



# UPSKILL UPDATE

MAY 2020

## RICH WELLS: COVID PRESENTS SHORT-TERM PROBLEMS, LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

Earlier this spring, the Greater Houston Partnership welcomed Rich A. Wells as chair of UpSkill Houston's executive committee. Wells, Dow Chemical Company vice president of U.S. Gulf Coast Operations and Texas Operations site director, will provide leadership to the Partnership's signature workforce development initiative as Houston's economy recovers from the pandemic and companies re-employ their workforce.

Wells, a long-time champion of workforce development within Dow, has been involved with UpSkill Houston for three years, serving the last two as the committee's vice chair. He succeeds Dan Gilbane, of Gilbane Building Co.

Under Gilbane's leadership UpSkill Houston developed its Vision 2025 strategic plan, added three industry sector councils and launched the "My Life As..." career exploration series designed to introduce students and young people to good but less visible careers that require more education than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree.

With Dow, Wells is responsible for 10 advanced manufacturing sites, the Texas Innovation Center and the Houston Dow Center, a strategic engineering and business hub. Dow Texas Operations employs more than 8,000 people and produces products used in industrial and consumer applications including food packaging, health care, construction and electronics.

Wells serves as a member of the Greater Houston Partnership's Board of Directors, is president and CEO of Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) and sits on the UCC Board of Directors. He is also a board member of the Texas Chemical Council, the Texas Taxpayers and Research Association, FIRST in Texas and the Economic Development Alliance for Brazoria County.

In April, he told the executive committee that the COVID-19 presented short-term problems but also opportunities for UpSkill Houston to accelerate its work.

"If we work together and really understand and take advantage of this opportunity, we can we work together to accelerate UpSkill Houston," he said. "We still have the long-term goals, the long-term opportunities, the long-term needs for Houston in the areas that UpSkill addresses."

See a [full bio of Rich Wells](#).



*Rich A. Wells, new chair of UpSkill Houston's executive committee, cites opportunity to accelerate work*

**COMMERCE DEPARTMENT OPENS \$1.5 BILLION OF FUNDING TO SUPPORT SKILLS, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

On May 7, the Department of Commerce released a Notice of Funding Opportunity for its \$1.5 billion Economic Development Agency (EDA)'s CARES Act Recovery Assistance program. Eligible organizations can now apply for Federal aid for an array of skills training and workforce development projects – funding that will advance economic development in communities negatively impacted by COVID-19.

Under the Economic Assistance program, successful applications will enable affected communities to respond to the impacts of the pandemic by supporting impacted businesses and communities by:

- Providing technical assistance to retain existing and hire new employees;
- Providing skills-training and workforce development projects to help employees compete for high-quality jobs; and
- Developing and implementing strategies to diversify regional economies to create jobs in new or existing industries.

State, county and local governments can apply for funding, as can higher education institutions, and public or private non-profit organizations and associations. A total of \$236 million will be administered through the EDA's Austin regional office.

Learn more about the program and apply on the [EDA's website](#).

## **SURVEY: EMPLOYER INTEREST IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES AMID ECONOMIC CONCERNS**

Economic and workforce concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic have not ended employers' interest in supporting an array of workforce development and career-centered programs and activities, according to a recent UpSkill Houston survey of partners and stakeholders.

Survey responses show a shift from short-term to longer-term concerns among employers while representatives from community based organizations reported continued need for client job placement services, financial coaching and assistance covering utilities and rent.

Read more [here](#).

## **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

- **May 28: [UpSkill Works Forum Series: Designing Virtual & Micro-Internships](#)**; UpSkill Houston's UpSkill Works Forum Series brings together Parker Dewey CEO Jeffrey Moss with Genesys Works Houston Executive Director Katherine Taylor and Greater Houston Partnership Senior Vice President of Regional Workforce Development Peter Beard to discuss how employers and organizations can build and run effective internships – remotely.
- **June 3: [Urban Reads: Stephen L. Klineberg](#)**; Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research Founding Director Dr. Stephen Klineberg will discuss his new book "Prophetic City: Houston on the Cusp of a Changing America," which will be released on June 2, 2020.
- **June 3: [Skillful Talent Series: Workforce Planning in a Crisis](#)**; This workshop from the Markle Foundation's Skillful initiative will go over the current state of business and effects of the pandemic, and business decisions around retaining employees while being as cost-effective as possible.
- **June 17-18: [HR Houston's HR Basics](#)**; This two-day workshop designed for individuals who are new to HR roles will provide an overview of the major areas of HR practice.



## RESOURCES & READINGS

- [Reopen Houston Safety Monitoring Dashboard](#); The Greater Houston Partnership established this dashboard in collaboration with the Texas Medical Center to provide a compilation of critical metrics spanning healthcare factors, economic metrics and local measures of citizen activity that can inform leaders the the region navigates the path to recovery. It is updated weekly.
- [Greater Houston Partnership Business Recovery Center](#); The GHPBRC features guidance and financing related to business recovery programs.
- [Workforce Solutions: Jobs Now](#); Workforce Solutions provides this list of immediate job openings in the Gulf Coast region. It is updated daily.
- [Mental Health During COVID-19 Resources](#); Mental Health America of Greater Houston has compiled local support groups and providers, hotlines and other resources to help address the pandemic's impacts on mental health.
- [Alternative Funding Options for Houston's Small Businesses](#); Financial experts shared information about funding sources during a recent Greater Houston Partnership Small Biz Matters Business Resource Group meeting.
- [Analysis: What Lasting Academic \(and Economic\) Effects Could Coronavirus Shutdowns Have on This Generation of Students? Some Alarming Data Points From Research on Previous Disasters](#); "This is not the time for complacency," writes Chad Aldeman, senior associate partner at Bellweather Education Partners and editor of TeacherPensions.org, in this analysis published by The 74 Million.

*Led by and for employers, UpSkill Houston builds the pipeline of skilled workers to grow the regional economy and provide opportunity for all Houstonians.*

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