

RON 2025

From Silos to Systems Reimagining Opportunity

The background features a light blue gradient with faint, stylized line art illustrations of business professionals. On the right side, there are sketches of people in business attire: one person is holding a large document or tablet, another is pointing at it, and a third is standing nearby. There are also abstract geometric shapes like a starburst and a triangle scattered throughout the right half of the image.

How do we move from silos to systems? How do we ensure workers shape the future of work rather than simply adapt to it?

- These questions drove the RON 2025 Convening in Bentonville, where RON members, frontline employees, funders, and other workforce leaders came together to reimagine the future of work—moving from silos to systems and placing workers at the center of innovation.
- This recap captures the bold ideas, meaningful connections, and growing momentum from our time together. We were joined by a talented digital artist who visually documented the energy and insights that filled the room, and these boards now serve as a creative way to revisit our conversations and carry forward the spirit of the convening.
- Whether you joined us in person or were unable to attend this year's convening, we invite you to explore this visual recap, key takeaways, and next steps.

RON 2025 CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

- **Centering Worker Voice:** Frontline workers must help shape the systems that impact them through shared power, meaningful engagement, and access to learning opportunities.
- **AI as a Tool for Empowerment:** AI is here to stay. When paired with empathy, it can support scheduling, coaching, and training while opening new doors for workers.
- **Inclusive Pathways & Local Investment:** Breaking stigma, investing locally, and building diverse career pathways, especially in trade, technical, and emerging digital roles.
- **Practical, Accessible Learning:** Learning must be hands-on, validated, and tied to real opportunity—focusing on behavior change and mobility, not just policy or credentials.

OPENING PLENARY

➔ Retail OpportunityNetwork



The RON 2025 opening remarks set the tone for the convening by emphasizing **connection, collaboration, and innovation** across the RON community. Participants were encouraged to **move from silos to systems**, working collectively to address shared challenges and reimagine opportunity within the retail workforce.

Julie Gehrki framed the convening around "Five Things on My Mind," which became touchstones throughout the event:

- **Invisible connections** within and beyond the RON network are our hidden strength
- **Good data** must guide our progress and decision-making
- **Jobs and AI** present both profound challenges and unprecedented opportunities
- **Human insight and technology** must work together, not in opposition
- **Connection and collaboration** remain our pathway to quality jobs for all

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In setting the tone for the convening, attendees were encouraged to:

- **Embrace unfamiliar territory** by staying open to learning, experimentation, and transformation even amid uncertainty
- **Keep people, research, and purpose** at the heart of every effort while weaving together human insight and technology
- **Engage in meaningful conversations** and listen deeply to peers across the network
- **Collaborate** through design sprints to drive change at a systems level
- **Dig deeper into challenges** side by side to uncover new possibilities
- **Use data and shared experience** to guide smarter decisions and lasting progress

While the landscape of work continues to evolve, the RON community's shared purpose and collaboration remain our most powerful tools for shaping a more inclusive and equitable future of work.

IT TAKES ALL OF US!

LEADER'S LOUNGE

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINE



DEFINING "FRONTLINE" WORKER

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE
WE DEPEND ON THEM DAILY

MOST HARD WORKING PEOPLE
HEART BEAT OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

FAMILY

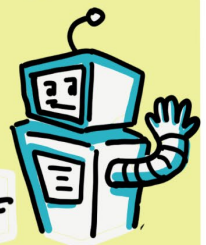
DEDICATION

REWARDING THE SOUL OF SOCIETY

FINDING MY OWN KIND OF VOICE

PROVIDING WORKERS:

- FLEXIBILITY
- UNDERSTANDING
- RESOURCES



ROLE OF AI

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES

SPREAD OUT THE WORK!
ASKING WHAT THEY WANT!

START WITH LEADERS

REGULAR CHECK INS

USING IT TO GIVE WORKERS MORE OPPORTUNITIES

- SCHEDULING
- PLANNING
- RESTOCKING
- EFFICIENCY
- JOB COACHING

CAREERS

- CONNECTIONS
- PURPOSE
- COMMUNITIES

CENTER WORKER LEARNING!

APPLY FOR COMPANIES

BUILDING BRIDGES

THINK BIG!

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

- BREAKING STIGMA TO CULTIVATE TALENT PIPELINES
- INVEST IN COMMUNITIES
- HAVING CONVERSATIONS

WE STILL NEED TRADE WORKERS!

IT IS HERE TO STAY!

