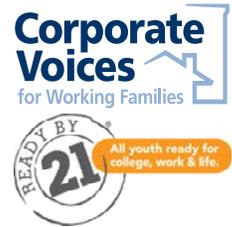


CALL TO ACTION

READY BY 21[®] BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT MENU INCREASING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS



PURPOSE

Business leaders play a crucial role in community efforts to ensure that all youth are ready for college, work and life. Business leaders are eager to make an impact across the education and talent development pipeline, from cradle to career. They want to ensure that the roles they play help contribute to better outcomes for youth, families and communities. Nonprofit leaders have the opportunity to recognize the needs of youth in their community and recommend how business may be able to best use their assets to meet those needs.

This dual purpose Business Engagement Menu provides business leaders with the various ways they can be involved in communities. Nonprofit leaders can also use the menu to learn the array of options that exist to get business active in effectively meeting a community's goals for youth. The document can be customized to include specific examples of involvement for a community.

What's in it for Business?

Commitment to strengthening the workforce pipeline and engagement in Ready by 21, both nationally and locally, can produce the following potential outcomes for business:

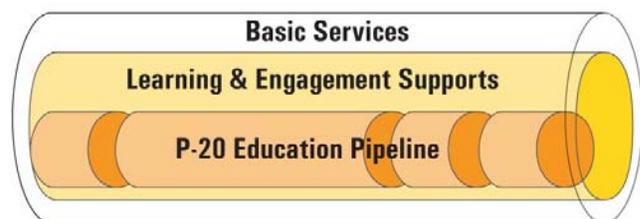
- Attain a more qualified workforce
- Decrease in turnover and training costs
- Showcase existing initiatives
- Gain greater access to other leaders
- Increase in opportunities to provide community leadership
- Receive national support and recognition
- Increase in the alignment of workforce readiness resources and supports
- Reinforce community and positive youth development
- Accomplish broader, more strategic corporate responsibility and philanthropic goals

A CALL TO ACTION

Corporate Voices for Working Families (Corporate Voices) believes that all young people need to grow up healthy and strong, equipped to excel in school today and in the jobs of tomorrow. American business competitiveness and economic prosperity depend on a skilled and prepared workforce. Too few young people are entering adulthood with the skills they need to sustain employment and thrive. Business leaders possess the power, the influence and the platform to change the odds for youth in their communities and help keep America competitive in the challenging global economy.

Through the Ready by 21 National Partnership, Corporate Voices is challenging business leaders to invest in workforce readiness as a business imperative. Ready by 21 is a strategy that helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life. With effective state and local leaders, nonprofits and public structures like schools, community centers, and libraries working together, communities can prepare a competitive workforce, strengthen social networks, support families and help all young people realize their potential.

Workforce Readiness Pipeline¹



Business leaders can work with the Ready by 21 National Partnership as collaborators in their efforts to advance global competitiveness by strengthening the workforce readiness pipeline. This is a fundamental and systemic imperative that will drive business sustainability and uplift the standard of living for youth and working families. Strengthening the workforce pipeline means we must create a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated system of learning and development that provides a range of opportunities for youth to succeed throughout school and into their working lives.

A variety of options exist for business leaders to get involved in creating a coordinated support system for youth and families. These options include partnering directly with community organizations to invest in programs and services for families and youth and also investing in internal company initiatives, like workplace flexibility, that help employees, their families and the community, succeed. These options include:

- Employee Supports
- Internships/Mentoring
- Peer-to-Peer Business Champion
- Policy Advocacy
- Corporate Social Responsibility/Philanthropy

This is not an exhaustive list, but is designed to provide an array of examples that can impact employees across the company and individuals across the community. Below are multiple opportunities for business leaders to commit to improving the workforce readiness pipeline.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Employee Supports

- Provide workplace flexibility to promote and encourage employees to become active with their families and their communities.
 - Promote volunteer opportunities in your company's newsletter and intranet website.
 - Provide employees with corporate volunteer time to work with youth through company-supported projects with local schools, sports teams, museums, libraries and other organizations.
 - Organize a company-wide volunteer day.

Example: Every 1 Reads, Louisville, KY

Every 1 Reads (www.every1reads.com) is a community-wide effort to ensure every child in Jefferson County Public Schools reads at or above grade level. More than 150 businesses and organizations have joined this program by asking employees to serve as volunteers. The number of children reading below grade level is now approximately 8.5 percent - down from nearly 20 percent.

- Educate employees on youth initiatives including posting information in breakrooms, employee newsletters, websites, discussion boards and emails. Use "lunch-n-learns" to provide organizations with the opportunity to educate employees on a variety of issues.

Internships/Mentoring

- Host company tours and field trips to allow all youth to experience an office environment.
- Encourage employees to become mentors, utilizing and increasing their coaching and management skills, to impart the skills, knowledge and work habits students will need to succeed in professional life.
- Use internships, apprenticeships and job shadows to provide local youth with employment experiences.

Ready by 21 is workforce readiness for business.

