of being excluded. Moreover, bias towards immigrant and refugee populations related to leadership style and opportunity can cause a barrier to immigrant and refugee advancement.

**Limited Reporting on Diversity:** According to Fortune, only a small share of Fortune 500 companies report diversity statistics. In 2017, only 3.2% of companies on the Fortune 500 list released complete data for the race and gender of their employees in each job category and management level.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Center for American Progress "Progress 2050";

<sup>2</sup>Migration Policy, "Untapped Talent: The Cost of Brain Waste among Highly Skilled Immigrants in the United States

<sup>3</sup>Fortune "Why We Logged Every Fortune 500 Company's Diversity Data, Or Lack Thereof" 2017

# MARKET RESEARCH & INTERVIEW KEY FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

## BARRIERS & CHALLENGES (CONTINUED)

Of the corporate participants interviewed, over 75% have a high-level understanding of the challenges and barriers that the immigrant and refugee population faces in the U.S. job search process and with inclusion in the workplace. Those same corporate participants also believe that organizational barriers can be addressed and accelerated with greater buy-in from colleagues and leadership in the organization.

To move an inclusion agenda forward, organizations need a strong business case and best in class examples on why to include immigrant and refugee professionals in their existing I&D initiatives. This includes a robust business case, best in class examples, and demand from employees to consider immigrant and refugee populations in their I&D diversity metrics, workforce planning strategy, and inclusion goals. Companies are further interested in workforce alignment tools, as well as experienced-based understanding trainings of immigrant and refugee challenges (including unconscious bias trainings).

## LEADING PRACTICES

Leading practices provide strong examples and guidance to corporations. Promising practices can be learned from the Tent Foundation's U.S. Employers' Guide to Hiring Refugees, which offers examples of how to build a recruitment strategy for the immigrant and refugee population. This guide highlights that out-of-date skills, differing communication styles, cultural differences, and lack of credentials are potential challenges that must be addressed.<sup>4</sup> The Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) Corporate Equality Index (CEI) provides examples of how to measure the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population through the implementation of policies and practices, as well as how to build a coalition around the movement. HRC's CEI launched in 2002 with 13 companies scoring 100 out of 100 in the first index and by 2019, had 572 top scoring companies.<sup>5</sup> By understanding these leaders and others, insights were provided into how to better achieve and track workforce initiatives.

"It is such an honor to work on the D&I project for Upwardly Global and guided and supported by Accenture. Immigrants have always been a differentiator to the U.S. Workforce and with the changing demographics of our workforce, immigrant and refugee talent is what will strengthen our innovation, our creativity and our business outcomes. That is the "head" reason. The "heart" reason for doing this work is we need to be a country that represents fairness and respect, makes all people feeling valued and belonging and where they can be their absolute best. With businesses helping to lead the way on D&I, we become many together to achieve belonging."

Terri Lynn Cardona, Founder – Stone Soup Performance Consulting, LLC.

<sup>4</sup>Tent Foundation "U.S. Employers' Guide to Hiring Refugees"

<sup>5</sup>Human Rights Campaign Foundation "Corporate Equality Index 2019"

# COVID-19 IMPACTS & IMPLICATIONS

## UPWARDLY GLOBAL JOBSEEKER IMPACTS

The impact of COVID-19 has heightened the need of Upwardly Global's collective talent to weather this storm. There is now greater market demand for STEM and healthcare jobs which comprise of 65% of UpGlo's jobseekers. In addition, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted underrepresented communities, making it harder for them to compete in the job market.

In early April, Upwardly Global assessed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on 74 of their jobseekers. The results showed that nearly **50% experienced job loss or reduced income** from their survival jobs in the past 10 days. As demand for survival jobs such as restaurant work and ride-sharing services has plummeted, jobseekers are left without a primary source of income. Of the jobseekers surveyed, **69% have no savings** or one month's worth of expenses or less in savings.

With little to no savings, jobseekers are juggling their immediate cash needs with their longer-term job search. As many as **73% of jobseekers reported that the COVID-19 crisis has impacted their professional job search** and an additional **40% have experienced slowing in the job market**, including hiring freezes, halted interview processes, and suspended credentialing and training programs.