AI WITH WORKERS
SOCIETY IS PREPARING US FOR THIS



WORKING BACKWARDS

FOCUSING ON WHAT THE KNOWLEDGE

LAUNCH

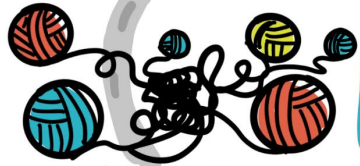


NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM

SKILLS ARE TRANSFERABLE!



ACCESS TO INTERNET



RELYING ON THE INTERCONNECTED NETWORK

LISTENING TO OUR ASSOCIATES
UNDERSTANDING THE FEEDBACK
EMPATHY

SIMULTANEOUS WORK TOWARDS WORKFORCE & OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDERS' PERSPECTIVES

INNOVATION!

A FOCUS ON:

- VALIDATING SKILLS
- MAKING IT PRACTICAL



TRUST IN THE SYSTEM

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

- BEING MISSION FOCUSED
- SCALE INNOVATION

WHAT IS THE ACTUAL POTENTIAL?

SKILLS OVER CREDENTIALS

BEHAVIOR NOT JUST POLICY

EQUITY BASED APPROACHES

HAVE IT AT THE TABLE!

AI

HOW TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES

USING IT SUSTAINABLY

TRY NEW THINGS! QUICKLY!

UP YOUR GAME

DEFINE JOBS

- MODELS
- TASKS

ENABLING

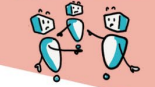
- TAKE WHAT WE HAVE MAKE IT BETTER

TRAINING MODELS

- EFFECTIVELY LEARN AT

ACCESSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

AVOID DUPLICATE PLATFORMS



STEADY THE JOB MARKET WITH A SOLID FOUNDATION

BREAK DOWN SILOS!

LEADER'S LOUNGE: The Leader's Lounge brought the voices of frontline employees, employers, policy leaders, and funders together to explore how collaboration, innovation, and shared trust can strengthen systems that create quality jobs and expand opportunity.

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINE

Speakers:

- **Andrew German** | Frontline Expert
- **Auriyana Jenkins** | Frontline Expert
- **Nashell Simpson** | Frontline Expert
- **Marisol Vejar** | Frontline Expert
- **Moderator: Scotland Nash** | Director, FSG

The Leaders' Lounge opened with a conversation grounded in the lived experiences of frontline employees, and their stories set the stage for RON 2025 by centering the realities of those most directly impacted by the systems we aim to change. During that conversation, frontline experts reminded participants that they are the heartbeat of organizations—dedicated, hardworking individuals who form the soul of society.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

During the conversation, frontline experts called for:

- Flexibility, understanding, and resources from employers
- Greater investment in career pathways and learning opportunities
- More regular check-ins to ensure worker voices shape workplace practices
- Centering worker learning and spreading opportunities across the workforce
- Including workers in designing solutions that directly affect them

Spotlight on AI: AI also emerged as a tool for empowerment rather than replacement—helping with scheduling, planning, restocking, and job coaching while creating new pathways to opportunity.

LEADER'S LOUNGE: The Leader's Lounge brought the voices of frontline employees, employers, policy leaders, and funders together to explore how collaboration, innovation, and shared trust can strengthen systems that create quality jobs and expand opportunity.

BUILDING BRIDGES - EMPLOYER-POLICY COLLABORATION

Speakers:

- **Josh Allen** | Group Director, Enterprise Frontline Learning, Walmart
- **Valeria Moody** | Manager, Process Improvement - Workforce Management- Facilities Services, Walmart
- **Mike Rogers** | Chief Workforce Officer, Office of Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders
- **Moderator: Chirlie Felix** | Managing Director, FSG

We brought together employer and policy leaders for a conversation about how they can collaborate and bridge gaps to strengthen career pathways, support frontline talent, and shape systems that drive economic mobility for frontline employees.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The conversation emphasized:

- Breaking stigma to cultivate diverse talent pipelines
- Investing in local communities and starting with leadership to drive change
- Recognizing the ongoing need for trade and technical workers alongside emerging digital roles
- Working backwards from desired business outcomes to identify clear pathways
- Identify and leverage transferable skills across sectors
- Ensuring universal access to technology and the internet for all workers

Spotlight on AI: AI was framed as a tool here to stay that requires combining empathy and feedback with innovation to prepare workers effectively.

LEADER'S LOUNGE: The Leader's Lounge brought the voices of frontline employees, employers, policy leaders, and funders together to explore how collaboration, innovation, and shared trust can strengthen systems that create quality jobs and expand opportunity.

