



Education Council discusses link between workforce development and education, highlights UpSkill Houston initiative

The Partnership held its quarterly Education Council on July 21 in the Partnership board room. Partnership Public Policy Manager Jesse Ayala welcomed Peter Beard, Partnership Senior Vice President of Workforce Development, as the Council speaker.

Beard presented on the Partnership's UpSkill Houston initiative, the nation's first business-led, community-wide, integrated workforce effort. The initiative focuses on closing the skills gap in Houston by increasing the number of Houstonians trained for great careers across the region. Today, 1.4 million jobs in the Houston region require more than a high school diploma and less than a four year college degree. "That's two out of five jobs in the region," Beard added.

In addition to the immediate need, Houston's long term economic viability is contingent on possessing a qualified workforce. Based on a New Skills at Work report released by J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., between now and 2017, Houston's economy will have 74,000 annual openings for workers that are middle skills, and 33,000 annual openings for these workers in the seven sectors that drive Houston's economy.

The UpSkill Houston action plan was developed by the Partnership's 79 member Regional Workforce Development Task Force. They developed a blueprint for collective action to build a qualified and skilled workforce that meets employers' needs and creates good-paying careers for Houstonians. The key components of the action plan include leadership provided by business community, and strong and effective collaboration with educational institutions, community-based and social service organizations, and the public sector.

UpSkill Houston focuses on Houston's key sectors: petrochemical, construction, healthcare, manufacturing, ports and maritime, utilities, and oil and gas. The first two sector councils, focused on petrochemical and construction, are already underway. The next sector to debut will be healthcare.

The next Education Council is October 6, 2015.