Additionally, jobseekers often do not have established professional networks to tap into and are now feeling more isolated and disconnected. Jobseekers are experiencing an emotional impact due to the situation with **1 in 3 specifically mentioning anxiety** stemming from the uncertainty of the situation and the pandemic's unknown long-term impact. Of the jobseekers surveyed, 18% feel isolated as a result of the emotional distress caused by the pandemic. On the other hand, employers are experiencing a variety of different pain points, but there is an opportunity of convergence to address the impacts of both corporations and immigrant and refugee jobseekers.

## CORPORATE IMPACTS

The following seven themes emerged as the top workforce challenges and opportunities that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The final three corporate impact themes:

- Remote Work: Inclusive Culture
- Current & Future Workforce Uncertainty
- Upskilling / Reskilling Opportunities

were explored further and ideated on for potential solutions.

### 1. REMOTE WORK: SHIFTING MINDSETS

With the shift to a virtual workplace, companies are looking for ways to keep their employees motivated and productive in this new way of working.

### 2. REMOTE WORK: HEALTH, WELLNESS & CARETAKING

A home / work environment brings along competing priorities such as childcare and family support. Companies want to support their employees as they navigate through high levels of stress and anxiety that can stem from remote work.

### 3. REMOTE WORK: TECHNICAL ENABLEMENT

A major priority for companies is ensuring that their organization and any client they support have the necessary technical capabilities to shift to fully remote operations.

### 4. TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION OPPORTUNITIES

With change brings new opportunities for technology leaders to move the needle on artificial Intelligence (AI) and workforce automation products to better adapt to the digital age.

# COVID-19 IMPACTS & IMPLICATIONS (CONTINUED)

## CORPORATE IMPACTS (CONTINUED)

### 5. REMOTE WORK: INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Companies recognize the importance of establishing an inclusive workplace culture virtually, one that allows for open communication and collaborative teamwork across a variety of virtual platforms. This is also important for companies that are looking to integrate newly hired employees into a remote work setting.

### 6. FUTURE & CURRENT WORKFORCE UNCERTAINTY

Companies are currently tasked with determining what to do about their current talent pipelines and forecasting future skill needs in a time of great uncertainty. While a challenging task, many see this as an opportunity to expand their thinking on remote roles and diverse talent pipelines.

### 7. UPSKILLING / RESKILLING OPPORTUNITIES

As the workplace is changing, employers are looking to find new ways to upskill / reskill resources in order to reallocate the workforce to better meet organizational and customer needs.

“I’m grateful that Upwardly Global used their unique point of view as a leading workforce development organization to act as a convener, bringing together voices from across the private sector. Now, more than ever, we must come together to look to the future, and be intentional about designing an economic recovery that is inclusive of everyone. When we design for the hardest hit, most vulnerable communities, we’re more likely to land a solution that benefits everyone. While the road ahead may not be easy, I came away from the workshop energized by the opportunity our companies have to re-imagine the future of work through an inclusive lens.”

Maya Appiah, Senior Manager, Inclusive Hiring – Microsoft

# INNOVATIONS & TOP IDEAS

## FUTURE OF WORK CONCEPT IDEAS

The following ideas were developed at the New York City and San Francisco workshops to help pave an inclusive recovery path for corporations and the workforce system.

These top ideas are categorized into three themes:

- Remote Work: Inclusive Culture
- Future & Current Workforce Uncertainty
- Upskilling / Reskilling Opportunities

## REMOTE WORK: INCLUSIVE CULTURE

The ideas in this theme address “How might we build towards and set a foundation for an inclusive workforce culture?”



**“Journey Toolkits to Build Inclusion & Understanding”** The toolkit would help organizations embed inclusion into the

everyday core by driving inclusion strategy and implementation at all levels of the organization. The toolkit for inclusion would showcase a walk-through of the stages of an employee’s journey through the lens of inclusion. These journeys would be made available at every level, including executive leadership, managers, and general employees. Each stage would provide questions to consider, key insights, and benchmarking tools to help an organization assess its progress.