FUNDER PERSPECTIVES: NAVIGATING SKILLS, CREDENTIALS, AND AI IN THE FUTURE OF WORK

Speakers:

- **Monique Carswell** | Director, Opportunity, Walmart.org
- **Patti Constantakis** | Director, Opportunity, Walmart.org
- **Moderator: Fay Hanleybrown** | Managing Director, FSG

During a conversation with the Walmart Foundation, they shared their perspective on the changing landscape of skills from where they sit as funders. Issues of how trust in non-degree credentials is built and maintained, and how AI is shaping the future of work were front and center in the conversation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Funders reinforced the "nothing about us without us" principle emphasized by frontline experts, including:

- Building trust through inclusive approaches that center those most affected
- Validating skills and making learning practical and accessible
- Focusing on behavior change rather than just policy
- Trying new things quickly while scaling innovation responsibly
- Avoiding creating redundant platforms

Spotlight on AI: The conversation emphasized using AI responsibly to define jobs, improve models, and strengthen training—all while being mission-focused, sharing power at the table, and breaking down silos to create a steady, healthy job market built on strong foundations.

THE FUTURE OF WORK, 2025 & BEYOND

SHIFTS IN
WORK
THAT ARE
NEEDED
IN THE
FUTURE

THINKING
AROUND
DEMAND

LEAD WITH
WHY

• LOOK AROUND

• BE
DELIBERATE

THERE'S
MORE THAN
ONE!

BARRIERS

• STEP BACK
& SEE
THE COMMON
PROBLEM!



• CHANGING
WHAT WE'RE
THINKING ABOUT

• INCENTIVES
TO
COLLABORATE

SKILLS
IS THE
CURRENCY

• TRAIN PEOPLE
TO GET THE
RIGHT
SKILLS

BY TACKLING
RISKS

• FOCUS ON SKILLS
• SHIFT WHAT WE'RE
LOOKING FOR



EMPLOYERS
FOCUS
ON THIS



THE APPROPRIATE
ROLE OF

AI

HELPING
TO FIND
JOBS

- SPEED
- ACCESS
- SCALE

IT IS A
TOOL
FOR US.



DATA
WORKS
BOTH
WAYS!

A
LEVER
FOR CHANGE

DIGITAL
WALLET



• INCREASING
ACCESS
• IN THE HANDS
OF THE LEARNERS
• AGENCY
• CREDENTIALS

DEFINE A
FUTURE
USE AI TO
GET US THERE

EMPLOYERS
ASKING
THE RIGHT
QUESTIONS

DATA
FOR
THE USER!

CHANGE
THE
ECOSYSTEM!

WHAT DATA
DO WE
NEED?

KEEPING IT
ACCOUNTABLE
• WITH **VALIDATED**
• INFORMATION

HOW DO
EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS
ENABLE
&
EMPOWER

INCLUDING
OTHER WAYS
TO
VERIFY

THE FUTURE OF WORK, 2025 & BEYOND

Speakers:

- **Haley Glover** | Senior Director, UpSkill America, Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program
- **Holly Kurtz** | Director, Retail Sector Initiative, Center for the Future of Arizona
- **Sean Murphy** | Director, Walmart
- **Moderator: Chirlie Felix** | Managing Director, FSG

This session explored how work is evolving and what shifts are needed to prepare for the future. The conversation centered on redefining skills, leveraging technology, and using data to shape a more adaptive and human-centered workforce system.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The conversation emphasized that preparing for the future requires:

- Leading with purpose and anticipating change by looking around deliberately
- Training people to gain the right skills for emerging roles
- Creating incentives for cross-sector collaboration
- Tackling barriers by reframing how problems are understood

Skills as Currency: The group reaffirmed that skills are the new currency of opportunity, requiring alignment between what employers need and what workers are developing.

Employers and Risk: Employers can drive change by focusing on skills-based hiring and advancement, asking the right questions about future-ready talent, and rewarding adaptability over credentials alone.

Defining the Future: The conversation closed with emphasis on building a shared vision through increased access to learning tools, keeping data in the hands of users, and transforming the broader ecosystem of education and employment through collaboration among employers, educators, and technology partners.

Spotlight on AI: AI was framed as both a tool and a lever for change---improving speed, access, and scale in job matching while ensuring data serves workers as much as it serves systems. The discussion emphasized keeping AI accountable through validated, transparent information and supporting digital wallets that give learners greater control over their credentials.