Peer-to-Peer Business Champion

- Research your community's education and youth-related challenges through peers, meetings and email updates.
- Become involved in your community: put workforce readiness issues on meeting agendas; join a local nonprofit board of directors or a local school board; assist community organizations in making connections with one another and with local business leaders.
- Advise community organizations on strategies and messaging to increase the effectiveness of business leader outreach.
- Recruit and mentor other business leaders.
- Become a spokesperson: sign a letter to the editor; participate in a media event; give speeches to community and business groups around youth issues.

Policy Advocacy

- Meet with local, state and national-level policymakers, particularly those with whom you have a relationship, and endorse relevant education, workforce readiness and youth legislation currently being debated.
- Use your leadership to testify before a legislative committee.
- Advise and advocate on the state level through industry colleagues, statewide networks or governor's summits.



Businesses thrive in communities where youth thrive.

Corporate Social Responsibility/Philanthropy

- Make in-kind gifts to local nonprofits including: pro-bono services, loaned executives, meeting/office space, refreshments, transportation, furniture, computers and equipment.
- Share your internal expertise with community organizations: professional development training, strategic and financial planning, curricula development, defining workforce needs and providing faculty.

Example: Principal Leadership Academy, Chattanooga, TN

The Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton Public Schools, Public Education Foundation and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga have partnered together to form the Principal Leadership Academy (www.hcde.org), a 12-month intensive program that combines educational leadership classes with core business skills. Through hands-on training, research projects, learning sessions and mentoring from experienced principals and business leaders, participating area principals gain indispensable resources and skills to help them improve their respective schools.

- Match employee contributions to education, workforce readiness or youth programs through your annual company giving, payroll, or United Way campaign.
- Financially support local nonprofits - possibilities include: sponsoring a community education fair, donating to the printing of educational materials, supporting the creation or expansion of a family resource center in a neighborhood of need to offer education, support and referral information.²
- Underwrite local organizations - options include: supporting infrastructure by offering support of community-wide evaluation studies, polling data - like the Gallup Student Poll and research and database development. Strategically invest your corporate contributions to fund quality, scalable programs making an impact in your community or nationally.

Coordinated Workforce Supports

Look at the workforce supports in your community as a potential opportunity for a strategic, long-term financial contribution. Has an organization in the community collected information on all of the tuition reimbursement, training and other support and education opportunities that exist for those who need it? Is there a community group educating individuals on the workforce resources available to them? You can strategically invest with other organizations on such an initiative to have large impact on the economic development of your community.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT IN READY BY 21

Ready by 21 National Partnership

- Learn about Ready by 21 through webinars and visiting www.readyby21.org or www.corporatevoices.org for more information.
- Contact the Corporate Voices' Ready by 21 Team at readyby21@corporatevoices.org.
- Serve on Corporate Voices' Workforce Readiness Taskforce and one of its Working Groups: Ready by 21, Post Secondary Attainment: Learn and Earn, and Alternative Pathways.
- Advocate for federal legislative policy changes focused on the Ready by 21 Principles.

Ready by 21 Communities

Work with the Ready by 21 Local Team in your community to help them:

- Establish a clear and complete vision for youth and families in the community.
- Map and coordinate existing resources.
- Establish publicly shared measures of programs, e.g. the Gallup Student Poll, a free online survey for public schools that tracks the hope, engagement and wellbeing of students.
- Publicly announce rewards for commitment and success.
- Commit to partnering with families, neighbors, neighborhoods and communities, not around them.

ABOUT CORPORATE VOICES

www.corporatevoices.org

Corporate Voices for Working Families is the leading national business membership organization representing the private sector on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policies that reflect collaboration among the private sector, government and other stakeholders. To create bipartisan support for issues affecting working families, we facilitate research in areas spotlighting the intersecting interests of business, community and families: workforce readiness, family economic stability, flexibility in the workplace, and work and family balance. Collectively our 50 partner companies, with annual net revenues of more than \$1 trillion, employ more than 4 million individuals throughout all 50 states.

ABOUT READY BY 21

www.readyby21.org

Ready by 21 is a set of innovative leadership capacity-building strategies developed by the Forum for Youth Investment. The national experts at the Forum have decades of youth policy experience which they leveraged to make the Ready by 21 strategy the most effective way to help communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life. The Ready by 21 strategy recognizes that effective leadership is the critical lever to improving health, educational and social outcomes for children and youth. The Ready by 21 strategy is flexible enough to meet leaders where they are and helps focus them on goals and the systems needing to be addressed; challenges them to create a shared vision and agenda; helps leaders build broader partnerships, set bigger goals, use better data and implement bolder strategies, and asks how all stakeholders, including youth, can deliver solutions.

Copyright © 2010 Corporate Voices for Working Families
Ready by 21 and the Ready by 21 Logo are registered trademarks of the Forum for Youth Investment.

ABOUT THE FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

www.forumfyi.org

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan “action tank” dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are Ready by 21: ready for college, work and life. Informed by rigorous research and practical experience, the Forum forges innovative ideas, strategies and partners to strengthen solutions for young people and those who care about them. A trusted resource for policy makers, advocates, researchers and program professionals, the Forum provides youth and adult leaders with the information, connections and tools they need to create greater opportunities and outcomes for young people.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Forum for Youth Investment, *Bringing Precision to Your Passion* (2010).

² United Way Worldwide, *Engaging Business Leaders in Early Childhood Education: A Continuum of Activity*. www.bornlearning.org