**“The Team Decoder: A Framework for Inclusion”** The focus of this concept was to create strong team cohesion by

quickly ramping up on a shared understanding of team members and organizations through a framework of people, processes, tools, and data. This decoder would include tools for shared agreement of cultural / unspoken “norms”, a repository for team member skills and work styles, and additional directories to help create a shared understanding amongst team members. By creating strong relationships and sense of acceptance within teams, The Team Decoder allows everyone to show their best self.

## FUTURE & CURRENT WORKFORCE UNCERTAINTY

The ideas in this theme address “How might we better strategize and plan for pipelines and forecasting, particularly from an inclusive lens?”



**“Commitment & Pledge to Diversifying Pipelines”** The group highlighted that the “moment is now” for companies to commit to maintaining focus and

investing in the diversification of talent pipelines, making sure to continue to collaborate on leading practices in this space. The concept timeline included the establishment of the pledge elements and the determination of leading practices, followed by a public movement to promote and recruit member organizations. The success of the implementation of the pledge elements would then be baselined and measured.



**“Playbook for Inclusive Hiring Guidelines”**

This playbook would be geared towards small to mid-sized companies that may lack internal Inclusion & Diversity departments. The adoption of the playbook would provide guidance to companies, embedding the leading practices of the inclusive hiring space. Elements of the playbook include aligning your organization to develop a “screen-in” vs. “screen-out” mentality, developing a value-based recruiting strategy, and providing unconscious bias training for recruiting staff and hiring managers.

## UPSKILLING / RESKILLING OPPORTUNITIES

The ideas in this theme address “How might we establish upskilling opportunities to prepare the workforce for the future, particularly from an inclusive lens?”



**“Career Counseling Platform to Connect & Grow”** This platform

concept aims to provide a central location for employees and perspective employees to gather information on how to align upskilling opportunities to career advancement. The platform would also provide 1-on-1 coaching to help future and current employees understand different career paths within the organization.

# INNOVATIONS & TOP IDEAS (CONTINUED)

## UPSKILLING / RESKILLING OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)



**“Real-World, Immersive Job Shadowing Experience Program”** The focus of this concept is to develop a paid, virtual job shadowing program with built-in 1-on-1 mentorship, job coaching and shadowing, and networking opportunities. By providing an

immersive experience, the program could benefit potential candidates by helping them gain a holistic, real-world experience in their desired field. Moreover, corporations can use this program as an informal tool to assess the mentor’s leadership skills and sensitivity on diverse populations through a mentees’ feedback.

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

## CONCLUSION

The Upwardly Global team would like to thank everyone who participated and contributed to this project in various forms. We are grateful for our partners and project participants’ engagement and energy, offering of impeccable insights, and contribution of innovative ideas with a depth and intentionality that will help **move this inclusion recovery movement forward**.

As we heard from many of the participants, in the midst of the uncertainty, **“now is the time”** to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are included in an equitable and inclusive recovery effort during and post the COVID-19 crisis. Corporations looking to champion this responsibility should look to this work to gain insight into how this might be accomplished.

The ideas and concepts learned from this work will help **kickstart a new wave of inclusive future of work measures** that help to include the immigrant and refugee population, as well as other underrepresented populations.

## NEXT STEPS

Upwardly Global will continue this project into a piloting phase with their corporate partner OC Tanner and participating organizations. These concepts will be built upon and expanded by the team before moving to the piloting phase, where the team will determine the best potential customers to test out the products.

**If you or your company are interested in partnering with Upwardly Global, please reach out to the contacts at the end of this paper.**

“As we are suddenly propelled into working remotely, it is even more important to think about the future of work and how to support inclusive work environments. Given there is no universal solution to this complex topic, it was helpful to work with a cross-functional group to think through different approaches (tools, processes, data) that could apply to companies of varying sizes, sectors, and technology platforms. I hope company leaders use this unique opportunity to reset and rethink employee engagement, and take the time to design for diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces of the future.”

Debra Kadner, Co-Founder & Head of Product – Eskalera

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