CLOSING THE DAY TOGETHER

LEARNING
SOMETHING
NEW
ABOUT
AI



PERSONAS
HELPED
THIS



PARTNERING
WITH AI

WE NEED
EXPERIENCE
FOR
AI
TO HELP

IT IS
OUT OF
STEP
WITH OUR
POPULATIONS

HOW
HUMAN
CENTERED
WE NEED
TO BE

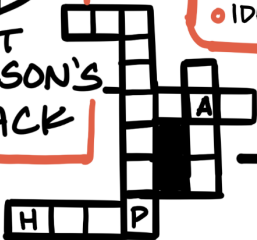
ECOSYSTEM

REMINING
US OF ALL
THE 'PROSPERS'

REAL LIFE
RESOURCES

- NAMED
- IDENTIFIED

IT WAS
HARD
WITHOUT
THE PERSON'S
FEEDBACK



TECHNOLOGY
HELPING TO
EXPEDITE
THE PROCESS



FINDING
BALANCE

PEOPLE
CENTERED
TECH
POWERED

PEOPLE
ARE NOT
JUST
STATISTICS

BEING
REMINDED
OF THE
PIT FALLS

LET'S
CHANGE
THAT!

CONTINUE TO:

• MAKE
CONNECTIONS

• LEAN INTO
EXPERTISE

• EMBRACE
DISCOMFORT



CLOSING THE DAY TOGETHER

Led by:

- **Patti Constantakis** | Director, Opportunity, Walmart
- **Collaborative Design Studio Facilitators** | JFF, Digital Promise, Education Design Lab, and FSG

The closing session invited participants to reflect on the day's learning, reconnect to the human stories behind the work, and explore the role of technology and AI in advancing opportunity with care and intentionality.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Participants shared new insights about how technology can support rather than replace the human experience, emphasizing:

- Staying human-centered in all approaches and recognizing that people are not just statistics
- Grounding technology in real-life resources and feedback from those it aims to serve
- Building balanced partnerships between people and technology through experience-based approaches

The Power of Personas: The personas from the "City of Prosper" helped anchor conversations in lived experience, reminding everyone of the diverse individuals and communities represented in the broader ecosystem and connecting emotionally to the challenges and opportunities discussed.

People-Centered, Tech-Powered: Progress must be people-centered and tech-powered. Participants were encouraged to continue making connections across teams and organizations, leaning into expertise and learning from each other, and embracing discomfort as part of growth and systems change.

Spotlight on AI: The group explored finding a balance between innovation and mindfulness, ensuring AI supports rather than misaligns with real populations. This requires acknowledging existing pitfalls, committing to changing them, and using technology to expedite processes while maintaining a clear focus on people and purpose.

DESIGN SOLUTION PRESENTATIONS



FICTIONAL COMMUNITY, BUT, REAL CHALLENGES

- DIVERSE COMMUNITY
- WORKING UNDER LIVING WAGES
- UNEMPLOYMENT IS COMMON
- SHIFTED FROM AGRICULTURE TO NEWER FIELDS

THINK ABOUT:

- AI
- ENTRY TO PROMOTION
- COMMUNITY
- INNOVATION
- INCLUSION
- PRACTICALITY

THIS IS THE FIRST STEP!

★ CALL OUT TO THE BUSINESS ROLE

TAX CREDIT FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES

A SOURCE OF FUNDING

STELLA VEGA

★ ALL ENCOMPASSING

◦ INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO EMPLOYEES

◦ APP

◦ NAVIGATION SYSTEM WITH A JOB COACH

THINK ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY

ST.E.A.M.Y. • A PLACE! WORKSPACE MAKER!

◦ FOR STELLA TO "GET HER GROOVE BACK!"

- CHILDCARE
- HOUSING
- TRANSPORTATION

★ TOOLS & SUPPORT THROUGH CASE MANAGEMENT

★ PLACE MATTERS



SKILL SAVING ACCOUNTS

◦ EMPLOYERS INVESTING IN THEIR EMPLOYEES

◦ MONEY SAVED OVERTIME FOR EMPLOYEES TO USE TO ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS

◦ CAREER NAVIGATION & SUPPORT

◦ INCREASED CONFIDENCE

★ BUILDING OFF OF ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS

★ SKILLS SAVING ACCOUNT!

