



GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP

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PRESS RELEASE

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GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHES MAJOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

UpSkill Houston to address dramatic and growing need for skilled workers

HOUSTON – Leaders of the Greater Houston Partnership announced details about UpSkill Houston, a comprehensive, industry-led approach to filling gaps in the Houston region’s workforce. At the event, officials from JPMorgan Chase announced that the company is committing \$5 million to workforce training in Houston, with a portion to support the UpSkill Houston effort.

The UpSkill Houston action plan is a blueprint for leaders in the business community, educational institutions and social service organizations to build a quality workforce that meets employer’s needs and ensures that Houstonians have the skills and opportunities to enter the workforce and build successful careers. Like many cities, Houston currently does not have enough skilled workers to fill jobs that are readily available.

The action plan focuses on middle-skills occupations that require candidates to have more than a high school diploma but do not require a four-year degree. The Houston region is expected to have 296,000 openings in middle-skills occupations between 2014 and 2017, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

“Employers tell us every day they need more workers with better and more diverse skills. Helping people gain skills they need to compete for jobs will transform lives and strengthen our economy,” said Gina Luna, Vice Chairman of the Greater Houston Partnership and Chairman of JPMorgan Chase in Houston. “Through UpSkill Houston, we can ensure the supply of skilled workers required to sustain our booming business environment. It will also provide great careers for our citizens and continued economic prosperity for the Houston region.”

A key characteristic of UpSkill Houston is connecting leaders from industry, education and social service organizations to address workforce challenges. The Partnership noted the importance of the involvement of a diverse set of stakeholders.

“The middle-skills challenge is incredibly complex, involving many moving parts and players throughout the system,” said Bob Harvey, President and CEO of GHP. “The UpSkill Houston program demands a collaborative effort involving stakeholders from across our region to succeed.”

The program will create seven sector-specific councils tasked to improve coordination between and among employers, community colleges, school districts, training facilitators and non-profits. The seven key sectors for the Houston region are: advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare, oil & gas, petrochemical, ports & maritime, and utilities.

“Hiring and training needs vary greatly by industry. These councils will identify each industry’s critical occupations and ensure the region’s training programs can meet the demand for workers in those critical areas,” Harvey said.

JPMorgan Chase’s \$5 million commitment to workforce training in Houston is part of the company’s \$250 million global New Skills at Work initiative, the largest ever private-sector effort aimed at addressing the skills gap. At the event, Chase announced a \$250,000 grant to the Partnership’s Opportunity Houston 2.0 campaign to support UpSkill Houston. In addition, the company announced a \$500,000 grant to Lone Star College to expand training opportunities for adults who currently have low-skill, low paying-jobs.

A major element of the UpSkill Houston sector approach includes improved data sharing between employers and educational institutions to match hiring needs with curricula. Additional efforts include a public relations campaign to drive awareness about middle-skills careers and improve perception of these good-paying occupations. The plan includes tactics to improve basic skills and employability of job candidates to ensure that they have the basic academic and communications skills to find, interview and successfully hold a job. GHP will work closely with United Way THRIVE to develop and execute the basic skills and employability component.

The UpSkill Houston action plan was developed by the Greater Houston Partnership’s Regional Workforce Development Task Force created in 2013. Luna co-chaired the Task Force with Bruce Culpepper, Executive Vice President of Shell Oil Company, and convened a group of 79 representatives from industry, education and social services to collaborate and develop this plan.

“The Gulf Coast is in the midst of an energy infrastructure construction boom, positioning our region for immense growth,” Luna said. “UpSkill Houston is our strategic plan to make the most of this opportunity for our region, our city and its people.”

A full copy of the GHP report, “Addressing Houston’s Middle-Skills Job Challenge” is available for download at www.houston.org/UpSkillHouston.

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Greater Houston Partnership works to make Houston one of the world’s best places to live, work and build a business. It represents 10 counties: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto and Waller. With more than 2,000 member organizations, GHP represents approximately one-fifth of the region’s workforce.