★ RAISING AWARENESS

★ SUPPORT TO TAKE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES

ABIKE OKAFOR

◦ BUILD FINANCIAL STABILITY

◦ OVERCOMING A LARGE NUMBER OF BARRIERS

EXPLORE MULTILINGUAL ASPECT

MAKING SURE THE HUMAN SUPPORT IS STILL THERE

JORDAN MILLER

◦ APPRENTICESHIPS FOR THOSE AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

◦ COMBINING NAVIGATORS & AI



DARNELL BROOKS

SKILL FIT

◦ JOB COMPANION FOR LIFE

◦ MAPPING OUT YOUR CAREER

WORKS FOR THE WHOLE WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

◦ HUMAN SUPPORT

◦ HOLISTIC SUPPORT

◦ CONTINUOUS JOB OPPORTUNITIES

GROWING THE TECH WITH THE TIMES

◦ ALLOWING FURTHER GROWTH FOR THOSE WITH SPECIFIC SKILLS

SKILLS IS THE CURRENCY OF OPPORTUNITY

RIVERFRONT PROSPER PROJECT

CONSIDERING THE ENTRY POINT

CONSIDER LAYERS OF SUPPORT

◦ FROM SURVIVAL TO POSSIBILITY

◦ MAKING POSSIBILITY THE NORM

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN STUDIO

The Collaborative Design Studio challenged participants to design an INNOVATIVE solution to a barrier experienced by an employee navigating the journey to a high-quality job.

Each team was presented with a fictional persona, based on the real-life experiences of employees around the country.

Collaborative Design Studio Goals

- Move from problem to possibility
- Transform identified barriers into breakthrough solutions that create real impact for employees seeking quality employment

Solution Elements

- **INNOVATIVE** - Goes beyond existing solutions
- **Barrier-focused** - Addresses real obstacles employees face
- **Journey-wide** - Impacts the complete path to quality jobs
- **Collaborative** - Brings organizations together
- **AI-enhanced** - Leverages technology meaningfully

The **Design Solution Presentations** brought to life ideas developed during the **City of Prosper** collaborative design session. Participants, working in teams around four fictional personas, presented innovative, practical, and human-centered solutions to address real challenges faced by workers and communities. Though Prosper is fictional, the challenges reflected realities across the workforce ecosystem, including low wages, unemployment, and limited access to opportunity.

RIVERFRONT PROSPER PROJECT | Jordan Miller: 17, High School Senior

Jordan's team created the Riverfront Prosper Project to support youth in transition through community apprenticeships, mentorship, and AI tools. The goal: make opportunity the norm, not the exception.

TAX CREDIT FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES | Stella Vega: 23, Retail Worker

Stella's team proposed a Tax Credit for Social Outcomes to incentivize businesses to invest in employee development and community support, positioning employers as key partners in advancing economic mobility through tools like career coaching and wraparound services.

SKILL SAVING ACCOUNT: Abike Okafor | 52, Frontline Hospital Worker

Abike's group proposed a Skill Saving Account to help workers save for training and career growth, promoting financial stability and upskilling. The model encouraged employers to support long-term development, especially for those facing systemic barriers.

SKILL FIT – JOB COMPANION FOR LIFE | Darnell Brooks: 38, Logistics Worker

The winning concept, Skill Fit: Job Companion for Life, reimagined career growth with continuous job matching, career mapping, and human support for all workers. It emphasized skill-building, adaptability, and collaboration across the workforce ecosystem, reinforcing the message that **skills are the currency of opportunity**.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Solutions combined human insight, technology, and cross-sector collaboration
- Each proposal demonstrated how organizations can invest in people and systems that create long-term opportunity
- The winning idea, Skill Fit, reflected the convening's broader theme of moving from silos to systems and placing workers at the center of innovation

FUNDER PERSPECTIVE

LISTEN TO OUR ADVERSARIES!

CALL TO ACTION and CLOSING REMARKS

BRING IN NEW VOICES

CLOSING THOUGHTS

BUILDING WITH and not FOR

FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVE

MAKING SURE:

- DESIGN IS SPECIFIC
- SUPPORT FOR EVERYONE

WHAT IS SCALE

WHAT IS THE ISSUE WE ARE ADDRESSING

WORKING THROUGH THE LENSE OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

"WE NEED SOLUTIONS THAT ARE SPECIFIC!"

WORKER VOICE

GIVE BETTER INFORMATION

WHAT IS THEIR TOP PRIORITY

CALL TO ACTION FOR THIS GROUP

INCENTIVE MODELS

A FOCUSED APPROACH TO WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE MARKET

WHAT ARE WE COMMUNICATING?

WHAT ARE WE INVESTING IN?

ADAPTING TO THE MARKET



NURSES



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

REFRAMING & CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

IT'S COSTING US MONEY!

SHOW THEM RETURN ON INVESTMENT

TAKE IT STEP BY STEP

WE GOTTA DO SOMETHING!



WE ARE AT THE CENTER OF THE CONVERSATION

DETERMINATION and COLLABORATION

VOICES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

REMEMBER:

1 STEP FORWARD IS STILL FORWARD

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE PERSON

WORK WITH US NOT JUST FOR US

IT'S ABOUT THRIVING NOT JUST SURVIVING

PUT VALUE TO THEIR SKILLS!

DIVERSIFY

TAP INTO COMMUNITY COLLEGES SHELTERS

LOCAL FOUNDATIONS

STATE WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

RECOGNIZING & ADVOCATING MY WORTH

CREATE A BRAVE SPACE

BUILD ON ESTABLISHED SUPPORT

ADVOCATING FOR MY PEERS!

CONTINUING TO LOOK FOR WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE TABLE

WE'VE GOTTEN CLOSER!

GIVING A VISION OF WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARDS

TRUST & CLARITY

BEING ABLE TO WORK IN A DIFFERENT WAY!

CROSS POLLENATE

HAVING EXPERTS ON OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

BE STRATEGIC

DELIBERATE WITH PARTNERSHIPS

BE ADAPTABLE & AGILE

HOW CAN WE GET THERE?

TECH CAN EMPOWER



CONTINUE TO BE COLLABORATIVE



LANGUAGE MATTERS!

CALL TO ACTION

The final session featured funders, frontline employees, and Walmart leaders who reflected on the work ahead and the shared responsibility to continue building a stronger, more connected system of opportunity. The conversation highlighted collaboration, inclusion, and the power of clear, human-centered action.

FUNDERS' PERSPECTIVE: WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Speakers:

- **Kyle Baltuch** | Vice President, Employer Engagement, Strada Education Foundation
- **Andy Tonsing** | Vice President, Future of Work, Stand Together
- **Kirstie Sims** | Group Director, Retail Opportunity, Walmart.org

The robust conversation brought forward the perspectives of funders about how they see the workforce landscape evolving and what commitments are needed to accelerate progress.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- During the conversation, funders emphasized:
- Ensuring that design is specific and responsive to the real issues being addressed
- Working through multiple lenses and perspectives to support everyone
- Listening not only to allies but also to those who challenge assumptions
- Taking a focused approach to what the market truly needs, such as addressing workforce gaps and aligning investments with practical needs
- Reframing and changing the narrative by communicating clearly what is being invested in
- Adapting to shifts in demand and building solutions that are specific, measurable, and grounded in worker voice

CALL TO ACTION

The final session featured funders, frontline employees, and Walmart leaders who reflected on the work ahead and the shared responsibility to continue building a stronger, more connected system of opportunity. The conversation highlighted collaboration, inclusion, and the power of clear, human-centered action.

FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVE: WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Speakers:

- **Andrew German** | Frontline Expert
- **Auriyana Jenkins** | Frontline Expert
- **Nashell Simpson** | Frontline Expert
- **Marisol Vejar** | Frontline Expert
- **Moderator: Scotland Nash** | Director, FSG

Frontline experts shared their reflections on what has stood out to them during the convening and what they want leaders to carry forward. Their calls to action serve as a critical anchor in the broader conversation, ensuring that the commitments participants take from the convening remain connected to the lived experiences of those most directly impacted by workforce systems.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

During the conversation, the speakers called for:

- Being at the center of the conversation and ensuring their voices shape decisions
- Recognizing and putting value on skills and lived experience
- Building diverse partnerships with community colleges, local foundations, and shelters
- Advocating for models that help people thrive, not just survive
- Taking the work step by step, maintaining an open mind, and thinking about the whole person

Finally, they reminded the group that **"one step forward is still progress"** and encouraged everyone with their central message: **"Work with us, not just for us."**

LOOKING FORWARD

As the convening ended, participants reflected on the shared journey and next steps.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The closing conversations and commitments shared emphasized:

- Language matters and should reflect collaboration and respect
- Continuing to look for who needs to be at the table, especially new and diverse voices
- Building *with*, not *for*, communities and partners
- Staying adaptable and agile while maintaining clarity about long-term goals
- Creating brave spaces that allow for learning, advocacy, and authenticity
- Using technology as a tool to empower and help people work in new ways
- Building on established support and sustaining the relationships formed through this work to create lasting impact